

BAGHDAD (FNA) – Iraqi army troops backed by volunteer forces thwarted a chlorine gas attack by the ISIL terrorists in Nineveh Province.

Commander of Nineveh Operations said Iraqi forces foiled ISIL's gas attack near al-Nasr village to the South of the city of Mosul.

There have been reports that the Takfiri militants used internationally banned chlorine gas during attacks in areas near the Central city of Ramadi, the provincial capital of Anbar, in July 2015.

'Yemeni Rocket Kills 70 Saudi Mercenaries in Jawf'



A Saudi soldier from an artillery unit walks near ammunition at a position close to the Saudi-Yemeni border, in the kingdom's southwestern Jizan Province.

SANAA (Press TV) – Yemeni forces have killed scores of Saudi mercenaries in the war-hit country's northern province of al-Jawf, local reports say.

According to a report on Yemen's al-Masirah news website, the rocket hit a building belonging to Saudi mercenaries late Tuesday and killed 70 of them. At least 100 others were injured in the attack, it

said. Local sources said the death toll may increase as the position was targeted while the mercenaries were distributing arms and munitions among themselves.

Saudi warplanes bombed an area in al-Zabab region in southern Yemen and the Hayran city in the northwestern province of Hajjah, al-Masirah reported without say-

ing if there were any casualties.

Meanwhile, Saudi state television said that three people were killed in shelling by Yemeni forces on the kingdom's southern province of Jizan.

The report said the shelling happened around 5 p.m. Tuesday and the child died at a local hospital.

The attacks came despite a ceasefire announced by both Houthi and

Saudi officials.

On Monday, Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir said that a Houthi delegation was in the Arab kingdom to hold peace discussions.

A Houthi spokesman, Mohammed Abdulsalam, said on Tuesday a ceasefire was reached with Saudi Arabia to halt operations in a number of Yemeni provinces.

He said the truce would pave the way for peace talks between Ansarullah and former president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi's loyalists.

Last month, the UN special envoy to Yemen, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, announced that the former government and the Houthi Ansarullah movement had agreed to halt hostilities on April 10 ahead of a new round of peace talks to be held in Kuwait on April 18.

Saudi Arabia is under growing pressure as its protracted war has ground into a no-win situation. In February, Saudi military spokesman Brigadier General Ahmed Asiri acknowledged that the kingdom was stuck in a "static war" against its southern neighbor.

Riyadh is also coming under an unprecedented chorus of criticism from around the world over rising civilian casualties and destruction in Yemen.

Syria Mufti: Terrorists Offered Peace in Return for Concessions to Zionist Regime



Syria's Grand Mufti Sheikh Ahmad Badreddin Hassoun

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – Syria's Grand Mufti Sheikh Ahmad Badreddin Hassoun says Damascus has been repeatedly offered a deal according to which the terrorists would cease their hostilities against the government if it made concessions to the Zionist regime.

Since the outbreak of the foreign-backed militancy five years ago, the Syrian government has been receiving offers to make a tit-for-tat deal to end the crisis, Hassoun said in an interview with the Lebanese al-Mayadeen TV channel.

Since 2011, "we have been receiving unofficial offers to make a deal that would end it: 'If you announce you would end hostilities against Israel and if you expel the Palestinian resistance from your territory and cut your relations with Hezbollah, we would stop fighting against you.'"

The grand mufti lashed out at terrorist groups fighting against the

Damascus government, saying they serve the joint Israeli-Western bid to ruin Syria.

"While previously it was France and Britain who divided Sham (Greater Syria) according to 'political borders', those who hit Sham today are Muslims who lost their mind and decided to prevent it from becoming a starting point for the liberation of al-Quds (Jerusalem)," Hassoun stated.

The senior Muslim cleric said the foreign-sponsored Takfiri groups who are killing Muslims in the name of God "do not understand that they serve the interests of Israel."

He further called on those who join terrorist groups operating in Syria to go to Palestine to fight the Tel Aviv regime instead.

Referring to Takfiris, Hassoun said "40,000 Muslims from Europe are fighting in Syria. Why do none of them go to fight in Palestine?"

'Turkey Seeking to Strip Citizenship of Terror Supporters'

ANKARA (Press TV) – Turkey says it will devocate a new rule enabling the revocation of the citizenship of those found to be supporting terrorism.

Turkish Justice Minister Bekir Bozdog made the announcement on Wednesday, adding that authorities would also be examining a reported leakage of sensitive identity data affecting some 50 million Turks. The figure equals about 64 percent of the country's population.

He, however, did not explain how and if the alleged leakage of the information was related to Ankara's plan to identify "terror supporters."

