

# ‘Zionist Air Strikes in Syria Could Further Destabilize Situation’

MOSCOW (Dispatches) – The Zionist regime’s air strikes on the territory of Syria might lead to a further destabilization, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said in a newspaper interview.

“Such actions ... further destabilize the situation and could lead to an escalation,” pan-Arab daily newspaper Asharq Al-Awsat quoted him as saying.

“Syria should not become a platform for implementing plans or settling accounts. The main task of all concerned forces must be to help restore peace to Syrian territory.”

The Zionist regime launches airstrikes on the Syrian territory from time to time. Such aggressive moves are usually viewed as attempts to prop up terrorist groups suffering defeats at the hands of Syrian government forces.

Since 2016, the election of U.S. President Donald Trump and his pro-Zionist decisions, including recognition of the “Israeli sovereignty” over the occupied Syrian territory of Golan Heights, have seemingly emboldened Tel Aviv to launch new aggression on the Arab country.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Lavrov commented on the potential of a confrontation between Iran and the Zionist regime in Syria, emphasizing that Syria should not become an arena for implementing external agendas.

“Syria should not become a platform for implementing plans or settling scores. The main task of all concerned forces must be to help restore peace to Syrian territory,” he added.



*The Damascus sky lights up missile fire, as the U.S. launches an attack on Syria targeting different parts of the capital, early April 14, 2018.*

The Russian Foreign Ministry announced in early June that Moscow takes serious issue with Israeli military aggression against Syria.

The ministry said in a statement that Russia was concerned about the aerial attacks launched by the occupying regime against Syria, adding that it believes the assaults could pose a threat to regional stability.

Last month, the Russian aviation publication Avia.Pro reported that the country’s combat air-

craft took off from Russia’s Hmeimim air base in Syria’s western coastal province of Latakia, “which resulted in the disruption of the Israeli attacks on the Syrian capital and its surroundings.”

According to the report, the Russian military also provided the Syrian armed forces with information about the Zionist regime’s drone that was preparing to strike the southeastern suburbs of Damascus.

## Turkish University to Open Faculties in Northern Syria

ISTANBUL (Dispatches) – Turkey’s Gaziantep University will open three faculties in small northern Syria towns, Ankara’s Official Gazette said on Friday, reflecting a growing Turkish presence in the region.

An Islamic sciences faculty will open in Syria’s Azaz, an education faculty in Afrin, and a faculty of economics and administrative sciences in Al-Bab, Turkey’s official state publication said.

All three towns are in northwestern Syria, west of the Euphrates river and broadly north

of Aleppo, in regions to which Turkey has twice sent forces in the last three years to drive back the Syrian Kurdish YPG militia and Daesh terrorists, in a bid to protect its own border.

The towns have been struck in the past by bomb attacks, some of which have been blamed on Daesh and others on Kurdish militants.

Ankara has previously built hospitals, restored schools and trained personnel in northwest Syria, and Turkish media reports say it is planning to build an industrial zone in the region

to create jobs for 7,000 people.

Gaziantep University, based in the southeastern Turkish city of the same name, has previously opened a vocational school in the Syrian border town of Jarabulus, just west of the Euphrates.

Across the Euphrates, Turkey has warned of military action in northeast Syria in a region controlled by the YPG, if the United States fails to follow through on establishing a planned “safe zone” there.

Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar later told U.S. Secretary of Defense Mark Esper in

a phone call that Ankara would end its work with the United States on establishing a “safe zone” if Washington stalled on the issue, Akar’s ministry said.

“Continuing to hold talks, wanting to solve the issue peacefully ... should not be viewed as weakness, and saying our plans are ready if necessary should not be seen as a threat,” the ministry statement reported Akar as saying in the call.

“If there is stalling or delaying, we are fully determined to end this work,” he was also quoted as saying.

## Saudi Arabia Allows Women to Join Military for First Time

RIYADH (Press TV) – The Saudi Defense Ministry has allowed women to be enlisted in its armed forces for the first time in a bid to “empower women” as part of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman’s “Saudi Vision 2030” development plan.

The Saudi-owned newspaper Asharq al-Awsat reported on Thursday that the measure permitted women to serve from soldier ranks to “senior ranks” across its different military branches.

The kingdom first allowed women to join its security forces last year in areas related to “public security”, such as anti-narcotics, criminal investigations, customs and the prison system.

Saudi Arabia’s push to allow women to enlist in the military comes despite women being banned from driving and traveling without male permission in the country up until just a year ago.

The kingdom joins Israel in enlisting women in its armed forces in the region.

Bin Salman has sought to portray an increasingly liberal image of the country as part of the 2030 initiative, pledging to make the

kingdom more “open” and eradicate “extremism” since his ascent to power.

The announced recruitment of women in the country’s armed forces, however, comes as the Saudi military is marred in a quagmire in Yemen and relies on foreign mercenaries to fight on behalf of the kingdom.

Last week, nearly 2000 Saudi-led mercenaries surrendered to Yemeni forces following a major retaliatory operation led by the popular Houthi Ansarullah movement in the north of the country.

Another 200 Saudi-led forces were killed in the retaliatory operation.

Aside from depending on mercenary forces in its war on Yemen, Riyadh has also historically relied on the deployment of American troops in the region in a bid to ensure the regime’s security.

Following a highly successful drone Yemeni drone attack on major Saudi oil installations last month, the U.S. pledged to send troops to Saudi Arabia bolster Riyadh’s air defenses.

## Flames ...

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and to pay close attention to the warnings of political and security officials,” the statement said.

Iran, it said, is confident the Iraqi government and nation will work with all groups, parties and personalities, especially the top clerics and other religious authorities and political leaders to calm the current tense situation.

