

DOHA (Reuters) – Qatar accused the United Arab Emirates on Friday of seizing a fishing boat and forcing its eight occupants to enter Emirati waters at gunpoint, the latest accusation in a nine-month row between the Persian Gulf neighbors. The UAE, along with Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Egypt, imposed travel, diplomatic and trade sanctions on Qatar last June, accusing it of supporting terrorism. Qatar denies that charge and says the four adversaries aim to curtail its sovereignty. Qatar’s permanent representative to the United Nations informed the UN Secretary General and Security Council President that its marine surveillance had observed a UAE naval ship obstruct and then commandeer the Qatari fishing boat on Jan. 19, a foreign ministry statement said.

Certainly, this world is a house of truth for those who look into it carefully, an abode of peace and rest for those who understand its ways and moods and it is the best working ground for those who want to procure rewards for life in the Hereafter.

Amir al-Momeneen Ali (AS)

# Truckloads of Aid Start Entering Syria’s Eastern Ghouta



This picture taken on March 8, 2018 shows Syrians walking down a street past rubble from destroyed buildings, in the terrorist-held town of Douma in the Eastern Ghouta enclave on the outskirts of Damascus.

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – A total of 13 truckloads of aid started entering the terrorist-held Douma district in the capital Damascus’ Eastern Ghouta countryside Friday, Red Cross spokesperson told Xinhua.

The 13 truckloads are part of the 46 trucks that entered Douma a few days before but couldn’t be unloaded at the time due to the situation on ground, Inji Sedky, the spokesperson of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said.

Activists said the 13 truckloads had to leave Douma due to government shelling, while the gov-

ernment says the rebels shelling hindered the full offload of the remaining trucks before they prepared again to enter Douma on Friday.

The convoy was supposed to deliver its relief supplies on Monday, but it could not enter the area due to heavy fighting.

The ICRC is preparing additional supplies, including medical material, to be sent in a bigger convoy next week.

Bilal Abu Salah, a resident of Douma said, “The situation is relatively good today,” but added that shortages are still acute, causing great hardship. “Entire families eat

one meal in several days,” he said.

Eastern Ghouta, a besieged area on the outskirts of Damascus with a population of some 400,000 people, has witnessed deadly violence over the past few weeks, with Takfiri terrorists launching mortar attacks on the Syrian capital in the face of an imminent humiliating defeat.

Last week, army troops secured a safe corridor set up for the evacuation of civilians via the al-Wafideen checkpoint, through which a UN aid convoy, consisting 46 truckloads of health, food and nutrition supplies, crossed into Eastern Ghouta and headed for the main town

of Douma.

Russia, which is helping Damascus curb foreign-backed militancy in the Arab country, has designated four safe routes in Eastern Ghouta after a ceasefire was declared across Syria by the UN Security Council.

That ceasefire does not apply to the fight against terrorists and their affiliates.

The Syrian army is making steady advances in the enclave, but it is facing a hostile West, which is threatening airstrikes to stop the push. President Bashar al-Assad vowed last week that Syrian forces would continue the campaign until the whole area is retaken.

German politicians in Syria

Separately, a group of seven politicians from the Alternative for Germany (AfD) party has visited Syria to examine the situation on the ground for themselves, saying mainstream media do not provide an accurate coverage of what is really happening in the Arab country.

“We have set out to Syria in order to receive information about the humanitarian situation in the country on-site. We do not rely exclusively on media coverage, which paints a horrifying picture of the developments, we want to find out what the living conditions are,” Christian Blex, an AfD parliamentarian from the western state of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) told Sputnik.

The delegation entered Syria from Lebanon on March 5, with its first destination being the country’s capital, Damascus, where they met with religious figures.

## Daesh Claims Blast in Afghan Capital

CAIRO (Dispatches) – Daesh claimed a bomb attack in the Afghan capital Kabul on Friday which killed at least seven people in a crowd gathered to commemorate a political leader from the mainly Shia Hazara minority.

The group gave no evidence for its claim, which it published online via its Amaq news agency.

At least seven people were killed and seven more injured in a bomb attack near a Shia mosque in the Afghan capital, Kabul.

The casualties were caused after

an attacker, who had been stopped at a nearby security checkpoint, set off an explosive device he was carrying, said Nasrat Rahimi, a deputy Interior Ministry spokesman.

The fatalities comprised one policeman and six civilians, while the wounded were all civilians, AFP reported.

Rahimi said the assailant apparently sought to target crowds comprising members of Afghanistan’s Shia Hazara community. They had gathered to commemo-

rate Abdul Ali Mazari, a Hazara political leader killed by the Taliban militant group in 1995.

No group has so far claimed responsibility for the deadly assault.

The Hazara community, the poorest of the country’s ethnic groups, accounts for about 22 percent of Afghanistan’s population.

Its members have been targeted in several large-scale kidnappings and killings across Afghanistan in the past, prompting demonstra-

tions and sit-ins in Kabul and elsewhere.

Last December, dozens were killed in an attack on a Shia cultural center claimed by the Daesh terror group, which has been growing in size and expanding its operations in the country over the past two years.

Daesh terrorists and Taliban militants also massacred dozens of civilians, mostly Shia Hazaras, during an attack on a village in Afghanistan’s northern province of Sar-e Pol last August.

