



Pipeline Blast in Iraq Halts Power Station Supply, Output Unaffected

BASRA (Reuters) – A gas pipeline exploded near Basra in southern Iraq on Wednesday and halted supplies to a local power station, but did not affect gas or oil output, oil ministry officials and police said. A technical fault due to scorching summer temperatures appeared to have caused the blast in al-Haritha 10 km (6 miles) north of Basra, a police source said. Gas running to the station was cut off while local emergency services put out the ensuing fire, civil defense officials said. Iraq's electricity suffers longer cuts than usual during its hot summers because of increased strain on its grid.

VOL NO: LV 10957 TEHRAN / Est.1959

Thursday, August 15, 2019, Mordad 24, 1398, Zil-Hijjah 13, 1440

Hamas Threatens to Shower Zionist Troops With Missiles



Members of the military arm of Palestinian resistance movement, Hamas, take part in a rally marking the 31st anniversary of the movement's founding, in Gaza City, December 16, 2018.

GAZA STRIP (Dispatches) – The leader of Hamas resistance movement in the Gaza Strip has warned the Zionist regime against waging a new military campaign on the besieged coastal sliver, stating that his fellow fighters will prevail over Zionist troops if the latter enter the enclave in any future conflict.

“We will break the defeated occupation army if it crosses into the

Gaza Strip. We know what we say and mean what we utter,” Yahya Sinwar said in a speech delivered to Palestinian families in his hometown of Khan Younis in southern Gaza.

“If Israel launches a campaign in Gaza, we will shower their cities with hundreds of missiles in one go,” he added.

Sinwar then praised the August

1 operation in the southern Gaza Strip, where Palestinian man Hani Abu Sallah was killed and three Israeli soldiers wounded in an exchange of fire, as a heroic commando one.

“If a war occurs, we will strike on the occupation army and break its power once and forever. We are not joking,” he pointed out.

The Zionist regime military fre-

quently bombs Gaza, with civilians being the main target of such attacks.

The regime has also launched several wars on the Palestinian coastal sliver, the last of which began in early July 2014. The military aggression, which ended on August 26, 2014, killed nearly 2,200 Palestinians. Over 11,100 others were also wounded in the war.

The Gaza Strip has been under a siege by the occupying regime since June 2007. The blockade has caused a decline in the standards of living as well as unprecedented levels of unemployment and unrelenting poverty.

The regime denies about 1.8 million people in Gaza their basic rights, such as freedom of movement, jobs with proper wages as well as adequate healthcare and education.

Sinwar also pointed to the weekly anti-occupation protests along the fence separating the Gaza Strip from the Israeli-occupied territories, stating that “our march will go on until it achieves its goals.”

Palestinians have held weekly rallies on the Gaza border to protest the siege on the enclave and demand the right for refugees to return to their homes they were forced from during the 1948 creation of Israel.

Syrian Army Closes In on Terrorist Bastion in Idlib



In this file picture, foreign-sponsored militants with the so-called Free Syrian army exit a cave where they live, in the outskirts of the northern town of Jisr al-Shughur, Syria, west of the city of Idlib.

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – The Syrian army reached on Wednesday the outskirts of the Khan Shaykhun town in the countryside of the northwestern Idlib province, a war monitor said.

The army forces reached 4 km west of Khan Shaykhun after capturing several areas in the southern countryside of Idlib, the so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

The Britain-based watchdog group said that the government forces are attempting to inch closer to the town's eastern flanks.

It added that over 100 fighters from both sides had been killed since Tuesday amid ongoing airstrikes on rebel-held areas in Idlib.

Meanwhile, state news agency SANA reported that the army succeeded on Wednesday in securing several towns in the southern countryside of Idlib, following battles with the al-Qaeda-linked Nusra

Front.

On Sunday, the Syrian army captured the key town of al-Habit in the countryside of Idlib Province, a progress that paved the way for capturing more areas in Idlib, the last major terrorist stronghold in the country.

The progress enabled the Syrian army to advance toward Khan Shaykhun, which is located 11 km east of al-Habit.

Idlib, as well as the northern countryside of Hama, are included in the de-escalation zones' deal that was reached between Russia and Turkey last September.

The deal, however, has largely failed despite several attempts to revive it.

The latest attempt to fix the deal took place earlier this month when Turkey and Russia mediated a fresh cease-fire in Idlib, which failed quickly with the resumption of the military showdown.

More Fractures Emerge Among Saudi-Led Allies in Yemen

SANAA (Dispatches) – Yemen's southern separatists vowed on Wednesday to keep control over Aden, warning the only way out of the impasse that has fractured a Saudi-led military alliance was for northerners to be removed from all positions of power in the south.