A day earlier, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan had said Ankara "must" consider stripping citizenships to prevent the

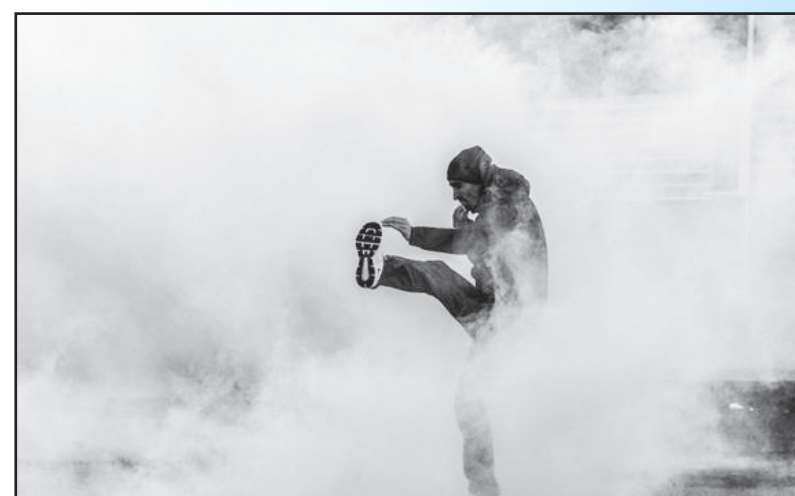
supporters of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) from doing harm. "These people don't deserve to be our citizens," he had asserted.

The PKK seeks to establish an independent state in Turkey's southeast.

The country has been engaged in a large-scale military campaign against the group in its southern border region in the past few months. The Turkish military has also been conducting offensives against PKK positions in northern Iraq.

According to the Turkish Human Rights Foundation, around 200 civilians, including 39 children, have been killed in military operations against the PKK since last August.

Erdogan has called for the



A protester kicks a teargas canister during a demonstration to denounce security operations against Kurdish militants, in the city of Diyarbakir in southeastern Turkey.

definition of terrorism to be expanded to include journalists, activists, and others who "exploit

their positions, pens, and titles and put them at terrorists' disposal."

'Terrorists Continue Shelling Kurdish Area in Syria's Aleppo'

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – A monitoring group says Takfiri terrorists continue to shell a Kurdish area in the city of Aleppo in northern Syria, in a blatant violation of a shaky ceasefire agreement.

The so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said that terrorists affiliated with Ahrar al-Sham, an al-Qaeda-linked group, and other terrorist groups continued their attacks against Sheikh Maqsd neighborhood on Wednesday.

The observatory's head, Rami

Abdel Rahman, said the Takfiri terrorists aim to capture the neighborhood, which overlooks areas controlled by the Damascus government, in order to have "a launching pad for attacks" on government troops.

Wednesday's attacks come a day after some 18 civilians were killed in terrorist attacks on the same neighborhood.

"A major shelling attack on Tuesday has left 18 civilians dead, including three children and two

women, a pregnant one and an elderly one," the Observatory said, adding that 70 people, including 30 children, were also injured in the assault.

Abdel Rahman described the attack as "a very clear violation of the ceasefire" brokered by the US and Russia, which took effect on February 27.

The news comes as the Syrian troops, backed by the Russian warplanes, have made major advances in several fronts across the country,

especially in the strategic province of Aleppo.

Syria has been gripped by foreign-backed militancy since March 2011. According to the UN, at least 270,000 people have been killed in the conflict. Some reports, however, put the death toll at as high as 470,000.

The Syrian army has vowed to press ahead with its counter-terror military operations to drive ISIL elements out of their major strongholds in the conflict-ridden country.

Kuwait Signs Deal to Buy 28 Eurofighter Jets

KUWAIT CITY (AP) – Kuwait has finalized a multi-billion-dollar deal with an Italian defense company to buy 28 Eurofighter jets after a report said military spending by Persian Gulf Arabs inflated a record bill of \$1.7 trillion.

The contract between the Persian Gulf monarchy and Finmeccanica, which is worth between 7 billion and 8 billion euros, was signed on Tuesday.

The sale was first agreed in September 2015 between Kuwait and the Eurofighter consortium, including Finmeccanica, France's planemaker Airbus and Britain's BAE Systems.

The company's chief executive, Mauro Moretti, said the deal is the company's "largest ever commercial achievement." The Rome-based firm receives about half of the total values.

Kuwait's Defense Ministry said in a statement earlier that the first two jets will arrive in Kuwait in 2019 and the final delivery will be in 2022. It added that the jets would be operational until 2050.

The deal came as the Stockholm International Peace Research In-

stitute (SIPRI) said in a report on Tuesday that the global military spending increased to USD 1.7 trillion in 2015, driven by military spending of Persian Gulf states.

Figures released by SIPRI showed that Western countries spent less on arms last year compared to 2014 while Persian Gulf states increased their military spending.

Saudi Arabia spent USD 87.2 billion on arms last year, double what it paid in 2006. The kingdom moved past Russia for the third spot in the world, SIPRI said.

The United States with USD 596 billion, decreasing by 2.4 percent, and China with USD 215 billion came in first and second respectively in the annual report.

Riyadh's spending came as the kingdom is involved in crackdown on demonstrations in the country's Shia-dominated regions.

It has also deployed troops to Bahrain to help the Manama regime suppress anti-regime protests there. Saudi Arabia also launched a military campaign against Yemen last year.