

'Western Forces Fuelling Persian Gulf Regional Tension'
DUBAI (Dispatches) – The presence of Western forces in the Persian Gulf is fuelling regional tension, Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammed al-Hakim said on Monday.
"The states of the (Persian) Gulf can together secure the transit of ships," he said on Twitter.
"Iraq is seeking to reduce tension in our region through calm negotiations and the presence of Western forces in the region will increase tension."

Thought for Today
O you, who are blaming the world, who have been allured and enticed by it, and have been tempted by its false pretenses. You allowed yourself to be enamored of, to be captivated by it and then you accuse and blame it.
Amir al-Momeneen Ali (AS)

U.S.-Taliban Talks End Without A Deal

KABUL (Dispatches) – Talks on a pact that would allow the United States to end its longest war and withdraw troops from Afghanistan ended on Monday without agreement and both sides would consult their leaders on the next steps, the Taliban said.
The talks, held in Qatar since late last year, have brought hopes for a deal allowing U.S. troops to leave in exchange for a Taliban promise that Afghanistan will not be used by militants as a base from which to plot attacks abroad.



Participants attend the opening of the two-day talks of the Taliban and Afghan opposition representatives at the President Hotel in Moscow on February 5, 2019.

But the United States is pushing for Taliban agreement on two other elements: power-sharing talks with the U.S.-backed government and a ceasefire.
Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said the eighth round of talks, which a U.S. official said earlier involved technical details of the implementation of the pact, ended in the early hours and both sides would consult their leaders.
"We prolonged our meeting with the hope of reaching a peace agreement but it could not happen," said

a member of the Taliban negotiating team in Qatar.
"We discussed a number of issues and developed consensus on some of them but couldn't reach a conclusion," said the official who declined to be identified.
The U.S. negotiators were demanding that the Taliban announce a ceasefire and start direct talks with the Afghan government.

The Taliban, fighting since their ouster in 2001 to expel foreign forces, responded by calling for the United States to announce a roadmap for the withdrawal of their forces, the Taliban official said.
U.S. officials were not immediately available for comment but the chief U.S. negotiator, veteran Afghan-American diplomat Zal-

may Khalilzad, said on Sunday hard work was being done "toward a lasting and honorable peace agreement and a sovereign Afghanistan which poses no threat to any other country".
An agreement would allow U.S. President Donald Trump to achieve his aim of ending a war launched in the days after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States.
The war has become a stalemate, with neither side able to defeat the other and casualties rising among civilians as well as combatants.

The government has not been involved in the talks. The Taliban refuse to recognize or negotiate with it.
President Ashraf Ghani on Sunday appeared to question the talks, saying his nation would decide its future, not outsiders.
"Our future cannot be decided outside, whether in the capital cities of our friends or neighbors. The fate of Afghanistan will be decided here in Afghanistan," Ghani told a gathering for prayers marking the Eid al-Adha Muslim festival.

U.S. Troops Arrive in Turkey to Set Up Syria 'Safe Zone'



Turkish-backed militants take part in a training at a military barracks, north of the Syrian town of Manbij, on March 6, 2019.

ANKARA (Dispatches) – Some 90 U.S. service personnel arrived in southern Turkey on Monday, days after the two allies agreed to set up a safe zone in northeastern Syria, Haderturk reported.
U.S. troops were flown to Turkey's Sanliurfa Province and taken to the border city of Akcakale, the channel Haderturk said. They will reportedly be part of a joint operation centre.
Washington and Ankara announced a deal last week on a buffer zone between Turkey and U.S.-backed Kurdish forces in northeastern Syria. Turkish authorities consider them to be an offshoot of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which is banned in the country.
President Recep Tayyip Erdogan had previously threatened to invade the territory east of the Euphrates River to secure the border from Kurdish forces.
The Syrian government has objected to the U.S.-Turkish deal as an attack on its sovereignty, because both countries' militaries are operating in Syria without permission from Damascus.
Damascus has rejected as "blatant aggression" the deal in the northern part of Syria, where Washington-sponsored Kurdish militants have been active to Ankara's dismay.
The area is currently under the

control of the US-backed Kurdish militants, who are considered terrorists by Ankara. Turkey has, since 2016, launched two military operations inside Syria against the Kurds and has threatened a third if they fail to leave east of the Euphrates.
A source at Syria's Foreign Ministry told the official SANA news agency that the U.S.-Turkey agreement amounted to "blatant aggression" against the country's territorial integrity and was a "flagrant violation" of the international law and the UN Charter.
"This agreement has very clearly exposed the U.S.-Turkish partnership in the aggression against Syria, which serves the interest of the Israeli occupation entity and the Turkish expansionist ambitions," the source said.
He also urged the Kurdish militants to reconsider their position and stand by the Syrians in defending their country.
The Syrian people and army, who have made sacrifices in defending their country against terrorist groups and their sponsors, are now more determined to preserve the safety of their homeland, he added.
The Syrian Foreign Ministry source further called on the Arab people to be aware of the dangers posed by Turkey's "expansionist ambitions" across the Arab world.

