

Syria Launches Operation to Liberate City in Aleppo

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – The Syrian army has launched an attack, described as the biggest government assault in Aleppo since February, to recapture the town of Tela'at al-Eis. Syrian ground forces, supported by heavy and concentrated air raids, targeted the positions of terrorist groups in the area, Lebanon's al-Ahed news website reported on Wednesday.

The army said in a statement that the operation was a response to the terrorists' violations of the cessation of hostilities agreement, which entered into force on February 27.

The UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said government forces had made progress but not been able to recapture the town.

The monitor also said a pregnant woman and three children were among 18 civilians killed when terrorists shelled a Kurdish neighborhood in the northern city of Aleppo.

The attack by Ahrar al-Sham, which is allied to al-Qaeda in Syria, targeted the Sheikh Maqsd neighborhood which houses some 50,000 residents, it said.

The observatory said the attack was "a very clear violation of the ceasefire" in place in Syria.



Syrian forces celebrate in al-Qaryatayn after they regained control of the central town from ISIL terrorists.

The agreement stipulates the cessation of all military hostilities, except for the operations against the Takfiri ISIL terrorist group and the al-Qaeda-linked al-Nusra Front.

On Tuesday, a Syrian warplane was shot down in Aleppo by a

surface-to-air missile fired by al-Nusra terrorists, who then captured its pilot.

Syrian forces have recently been making rapid advances against terrorists, who are committing heinous crimes against all religious

groups, in parts of the country.

ISIL terrorists launched attacks on government-held areas near Damascus overnight on Tuesday in an apparent response to the group's loss of ground elsewhere in Syria, Reuters reported.

U.S. ... (Continued From Page One)

Kerry was asked Tuesday during an interview on MSNBC about the recent effort by the Obama administration to give Iran limited access to the dollar currency.

"It's fair for Iran to get what it deserves because it kept its part of the bargain to date, with respect to the nuclear agreement."

"We've in fact tried to work to make sure that the banks that are supposed to be doing legitimate business with respect to the transactions that are okay after the agreement, that they're operating," the top U.S. diplomat added.

"Iran deserves the benefits of the agreement they struck. And President Obama has said it, I've said it, U.S. (Treasury) Secretary (Jack) Lew has said it."

Washington has already come under fire from Tehran for dragging its feet on the removal of sanctions under the nuclear deal.

Iran and the P5+1 finalized the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in Vienna, Austria, on July 14, 2015. They started to implement the JCPOA on January 16, 2016.

Under the agreement, limits are put on Iran's nuclear activities in exchange for, among other things, the removal of all nuclear-related economic sanctions against the Islamic Republic.

A group of Republican senators last month unveiled legislation that requires the administration to sanction every sector of Iran's economy that supports the country's ballistic missile program.

Russia... (Continued From Page One)

2231 does not prohibit Iran from buying fighter jets, and its language is not legally binding and cannot be enforced with punitive measures.

Su-30 is a multirole advanced fighter aircraft for all-weather, air-to-air and air-to-surface deep interdiction missions.

Iran and the P5+1 finalized the nuclear agreement, dubbed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in Vienna, Austria, in July last year. They started to implement the JCPOA on January 16, 2016.

On Tuesday, a senior Russian diplomat also said Moscow would begin the first shipment of its S-300 air defense missile systems to Iran in the coming days.

"I don't know if this will happen today, but they (S-300 missiles) will be loaded (for shipment to Iran)," Interfax quoted Zamir Kabulov, a department chief at the Foreign Ministry, as saying.

Russia cancelled a contract to deliver the advanced anti-missile rocket system to Iran in 2010 under pressure from the West following UN sanctions imposed on Iran over its nuclear program.

Tehran agreed the deal on curbing its nuclear work in July last year and sanctions were lifted in January.

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exploitation by French troops in the conflict-ridden Central African Republic (CAR).

According to the United Nations, more than 100 victims have so far come forward in the CAR with appalling new accounts of sexual abuse by UN peacekeepers and French troops.

On March 30, the Code Blue Campaign run by the advocacy group AIDS-Free World issued a statement saying that three victims claim they and a fourth girl were "tied up and undressed inside a camp by a military commander from the Sangaris force (the French military intervention in CAR) and forced to have sex with a dog" in 2014.

The advocacy group added that each girl was then given 5,000 Central Af-

rican Francs (\$8.6). While three girls sought basic treatment following the abuse, a fourth girl is reported to have later died of an unknown disease.

Also on Tuesday, UN Undersecretary-General Atul Khare called for the "strongest" disciplinary action against those peacekeepers found guilty of sexual abuse in the CAR.

"We count on all member states to live up to their responsibilities to expeditiously bring to justice those who have committed crimes while serving with the United Nations and to impose the strongest of disciplinary and criminal sanctions warranted under their national laws," he said.

The CAR plunged into crisis in December 2013, when anti-balaka militia began coordinated attacks against the Seleka group, which had toppled the government in March that year.

France effectively invaded the CAR, a former French colony, after the UN Security Council adopted a resolution giving the African Union and France the go-ahead to send troops to the country.

Europol... (Continued From Page One)

think Brussels as well who have a criminal background, a lifestyle albeit low-level," Wainwright said.

Citing the most recent available figures, the report said cannabis led in 2013 with 38% of the market, followed by heroin at 28%, cocaine at 24%, amphetamines at 8.0% and ecstasy at 3.0%.

After several years that saw a drop in the quantity of heroin seized mainly from Turkish, Albanian-speaking and Pakistani crime syndicates, supply picked up in 2013 while street prices decreased, it said.