The separatists, who are supported by coalition member the United Arab Emirates, effectively took over Aden, the temporary seat of the Saudi-backed former regime, over the weekend by seizing military bases.

Southern militants are a major component in the coalition's battle against the Houthis. But the war has revived old strains between north and south Yemen - formerly separate countries that united into a single

state in 1990 under then-President Ali Abdullah Saleh.

The United Nations says at least hundreds of people have been killed and 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.

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 last Wednesday, when a group of separatist militia in southern Yemen was attending a funeral for dozens of fellows, including 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.

The war was also launched to restore the former regime of Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi to power in Yemen.

For the past four years, Hadi, who lives in Riyadh, has based his “government” in Aden, describing it as Yemen's “temporary capital.”

The Saudi-led war in his support has achieved neither of its goals, and the recent heavy infighting is the first of its magnitude since the UAE announced a plan to effectively withdraw its forces from Yemen in July. The decision was apparently taken because the UAE came to the conclusion that the war — a brainchild of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman — is unwinnable.

U.S. Training Thousands of Terrorists to Revive Daesh

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – Thousands of Daesh terrorists have been transferred from areas under their control in Dayr al-Zawr to Hasaka and Raqqah provinces and thousands of others have been taken to al-Tanf military base and received training there in line with Washington's plan to revive the Daesh in eastern Syria.

The Arabic-language website of the Russian Sputnik news agency quoted Kurdish sources in Hasakah province as saying that Washington is trying to once again revive the Daesh terrorists in Eastern Euphrates.

The Kurdish sources reiterated that the U.S. has transferred thousands of Daesh terrorists from Baghouz region in Eastern Dayr al-Zawr to other parts of the province as well as

Raqqah and Hasaka provinces.

“The Ovais Qarani Brigade terrorists who are the most important ally of the Daesh terrorist group and the security branch of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) have been stationed in Raqqah,” they added.

The sources said that the U.S. Army has transferred thousands of other Daesh terrorists from different regions, including Dayr al-Zawr, Hasaka, Damascus outskirts, Houz al-Yarmouk in Dara'a and Taloul al-Safa in Sweida's Badiyah (desert), to al-Tanf military base in eastern Syria and has been training them.

“Whenever asked, the U.S. army introduces these Daesh militants under its training under

different names and labels such as Maghavar al-Thura, Asvad al-Sharqieh or the new Syrian army,” they concluded.

Earlier in August, an Iraqi official said that the U.S. forces had withdrawn from al-Ratbah base in al-Anbar province towards Ein al-Assad base in a move to open a safe corridor for the Daesh terrorists.

Head of Badr Organization's Office in al-Anbar Qusai al-Anbari told the Arabic-language al-Ma'aloumeh news website on Wednesday that the U.S. forces have been transferred from Base 70 in al-Ratbah to Ein al-Assad.

He noted that the Americans will pave the ground for the Daesh's free trafficking in the region by withdrawal from al-Ratbah.

UN Urges Halt to Afghan Civilian Casualties

KABUL (Dispatches) – The United Nations said on Wednesday it was gravely concerned about reports indicating 11 civilians had been killed in an Afghan security force operation in an eastern province near the border with Pakistan.

Civilian casualties in Afghanistan have been increasing, despite attempts by the United States and the Taliban to negotiate an agreement to end the 18-year war.

The government's main security agency, the National Directorate of Security (NDS), said the operation in Paktia province had targeted a Taliban hideout and among the 11 dead militants were two commanders.

The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan said it was gravely concerned at the killings during a search operation and a human rights team was investigating.

“Accountability essential. Harm to civilians must stop,” the agency said in a post on Twitter.

A politician in the area said the government forces attacked a student gathering over the Eid al-Adha Muslim holiday.

“A university student had invited his classmates for dinner,” Allah Mir Khan Bahramzoi, a provincial council member in Paktia, told Reuters.

“Late in the evening, security forces surrounded the house, brought out the victims from the guesthouse and shot them one by one,” he said by telephone from the province.

The NDS said weapons and ammunition were seized in the raid.

“This operation was conducted based on operative information on a Taliban hideout/center and it left no civilian casualties,” the agency said in a statement.

The United Nations says nearly 4,000 civilians were killed or wounded in the first half of the year. The toll included a big increase in the number of casualties inflicted by government and U.S.-led foreign forces.

Ground raids and clashes caused the most civilian casualties, followed by bomb attacks and air strikes, UNAMA said in a report last month.

There has been no let-up in violence, even though the Taliban and the United States have both reported significant progress in talks on a pact for U.S. troops to withdraw in exchange for a Taliban promise that Afghanistan will not be used as a base for militant attacks.

Their latest round of talks ended on Monday without a final agreement. No date has been announced for the next round.