

## Taliban Kill 13 in Afghanistan's Balkh

KABUL (Dispatches) – Taliban militants in Afghanistan have killed more than a dozen people in Afghanistan's northern Balkh Province.

The Taliban militants stormed a mosque where the group had gathered, local government sources said. Local hospital officials reported inspecting the bullet-riddled bodies of 13 people. Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said the Taliban militants had been responsible for the attack. He said 12 people, including three commanders of what he said were local militia forces hired by the government to maintain security in the region, had been killed, and another one was wounded in the attack.

No deal is more profitable than good deeds; no profit is greater than Divine Reward; no abstinence is better than to restrain one's mind from doubts (about religion); no virtue is better than refraining from prohibited deeds;

Amir al-Momeneen Ali (AS)

## Iraqi Spokesman:

# U.S. Had No Role in Mosul Victories



Members of Hashd al-Sha'abi gather in a street in the modern town of Hatra, near the eponymous UNESCO-listed ancient city, southwest of the northern city of Mosul, on April 28, 2017.

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) – An Iraqi military spokesman says the U.S. had no role in the Arab country's recapture of Mosul despite Western reports characterizing American troops as leading the operation to retake the city from Daesh.

Recent gains in the Old City of Mosul have brought Iraqi troops closer to victory against Daesh, with the three branches of the country's security forces fighting the last remnants of the terrorist group.

The spokesman for Hashd al-Sha'abi fighters Karim al-Nouri told Iran's Mehr News Agency that "a few remaining terrorists are awaiting their deaths and this is definite."

"Washington wants to have a share in the final victory announcement against Daesh and benefit from it, but I have to emphasize that this victory was won by the Iraqi people and the United States did not play any role in it," he said.

Hashd al-Shaabi fighters, incorporating mem-

bers of all ethnic and religious groups, have joined government forces in operations against Daesh across the country. They were given legal status by Iraq's Parliament last November.

Hashd troops, Nouri said, have helped re-establish security in Iraq and prevent Mosul's break-up along ethnic lines.

"This is because Turkey and some of the local parties sought to break up Mosul, but Hashd al-Sha'abi foiled their plot. It also did not allow the conspiracy of the enemies to divide Mosul and other parts of the region to realize."

Nouri said all of the liberated areas will be under the control of the Iraqi government like before the Daesh terrorist attack, adding there will be no

The Hashd al-Sha'abi spokesman further praised Iran and the commander of the Quds Force General Qassem Soleimani for their role in Iraq's victories.

"Iran was the first country to stand with Iraq and support us. General Qassem Soleimani has been and continues to serve as the best adviser on the battlefield against Daesh," he said.

Meanwhile, The Iraqi premier has thanked top Shia cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani for his contribution to the fight against Daesh terrorists, saying his 2014 religious decree (fatwa), which mobilized volunteer forces behind army troops on the battlefield, "saved" the Arab state.

In June 2014, shortly after Daesh unleashed its terror campaign in Iraq, Ayatollah Sistani issued a fatwa calling on all Iraqi citizens to defend their country.

## Russia:

# Diplomacy Needed in Persian Gulf Dispute

MOSCOW (Dispatches) – Russian President Vladimir Putin has stressed the need for diplomacy to end the dispute between Qatar and several other Persian Gulf states.

"Vladimir Putin stressed the importance of political-diplomatic efforts aimed at overcoming differences of opinion and the normalization of the difficult situation that exists," said a statement released by the Kremlin.

While noting that the conversation was initiated by Qatar and Bahrain, it noted that boosting cooperation in the field of energy and investment was also discussed.

Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates severed diplomatic ties and cut all land, sea, and air contacts with Qatar on June 5. The four countries accused Qatar of supporting terrorism and destabilizing the region, al-

legations denied by Doha.

The countries later issued a list of demands for Qatar to meet in return for the normalization of ties. Among them was that Qatar should shut down Al Jazeera, a media network that has reportedly been critical especially of Saudi Arabia, close a Turkish military base, limit its ties with Iran, and "compensate" the sanctioning countries.

Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani told reporters in Rome that his country would reject the demands, noting that the ultimatum was aimed not at tackling terrorism but at undermining Qatar's sovereignty.

"This list of demands is to be rejected, not to be accepted. We are willing to engage in dialogue but under proper conditions," he said.

Ankara, which has supported Doha throughout the crisis, resists pressure to close its military base in Qatar. Turkey has dispatched hundreds of aid flights and even a cargo ship of food to Qatar during the blockade.

A Turkish presidential spokesman has expressed hope about the likelihood of finding a solution to the ongoing crisis between Qatar and several Arab countries.

"There are some indications that a solution is possible. This is our general impression. We need to continue efforts to take measures that go in the right direction," Ibrahim Kalin said.

