

Palestinian Killed in Blast Near Gaza Airport

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – A young Palestinian man has been killed and his brother critically wounded in a blast near the Gaza Strip’s abandoned airport, the besieged sliver’s Health Ministry says. “Naji Khaled Abu Sabla, 21, was killed and his brother, Akram, 18, seriously wounded in the face and stomach when an unidentified device blew up in the area of the airport” in southern Gaza, ministry spokesman, Ashraf al-Qudra, said on Saturday.

Syrian Army Troops Take Back Villages From Terrorists



Syrian army forces on a road near the town of Al-Jbaileh on the outskirts of Aleppo, northwest Syria

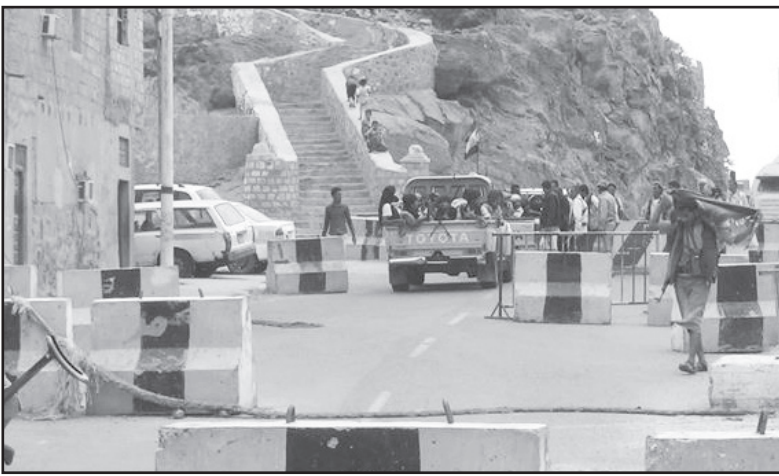
DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – Syrian government forces continue to gain ground in their fight against foreign-backed armed groups, and have taken full control of several villages south of the conflict-stricken Arab

country. On Saturday, Syrian troopers, backed by fighters from Lebanon’s Hezbollah resistance movement, established control over the villages of Nabe’ al-Sakher and Tal al-Ba-

zzaq in the strategic southwestern province of Quneitra, situated some 60 kilometers (37 miles) south of the capital, Damascus, Syria’s official SANA news agency reported. A number of militants were killed

and injured during the intense clashes with the Syrian forces. The Syrian army also dealt a blow to foreign-sponsored militants by capturing the villages of al-Habaria, Kherbet Sultana, Hamreet, Tal Qurein and Tal Antar in the southwestern province of Dara’a. Scores of militants from the al-Qaeda-linked terrorist al-Nusra Front were killed in the operations, and their weaponry was later destroyed. Syrian troops also killed many terrorists and destroyed their vehicles in Kafar Nasej and Tal al-Hara villages in Dara’a Province. On February 26, Syrian army forces repelled an offensive by Takfiri terrorists to capture al-Fo’aa and Kafrayya villages on the outskirts of Syria’s northwestern city of Idlib. Syria has been grappling with a deadly crisis since March 2011. The violence fuelled by Takfiri groups has so far claimed the lives of over 210,000 people, according to reports. New figures show that over 76,000 people, including thousands of children, lost their lives in Syria last year. Over 3.8 million Syrians have left their country since the beginning of the crisis. More than 7.2 million Syrians have also become internally displaced, according to the UN.

Kuwait Set to Reopen Yemen Mission in Aden



Armed supporters of Yemeni President Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi take to the streets of the southern city of Aden.

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) – Kuwait has announced a decision to reopen its diplomatic mission in Yemen’s southern coastal city of Aden, where former President Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi plans to establish a rival power base. “In the framework of supporting constitutional legitimacy in Yemen represented in ... Hadi... the state of Kuwait has decided to reopen its embassy in the city of Aden,” Kuwait’s KUNA news agency quoted the foreign ministry as saying on Saturday. The decision was in accordance with an agreement by foreign ministers of the six [Persian] Gulf Cooperation Council member states, the ministry claimed. Earlier this week, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia also announced that they would reopen their Yemen embassies in Aden instead of the capital city of Sana’a. The three Arab countries were among a number of states that recently closed their embassies and evacuated all their diplomatic staff in Yemen over what they call security concerns. Hadi, along with the cabinet of Prime Minister Khaled Bahah stepped down on January 22, but the Yemeni parliament didn’t approve the resignation.