### Palestinian FM:

## Arabs’ Failure to Take Action Encouraged U.S. Move on al-Quds

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad al-Maliki has criticized the Arab states’ indifference towards the Palestinian conflict over the past decades, arguing that their failure to carry out concrete actions encouraged the United States to continue its “unfortunate approach” and declare al-Quds as the “capital” of the Zionist regime.

“Our failure has also given a small country like Guatemala the green light to decide to relocate its embassy to al-Quds,” Maliki told Palestine’s official WAFA news agency.

He added that Guatemalan Foreign Minister Sandra Jovel would not reverse her decision to move her country’s diplomatic mission from Tel Aviv to al-Quds, “simply because she is fully aware that Arab countries do not have any means to pressure Guatemala to overturn its measure.”

“Guatemala’s impertinence stems only from the fact that Arabs have failed to execute any of the decisions that they have taken for so many years. If we are unable to carry out such decisions, how could we prevent Guatemala or any other country from taking such a step on al-Quds,” Maliki pointed out.

Guatemala’s President Jimmy Morales has announced that the Central American country’s embassy will be moved to Jerusalem on

May 16, two days after the United States is scheduled to do the same.

Speaking on Monday at the annual American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) conference in Washington, DC, Morales said that the embassy move “strongly evidences Guatemala’s continued support and solidarity with Israel.”

The occupied Palestinian territories have witnessed a new wave of tension ever since Trump announced his decision on December 6 last year to recognize al-Quds as the regime’s capital and relocate the U.S. embassy in the occupied territories from Tel Aviv to the occupied city.

## Zionist Regime Holding Joint Military Drill With U.S.



U.S. army officers stand in front a U.S. Patriot missile system during a joint military exercise with the Zionist regime at the Hatzor Airforce Base on March 8, 2018.

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – Thousands of American and Zionist troops are holding a month-long joint military exercise in the occupied territories amid the Tel Aviv regime’s rising threats of a new war against Lebanon.

U.S. and Zionist officials said they had launched the so-called Juniper Cobra 2018 military drill that simulates a missile attack on the Israeli-occupied territories.

Some 2,500 troops, including 1,400 marines and 1,100 naval personnel from the U.S. European Command (USEUCOM) as well as 2,000 Zionist troops are taking part in the biennial drill, in what is said to be the largest joint combat exercise between the Zionist regime and the U.S.

Two U.S. Navy vessels have taken up positions off the coast of Israel and will be taking part in the exercise.

During the ninth Juniper Cobra military exercise, the U.S. and Zionist troops will train on the long-range Arrow and Patriot missile systems, the medium-range David’s Sling, and the short-range Iron Dome.

Since 2001, Israeli and U.S. forces have conducted a total of eight Juniper Cobra joint combat exercises, including the most recent exercise in February 2016.

Israeli air force commander B.G. Tzavik Haimovich said the drill “will serve as an opportunity” for

Israel’s military “to enhance operational capabilities in the face of high-trajectory threats.”

“In the coming weeks we will train together to face complex and challenging scenarios, which are relevant to the dynamic range of threats that we must be prepared to face,” he said.

Lt. Col. Tal Kaduri, head of cooperation for Israel’s air force, also said the main goal of Juniper Cobra is to see how both forces can answer what he claimed to be “the evolving threats that Iran is posing.”

The exercise comes as Israel has recently stepped up its threats against Lebanon, prompting speculation that a new Israeli act of aggression is on the horizon.

The Zionist regime waged two all-out wars against Lebanon — in 2000 and 2006 — but fell short of its military objectives in both cases in the face of strong resistance by Lebanon’s Hezbollah resistance movement and national army.

Earlier this month, the Israeli military’s Major General Yaakov Barak said the next war on Lebanon would focus on killing Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, the Hezbollah head, among other goals.

Any future war, he added, is expected to be very different from previous ones, and that Israeli ground forces are “ready and prepared” to be sent into the Lebanese territory more quickly, widely and deeply than before.

### Turkish President:

## Syria’s Afrin Under Siege, Entry Imminent

ANKARA (Dispatches) – Turkey’s military and its militant allies have besieged the northern Syrian town of Afrin and were nearing its town center, President Tayyip Erdogan said on Friday, in what would mark a major advance in Turkey’s military operation.

Turkey launched its operation, dubbed “Olive Branch”, in northern Syria nearly seven weeks ago to sweep the Syrian Kurdish YPG from the Turkish border. Turkey sees the YPG as a terrorist group and an extension of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK).

On Thursday, Turkish forces and their Free Syrian Army (FSA) allies seized control of the nearby town of Jinderes, state media reported. Turkey now controls five out of seven of the settlements in the northwest Afrin region, state media said.

“Now the center of Afrin is surrounded and our entry is imminent,” Erdogan said in televised speech in Ankara.

“We are removing the last remaining obstacles standing before our besieging of Afrin city center,” he said, adding there was still about six kilometers (3.7 miles) to go to reach Afrin from the outskirts of Jinderes.

The armed forces will push on after operations in Afrin and Manbij, further east, to sweep Syrian Kurdish fighters from the length of Turkey’s border with Syria, President Tayyip Erdogan said on Friday.

“We are in Afrin today, we will be in Manbij tomorrow. The next day we will ensure that the east of Euphrates will be cleared of terrorist up to the Iraqi border.”

Erdogan’s repeated threats to push on to Manbij have caused complications with NATO ally the United States, which has its troops deployed in the area.

Turkey has been infuriated by U.S. support for the YPG. Washington has backed the group in the fight against Daesh terrorists.