Saudi King, Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Discuss Yemen

DUBAI (Dispatches) – Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz discussed the situation in Yemen with the crown prince of Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nayhan, on Monday, state-run Saudi TV said.
The meeting, in the region of Mecca, came after the Saudi-led coalition intervened in Aden on Sunday in support of the Yemeni former regime after UAE-backed southern separatists effectively took over the port city, fracturing the alliance that had been battling the Houthi Ansarullah movement.
The United Nations says

at least 40 people have been killed and 260 others wounded in Yemen's southern port city of Aden during infighting between groups of militia receiving support from either Saudi Arabia or the United Arab Emirates.
"Scores of civilians have been killed and wounded since August 8 when fighting broke out in the city of Aden. Preliminary reports indicate that as many as 40 people have been killed and 260 injured," UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Yemen Lise Grande said in a statement.
"It is heart-breaking that dur-

ing Eid al-Adha, families are mourning the death of their loved ones instead of celebrating together in peace and harmony," Grande further said. "Our main concern right now is to dispatch medical teams to rescue the injured."
She said civilians "need to be able to move freely and safely to secure the things they need to survive," an indication that movement is restricted in the city.
The infighting erupted on Wednesday, when a group of separatist militia in southern Yemen was attending a funeral for dozens of fellows, includ-

ing a senior militant commander who had been killed in a missile attack by Yemen's Houthi Ansarullah movement.
The separatists, which are backed by the UAE and are known as the Southern Transitional Council (STC), accused a political party allied to Saudi-backed forces of complicity in the missile attack and clashes broke out between the sides.
The UAE is Saudi Arabia's major partner in the war on Yemen, which started in 2015 to eliminate the Houthis, and until now, the militia groups on the ground had been fighting alongside each other.

Russia Shoots Down Six Drones Launched by Terrorists in Syria's Latakia

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – Russia has downed six drones launched by terrorists against the country's Hmeimim air base in Syria's west-province of Latakia.
The Russian Defense Ministry said in a statement that its air defenses destroyed the unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) at a "safe distance" as they approached the base from the northwest on Sunday evening.
According to the statement, no damage was caused to the base during the terrorist attack. The failed drone raid is not the first attempt by terrorists to target the Russian facility.
On August 8, terrorists fired four rockets at the base, but all the projectiles exploded mid-air and failed to reach their targets. However, the incident killed two civilians from a nearby village and injured four others.
On August 5, terrorists fired three unguided missiles at the base but the missile landed outside the bases, injuring four civilians.
Russia has been helping Syrian forces alongside Iran and the Lebanese movement Hezbollah in ongoing battles against foreign-backed terrorist across the conflict-plagued Arab country.
The Russian military assistance, which began in September 2015 at the official request

of the Syrian government, has proven effective as Syrians continue to recapture key areas from Daesh and other foreign-backed terrorist groups across the country with Russian air support.
Syria has been gripped by foreign-backed militancy since March 2011. The Syrian government says the Israeli regime and its Western and regional allies are aiding terrorist groups that are wreaking havoc in the country.
Deash threatens to step up fight against US-backed Kurds
Meanwhile, the Daesh terrorist group on Sunday vowed to intensify its fight against the US-led coalition and Kurdish militants in eastern Syria after the US Defense Department said in a report released earlier this month that the group "solidified its insurgent capabilities in Iraq and was re-surfing in Syria."
The resurgence of Daesh comes as reports said earlier this year that a deal was clinched between the United States and Daesh, under which Washington has received massive amounts of gold in exchange for providing safe passage to the terror group's members in Syria.
"The fire of the battle between us and them has been reignited and will intensify," Daesh

said of the Kurdish militants in a video posted on its Telegram channel on Sunday.
Syrian Kurds pronounced the death of Daesh's nearly five-year-old "caliphate" in late March after flushing out diehard terrorists from the village of Baghouz, their very last bastion, in eastern Syria.
The terror outfit launched a campaign of bloodshed and destruction in Syria and Iraq in 2014. Later that year, the US led scores of its allies in an invasion of the two countries under the pretext of dislodging the terrorists.
Damascus objects to Washington's military presence on its soil and has repeatedly brought its stated goal into question.
Daesh has lost almost all of the swathes of land it had captured from the Syrian government thanks to successful army operations, which have the backing of Iran and Russia.
However, sporadic attacks by the group, which retains sleeper cells, are still reported in eastern and northeastern Syria.
Also on Sunday, the terrorist group said the US-led coalition has entrapped its local adversaries, including the Kurds.
"They have been thrown into the flames of a fierce war that will leave them without tail or head," Daesh warned.

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'Zionist PM Lobbies Trump to Recognize Regime Sovereignty Over West Bank'

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is undertaking efforts to receive official support from U.S. President Donald Trump for the occupying regime's claims on territories it controls in the West Bank ahead of next elections, scheduled for September, The Times of Israel reported citing an anonymous source in the prime minister's Office.
According to the source, the Zionist prime minister is lobbying the move to secure solid support from right-wing voters, who are likely to praise the move that will strengthen Tel Aviv's hold on West Bank settlements, condemned by the UN.
"Ahead of the elections, something will happen. President Trump will repeat the statements by Friedman and Greenblatt in his own words. It will likely be dramatic", the anonymous source said, referring to earlier statements by U.S. ambassador

to the occupied territories David Friedman and U.S. envoy Jason Greenblatt, both of whom mulled the possibility of Washington supporting the Zionist regime's claims to certain parts of the West Bank.
Friedman said in June that "under certain circumstances" Israel may "retain some, but unlikely all" of the West Bank territories. His statements were echoed by Greenblatt on 16 June though he noted that such plans should be postponed to until after Trump's "deal of the century" peace plan revealed.
Few details, except economic ones, have been released about the essence of this plan, but the Palestinian Authority's attitude to it has already been undermined by Trump's previous moves with regard to the Zionist regime. The U.S. president namely recognized Tel Aviv's claims to al-Quds and the Golan Heights.