The Yemeni president left his home in Sana’a on February 21 after weeks under effective house arrest and went to Aden, where he officially withdrew his resignation and highlighted his determination to resume duties. He also called on the Ansarullah revolutionaries to relinquish power and leave the capital. The Ansarullah movement, however, said that Hadi had lost his legitimacy as head of state and was being sought as a fugitive from justice. In September 2014, the Ansarullah fighters gained control of Sana’a after Yemeni political parties failed to put aside differences and fill the power vacuum. A few months later, they dissolved the parliament and announced a constitutional declaration on the Transitional National Council, following weeks of clashes with government forces. The Ansarullah revolutionaries say the Yemeni government has been incapable of properly running the affairs of the country and providing security. The Ansarullah movement played a key role in the 2011 popular uprising that forced dictator Ali Abdullah Saleh to quit after 33 years in power.

Officials: US Rethinks ‘Spring Offensive’ Against ISIL in Mosul

BAGHDAD (Press TV) – The US military is rethinking a previously-announced plan for a “spring offensive” against the ISIL terrorist group in the Iraqi city of Mosul, officials said. Earlier this month, senior US military officials publicly outlined details of their plans for an on-the-ground offensive against ISIL to retake Iraq’s second largest city by April or May. A senior US Central Command official said last week that the “shaping” for the campaign was

currently underway and that a total force of up to 25,000 Iraqi troops were expected to participate in the battle. The official came under fire from members of Congress for revealing details of a military plan to the enemy. A day after the plan was announced, many within the Pentagon privately questioned whether the plan might work. “I really doubt it is going to happen that soon,” one military officer told the Daily Beast on condition of

anonymity. “And if it does, it will take months.” US military officials said Friday that the offensive is unlikely to start until the fall at the earliest, after an intensive campaign of airstrikes has weakened the hold of ISIL terrorists on Mosul, and have cut off their supply lines in and around the vital city, according to the Wall Street Journal. Officials also said Iraq’s military units are months away from being in a position to retake Mosul, the largest city under ISIL control.

“When we feel that the Iraqi forces are ready to go and win decisively, we will go and advise the Iraqis to begin the operation,” a military official said. At a briefing on Friday, Pentagon spokesman Rear Adm. John Kirby said the US military would not set a timeline for the Mosul operation, adding that any offensive to liberate the city would be a tough one. “We’re not going to be able to go, nor do we want to go any faster than the Iraqis are ready to go,” Adm. Kirby said.

UAE Denies Arms Sales to Ukraine Despite Kiev’s Confirmation

ABU DHABI (Press TV) – The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has denied reports of selling military supplies to Ukraine despite earlier statements by senior Ukrainian officials confirming an arms deal with the UAE. “An agreement on cooperation in defense technologies the UAE and Ukraine signed recently does not stipulate any contracts for deliveries of weaponry to the Ukrainian side,” said Faraj Faris al-Mazrouei, an adviser to UAE Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, as cited in a Friday report by the Emarat Al-Yawm news portal. According to the report quoting al-Mazrouei, the deal signed between Ukraine and the UAE was only one element in a future system of cooperation between the two nations in the field of military technologies. The development comes as Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko said earlier this week after a meeting with top UAE officials that military technical-cooperation agreements were signed to bolster Ukraine’s arms industry, which he said would secure several export orders. He further described the deals as “extremely important, so we have the money to modernize our armed forces.” Additionally, Anton Gerashchenko, an advisor to the Ukrainian interior minister, stated in a post on his Facebook page that the UAE-Ukraine deal would include “the supply of certain types of arms and military equipment to Ukraine” by the UAE. Press reports have also cited the Ukrainian president as saying that Kiev signed nearly 20 contracts on arms supplies at the recent International Defense Exhibition fair, IDEX-2015. “Deals to supply of defensive weapons to Ukraine have been signed with European, American and Middle Eastern companies,” Poroshenko reportedly said. This is while Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov censured potential US plans to supply weapons and ammunition to Kiev as a “major blow” to the Minsk truce agreements, vowing earlier this week that Moscow “will have to respond appropriately” in the face of “such provocative actions.” Ukraine’s warring sides, including the government forces and pro-Russians, reached a ceasefire deal dubbed Minsk II at a summit attended by the leaders of Russia, France, and Germany in the Belarusian capital on February 11 and 12. Nearly 5,700 people have been killed and close to a million have been displaced since the armed conflict began in eastern Ukraine in April 2014.

Egypt Sentences Brotherhood Leaders to Death

Cairo (Dispatches) – An Egyptian court sentenced the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood’s top leader Muhammad Badie to life in prison while other members received the death penalty. Badie has already been sentenced to multiple life terms, and was one of hundreds given the death sentence in a mass trial that drew international criticism of Egyptian’s judicial system. President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, who as army chief toppled Mohammad Mursi, the democratically elected president, describes the Brotherhood as a major security threat. The movement says it is committed to peaceful activism. ***** “This type of justice should be looked at as a ‘major security threat’”, remarked my friend Jamsheed, nicknamed Jimmy because of his simplemindedness. Najafi