

MOSCOW (Dispatches) – Three Russian military police officers were hurt in a blast from a home-made bomb on Monday as they carried out a routine patrol in Syria near the border with Turkey, the RIA news agency cited Russia's Defense Ministry as saying. The bomb went off near the town of Kobani in Syria's northern Aleppo province, the ministry was quoted as saying, adding that it did not believe the lives of the injured servicemen were in danger.

Russia and Turkey have been carrying out joint patrols along Syria's border with Turkey under a deal reached by Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Turkish counterpart Tayyip Erdogan.

People in this world are like travelers whose journey is going on though they are asleep.

Amir al-Momeneen Ali (AS)

Palestinians Blame U.S. for New Zionist Settlement

Turkey Says Not 'Blackmailing' NATO Over Baltics Plan



A picture taken on December 1, 2019 shows the settlement of Negohot (R), located near the Palestinian village of Beit Awwa (L), in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

RAMALLAH (Dispatches) – Palestinians have slammed the Zionist regime's decision on building a new settlement in the southern West Bank city of al-Khalil, saying it is a "clear result" of the U.S. backing.

"Israel's decision to build a new illegal settlement in occupied al-Khalil is the first tangible result of the U.S. decision to legitimize colonization; this cannot be taken out of the annexation

context," said Saeb Erekat, secretary general of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

"Concrete measures, including sanctions against settlements, are an international responsibility," he tweeted.

His tweet came right after Zionist war minister Naftali Bennett approved the construction of a new settlement in al-Khalil.

The Zionist regime's settlement ac-

tivity is deemed illegal by most world powers and the international law. It is considered one of the major issues that caused the collapse of the talks between Palestinians and Zionists in 2014.

The Zionist regime's plan to construct the new settlement in al-Khalil will purportedly accommodate as many settlers as are currently housed in the city.

The planned project will "double" the

number of Israeli settlers in the city, Bennett said.

Al-Khalil is a flashpoint of clashes between Palestinians and Zionist settlers.

Hundreds of Zionist settlers, backed by tens of thousands of soldiers, occupy significant parts of the city center.

Meanwhile, the United Nations says the Zionist regime's authorities have demolished or confiscated 39 Palestinian buildings in the occupied West Bank over the past two weeks, on the grounds that they lacked the required construction permits.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said in its biweekly Protection of Civilians Report that the regime's demolitions, which took place between November 12 and 25, led to the displacement of 63 people, and badly affected 380 others.

The report added that 35 of the targeted buildings, including two which were being used for humanitarian purposes, were located in the so-called Area C.

Area C, which is under the regime's full control, makes up more than 60 percent of the entire occupied West Bank. Eighty eight percent of the area lies in the strategic Jordan Valley, which comprises a third of the occupied West Bank.

Zionist regime authorities frequently demolish Palestinian buildings and residences in Area C, with Bedouin and herding communities being particularly vulnerable to that practice.



The photo, taken and released on August 27, 2019, by the Turkish Defense Ministry shows a part of the Russian S-400 missile system at the Murted airbase.

ANKARA (Dispatches) – Turkey is not blackmailing NATO with its rejection of a plan for the Baltics and Poland, and has full veto rights within the alliance, a Turkish security source said on Monday ahead of a NATO alliance summit in London.

Reuters reported last week that Turkey was refusing to back a NATO plan for the Baltics and Poland until it received more support for its battle with the Syrian Kurdish YPG militia, which it views as a terrorist organization.

Ankara has said the impasse was caused by the United States withdrawing support from a separate plan for Turkey, covering any possible attack from the south where it borders Syria, and that it wanted the issue resolved.

"NATO is an institution where Turkey has full veto rights, politically and militarily, and there are procedures here," the source said. "There is no such thing as Turkey blackmailing - a statement like that is unacceptable."

A diplomatic source told Reuters last week that Turkey was "taking eastern Europeans hostage" by blocking approval of the military planning, and a second source call Ankara's behavior "disruptive".

NATO envoys need formal ap-

proval by all 29 members for the plan to improve the "defense" of Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia against any threat from neighboring Russia.

A Turkish diplomatic source later said Turkey was "open to offers", and that NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg was trying to find common ground between the allies.

However, relations between Turkey and its NATO allies have been strained over a host of issues ranging from Ankara's decision to procure Russian air systems to Syria policy. Several NATO members condemned Turkey's decision last month to launch an incursion into north-eastern Syria against the YPG.

Turkey, which has NATO's second largest military, wants the alliance to formally classify the YPG, the main component of the U.S.-backed so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), as terrorists. It has been infuriated over the support NATO allies have given the YPG.