“The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is confident that the Iraqi nation and government will not allow the continuation of certain moves that are to the detriment of the Iraqi people and will not let the foreigners take advantage of the situation,” the statement added.

## Yemenis...

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According to the network, regional players and the West see the imperative to prevent a broader conflict from developing.

VOA said the once rag-tag Houthi fighters and their allies have held off the military might of Yemen’s rich Persian Gulf neighbors, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, for the past four-and-a-half years. They also have proven to be some of the most effective fighters in the war, it added.

“Some analysts believe the Houthi are taking a two-pronged approach to win the war. On Monday they freed 290 prisoners, including survivors of a Saudi airstrike on a prison, in a bid to promote talks. Last week, though, they claimed, without providing much evidence, to have killed hundreds of troops in an attack on Saudi territory and taken thousands more captive,” VOA said.

“They apparently are trying to maintain military momentum while pressing for a ceasefire. Observers say the Saudis may now see the war south of the border as posing a greater threat than before,” it said.

The network cited Persian Gulf analyst Neil Partrick as saying that interest “in at least winding down aspects of the conflict suggests from the Saudi point of view that there is a recognition that after four-and-a-half years, they can’t bomb the Houthi into submission, and that perhaps there has to be some kind of accommodation”.

Saudi Arabia recently announced the ceasefire in Yemen after a visit to the region by U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs David Schenker. Schenker said Washington is in talks with Yemen’s Houthis in a bid to end the war, the first such contact in more than four years. The Wall Street Journal reported the Trump administration was trying to coax Saudi Arabia into negotiations with Houthi leaders.

According to Partrick, Saudi airstrikes in Yemen have proven to be “a very limited success, and in many ways counterproductive”, while “there was shock” in the kingdom where he was in the immediate aftermath of the attacks in Abqaiq and Khurais.

## Haaretz...

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Saudi crown prince had urged for a “peaceful” solution regarding its tensions with Iran in an interview earlier this week.

The crown prince had stated that a war with Iran would lead to the “total collapse of the global economy.”

Haaretz said such developments came despite the fact that Washington and Riyadh had both blamed Iran for being behind a major September 14 Yemeni drone attack on Saudi Arabia’s oil installations, an accusation firmly denied by Tehran.

“Not only did the sophisticated and destructive attack on the Saudi oil facilities last month pass without a military response from Riyadh or Washington, but Saudi Arabia even made it clear that it supported dialogue with Tehran,” it wrote.

The Saudi crown prince had been previously known for his exclusively bellicose rhetoric against Tehran.

In May 2017, the Saudi crown prince had accused Tehran of attempting to dominate the Muslim world. He pledged at the time to take the war “inside Iran.”

## Iran’s ...

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This has triggered a big rally for the Tehran bourse, which had sold off in the final quarter of 2018 on fears of military conflict and economic stagnation. It is now up 73 percent in local currency terms over the past 12 months, outpacing any other global equity market tracked by Bloomberg.

“Iran’s bourse showed it can hedge against foreign currency risks and is the best market to guarantee people’s money with high dividends,” said the manager of a Tehran-based asset management firm, who asked not to be named.

The top 30 listed companies account for more than 60 percent of the stock exchange’s market cap, according to local analysts — including the country’s top exporters of petrochemicals, steel and copper. These businesses generate foreign currency income, giving them protection from domestic economic stagnation.

## France’s...

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“We consider that these initiatives, which didn’t succeed, are still on the table and it is up to Iran and the United States to seize (them) in a relatively short amount of time because Iran has announced new measures to reduce its commitments to the Vienna accord in November,” Jean-Yves Le Drian told parliament’s foreign affairs committee.

Iran is reducing restrictions of its 2015 nuclear deal with major powers step-by-step in response to U.S. sanctions imposed since Washington pulled out of the agreement in May of last year.

It has said its next reductions would be at the start of November. “These measures risk leading to a new period of tension and new escalation so we must take advantage of the political space that exists to move forward,” Le Drian said.

Washington has repeatedly said it is prepared to hold talks with Iran on a more far-reaching deal, arguing its economic sanctions will force Iran to the negotiating table. Tehran, however, has ruled out talks until those sanctions are lifted, while continuing its incremental nuclear expansion.

## Egypt Discussing Possible New IMF Cooperation

CAIRO (Reuters) – Egypt is discussing possible further assistance from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to help it carry out structural reforms once its current three-year IMF program ends next month, its central bank governor says.

“The government and the IMF are reviewing to see if there is any area for cooperation. There are still discussions on the subject, consultations,” Tarek Amer told reporters.

“We did fiscal reform and monitoring reform. Now we are doing structural reform. We are looking to see if the IMF can help on the subject of structural reform.”

Egypt signed a three-year, \$12 billion Extend-

ed Fund Facility on Nov. 11, 2016, after allowing its currency to weaken sharply, implementing a value-added tax and raising fuel prices to reduce its balance of payments budget and deficits.

Amer said Egypt would continue working with the fund whatever new arrangement was agreed upon.

“At a minimum is the post-program monitoring in which the IMF continues with us as long as the loan is outstanding,” he said.

Egypt’s government has said it will continue to work on attracting more investment and lowering unemployment by improving the business

environment.

IMF Mission Chief for Egypt Subir Lall said the government needed to press ahead with reforms to support private sector development and job creation.

“It needs to strengthen governance and competition, better integrate women and youth in the labor market, improve access to land, and limit the role of the state in the economy,” Lall said in remarks sent to Reuters by email.

“We stand ready to support Egypt and its people as they continue the process of transforming the economy to achieve high, sustained and inclusive growth and job creation.”