The report estimated the number of heroin users at 1.3 million in Europe, with the annual retail market worth some 6.8 billion euros.

Wainwright said heroine production is moving within the EU, "with laboratories converting morphine into heroin that have been identified now in several EU member states including Spain and the Czech Republic."

The report said heroin is increasingly trafficked via routes involving Africa, the southern Caucasus, Syria and Iraq.

Wholesale importation of cocaine into Europe, with some 3.6 million users and an annual market value of 5.7 billion euros, remains dominated by Colombian and Italian groups, although Nigerian and Balkan dealers are gaining a foothold.

Cocaine dealers "not only use corrupt lawyers and accountants... but are believed to engage in the systematic recruitment of corrupt workers at all major seaports and airports in the EU," the report said.

It listed cocaine smuggling in maritime containers as "a major threat".

West... (Continued From Page 2)

HMX (octogen) explosives are used to increase the efficiency of different missiles and air defense weapons.

Octogen is a powerful and relatively insensitive nitroamine high explosive used almost exclusively in military applications, including as a solid rocket propellant.

It is usually utilized in different missiles, air defense weapons, anti-armor weapons, and marine weaponry, and enhances their effectiveness and efficiency.

Iranian military experts and technicians have in recent years made great headways in manufacturing a broad range of indigenous equipment, making the armed forces self-sufficient in the arms sphere.

Tehran has always assured other nations that its military might poses no threat to the regional countries, saying that the Islamic Republic's defense doctrine is entirely based on deterrence.

Bahraini Forces Attack Protesters After Teenager's Funeral

MANAMA (Press TV) – Bahraini regime forces have clashed with demonstrators holding a rally to denounce the death of a 17-year-old teenager who succumbed to injuries he sustained in a police chase.

Protesters on Tuesday took to the streets in the town of Shahrakan, located on the outskirts of Manama, to condemn the killing of Ali Abdulghani, who died of his wounds in a hospital in the capital four

days after he was reportedly overrun by a police vehicle.

The demonstrators blocked a road with a large waste drum which they set ablaze and hurled stones at security forces. Police used tear gas to disperse the protesters.

According to witnesses and a report from the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD), police on March 31 stormed a property belonging to the victim's aunt while Abdulghani was present. Abdulghani fled the scene as the police attempted to arrest him.

Later in the day, he was seen and photographed while lying on the ground "with blood spilt from a serious head injury". The victim was then transferred to the Bahrain Defense Forces Hospital.

Bahrain's Interior Ministry has made no comment about the incident yet.

Bahrain's main opposition group, al-Wefaq, has described the circumstances surrounding Abdulghani's death as "vague."

Prominent opposition figures, including senior member of al-Wefaq Seyyed Jamil Kazim, issued a message, saying the teenager died as a result of the government's insistence on using security measures against political demands by the public.

Kazim urged the government to heed popular calls for change.

Rights organizations, including the European Centre for Democracy and Human Rights, have demanded an immediate and impartial investigation into Abdulghani's death, saying the injuries had been inflicted during his arrest.



Mourners hold photos of Ali Abdulghani during his funeral in the village of Dar Kulaib, Bahrain.

Hamas Official Warns of 'Explosion' in Gaza

GAZA STRIP (Press TV) – A senior Hamas official has warned of an "explosion" in the Gaza Strip amid Israel's siege of the impoverished enclave.

Much of Gaza remains in shambles since Israel's war against the coastal territory in summer 2014, which killed more than 2,500 people and wreaked huge destruction across the strip.

Since 2007, Israel and Egypt have imposed a blockade on Gaza which has one of the world's highest unemployment rates and poverty is widespread.

Israel on Monday announced it had stopped private imports of cement to the enclave, accusing

Hamas of diverting supplies.

Hamas denied the accusation, saying the imports were in line with a UN-brokered Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism, aimed at allowing for reconstruction following Israel's three devastating wars since 2008.

Robert Piper, the UN humanitarian coordinator for the Palestinian territories, also said he did not have the evidence to support the Israeli accusation.

Imad al-Baz, deputy director of the Economy Ministry in Gaza, said the Hamas government doesn't interfere with the cement mechanism.

He said all cement distribution sites in Gaza are monitored by Israeli cameras.

Baz warned that Israel's decision would have "dire consequences."

"If Israel continues to prevent the supply of cement to Gaza, the situation will explode in the face of the occupation and it will bear the responsibility," he said.

The decision would be "stopping the wheels of reconstruction, destroying the economy and increasing unemployment with adverse repercussions for tens of thousands of citizens," Baz added.

Iraqi Security Forces Control 70% of Heet

BAGHDAD (FNA) – Iraqi officials revealed that the country's security forces gained the control of more than 70% of Heet in the Western province of Ramadi, saying that they expect to capture the remaining parts of the strategic city in the next few hours.

"The security forces continue the operation to liberate the city

of Heet," the Head of Heet city council, Mohammed Mohannad al-Heeti said in a brief statement.

"ISIL is now in control of less than 30% of the city, and those areas do not exceed five square kilometers," he pointed out.

The official added that remnants of ISIL terrorists in Heet are currently besieged, and the

next few hours will be crucial for the military troops who managed to advance in all the directions around the city of Heet and cross the Euphrates River.

Since early this week, Iraqi security forces have been taking control of more districts in the city of Heet in Iraq's Western province of Anbar from ISIL

militants.

The Iraqi security forces continued to impose their control over more districts across the city of Heet and, yesterday, managed to liberate the city's main government compound, Al-Sa'a roundabout, Al-M'lamin neighborhood and Courthouse of the city.