Last week, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu accused French President Emmanuel Macron of sponsoring terrorism in his support for the YPG, after Macron said Turkey should not expect solidarity from NATO after its Syria incursion.

Iraq Parties in Talks Over New PM

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) – Iraq's rival parties were negotiating the contours of a new government on Monday, after the previous cabinet was brought down by a two-month protest.

After just over a year in power, premier Adel Abdel Mahdi stepped down last week after a dramatic intervention by top Shia cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani.

"In response to this call, and in order to facilitate it as quickly as possible, I will present to parliament a demand (to accept) my resignation from the leadership of the current government," a statement signed by Abdul Mahdi said on Friday.

Iraq's parliament approved the

resignation of Abdul-Mahdi on Sunday.

Parliament on Sunday formally tasked President Barham Saleh with naming a new candidate, as prescribed by the constitution.

But Iraq's competing factions typically engage in drawn-out discussions and horse-trading before any official decisions are made.

Talks over a new premier began even before Abdul Mahdi's formal resignation, a senior political source and a government official told AFP.

"The meetings are ongoing now," the political source added.

Such discussions produced

Abdel Mahdi as a candidate in 2018, but agreeing on a single name is expected to be more difficult this time around.

"They understand it has to be a figure who is widely accepted by the diverse centers of power, not objected to by the marjiah (Shia religious establishment), and not hated by the street," said Harith Hasan, a fellow at the Carnegie Middle East Center.

Nearly two months of protests have rocked primarily Baghdad and the southern areas of Iraq. The protesters have been expressing frustration with a failing economy and have demanded reforms.

The rallies have, however, turned into violent confronta-

tions on numerous occasions.

Commenting on the ongoing unrest across Iraq, Lawrence Davidson, a professor in West Chester University, said in an interview with Press TV on Sunday that some foreign elements were desperately attempting to make Iran a "scapegoat" for Iraq's social and economic problems.

The remarks come after masked assailants last week set fire on the Iranian consulate in the southern Iraqi city of Najaf and burned tires around the building.

Davidson said the "U.S. was considering the protests an opportunity to create a trouble and direct them against Iran."

'Saudi Regime Releases 11 People Questioned Over Foreign Ties'

RIYADH (Dispatches) – Saudi regime authorities have released 11 citizens who were detained for several days last month for questioning over suspected links to foreign entities, a Saudi official told Reuters.

The new wave of detentions came as the regime assumes the presidency of the Group of 20 countries amid sustained Western criticism of its human rights record following last year's killing of prominent journalist Jamal Khashoggi by Saudi agents.

The detainees were questioned on suspicion of receiving funds from foreign countries and coordinating with hostile organizations, the official told Reuters without providing more details or evidence.

None of them have been indicted but the case remains open and charges could still be laid, added the official who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The reason remains unclear as the people are not considered frontline activists, though some had written previously about the 2011 Arab Spring uprisings.

Sources, including London-based Saudi rights group ALQST, said last week that around 10 people, mostly writers and intellectuals, had been taken from their homes by plainclothes police. As of Sunday, the sources had not confirmed everyone's release.

Activists have decried the detentions as the latest wave in a crackdown on dissent which

gathered pace in September 2017 with the arrests of prominent clerics, some of whom could now face the death penalty.

An anti-corruption campaign two months later netted top businessmen and senior officials, several of which have not been heard from since.

In mid-2018, around a dozen women's rights activists who had called for ending a ban on women driving were arrested just as Riyadh lifted it.

The public prosecutor has said some of them were suspected of harming Saudi interests and offering support to hostile elements abroad.

This April, eight people, including two U.S. citizens, who had supported the detained women were also arrested.

Lebanese Protesters Break Into Justice Palace

BEIRUT (Xinhua) – A number of young Lebanese protesters broke into the Beirut Justice Palace on Monday voicing demands on the 47th day of nationwide demonstrations, Al Jadeed local TV channel reported.

Protesters demanded that the judicial system in Lebanon be free of any political interference, in addition to investigations into corruption cases related to fuel and electricity, tax evasion and other issues.

Protesters also demanded the release of their friends who were arrested during nationwide demonstrations in the past days.

Demonstrators who entered the Beirut Justice Palace for the

first time since the beginning of protests in Lebanon shouted slogans against the corrupted political system in Lebanon.

One citizen told Al Jadeed that lawyers and judges at the Beirut Justice Palace showed great support for protesters' demands.

Lebanon has been witnessing protests against the ruling political class and their corrupt practices for the past 30 years.

Protests have so far succeeded in toppling the government while protesters vowed not to leave the streets until they see a formation of a new cabinet capable of dealing with their demands including the trial of corrupted politicians.