Kalin made the remarks after Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan held talks with Qatari Defense Minister Khalid bin Mohammad al-Attiyah at the headquarters of the AKP ruling party in Ankara.

## Blasts, Mortar Rounds Hit Syrian Capital



Smoke billows from several explosions in Syria's capital of Damascus on July 2, 2017.

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – A car bomb and two booby-trap explosions have hit Syria's capital Damascus, killing at least 20 people and injuring a number of others.

Syria's state television reported on Sunday that a car bomb had gone off at Bilal Mosque near Tahrir Square. It said the bomber detonated his payload after being surrounded by security forces.

Security forces also chased and detonated two other explosives-laden vehicles before they reached their targets.

Damascus Governor Bashr al-Sabban said the attackers were heading to the city center where they hoped to cause maximum damage.

Meanwhile, Minister of Local Administration Hussein Makhoul said the response marked a "major success" in foiling the plot to cause mass casualties.

Two booby-traps were also set off near the city's al-Baitarah Square and Shuhada' School.

A mortar round further landed in the area between the al-Saadat and Bab al-Salam neighborhoods, while several others hit the Bab Touma Borough and Baghdad Square at the capital's al-Qadir

Square.

The violence came a day after at least five civilians lost their lives when the U.S.-led coalition purportedly fighting the Daesh terrorist group carried out an airstrike against Syria's troubled northeastern province of Hama.

The aerial attack had targeted al-Hussein village, located more than 650 kilometers northeast of the capital Damascus on Saturday afternoon, Lebanon-based Arabic-language al-Manar television network reported.

The airstrike came only two days after the so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said U.S.-led airstrikes had hit the village of al-Dablan, located about 20 kilometers southeast of Mayadin town, leaving at least 30 civilians dead and dozens more injured.

Damascus has been largely immune to rampant violence by foreign-backed terrorist groups, which have been operating in the country since 2011.

In recent days, Syrian troops and allied forces have been fighting to drive terrorists out of Ain Terma and adjacent Jobar, on the city's eastern outskirts.

## Zionist Regime Targets Syrian Artillery Position

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – The Zionist regime has attacked Syrian military positions once again in response to alleged errant mortar fire from Syria's Golan Heights.

"In response to projectiles launched earlier today at Israel from Syria, Israeli forces targeted the Syrian military artillery position that was the source of the previous fire," read a statement released by the Tel Aviv regime.

It added that both of errant rounds which landed in the occupied Golan Heights were the "result of internal fighting in Syria."

No casualties have been reported from either of the incidents.

"Israel holds the Syrian regime responsible for any breach of its borders and will act accordingly," read a statement released earlier by Tel Aviv.

The incident was the sixth time in over ten days that the occupy-

ing regime attacked Syrian positions, claiming their move to be in response to errant mortar fire.

The Golan Heights has been tense since foreign-backed terrorists gripped the Arab country in 2011, claiming the lives of hundreds of thousands of people so far.

During the past few years, the regime has frequently attacked military targets in Syria in what is considered an attempt to prop up terrorist groups that have been suffering heavy defeats against Syrian government forces.

Damascus says the Zionist regime and its Western and regional allies are aiding terrorist groups operating inside the Arab country, while the regime's military carries out such sporadic strikes against Syrian government forces. The occupying regime has even set up field hospitals to treat wounded terrorists evacuated from Syria.

## 'Cholera Outbreak Killed 1,500 in Yemen in 2 Months'

SANAA (Dispatches) – The cholera outbreak in war-torn Yemen has killed 1,500 people since late April while a total of 246,000 suspected cases of the disease have been reported over the past two months, the World Health Organization says.

WHO's representative in Yemen, Nevio Zagaria, made the remarks during press conference in the capital Sana'a, adding that the number of suspected cases has multiplied tenfold over the past two months.

According to WHO figures, the number of people killed by cholera in Yemen was 1,300 two weeks ago while the number of suspected cases was over 200,000 people.

This is the second rapid outbreak of Cholera in Yemen over the past six months.

The UN health agency said a quarter of those killed by the Cholera outbreak are children.

Last month, the United Nations

children's agency warned that the number of Yemenis infected with cholera would rise to more than 300,000 by the end of August.

Cholera is an acute diarrheal infection that is spread through contaminated food or water. It can be effectively treated with the immediate replacement of lost fluids and salts, but without treatment it can be fatal.

Meanwhile, a two-year Saudi-led war on the Arab world's poorest country has severely damaged infrastructure and caused medicine shortages in Yemen.

Saudi Arabia has led a brutal military campaign against Yemen since two years ago in a bid to eliminate the Houthi Ansarullah movement and reinstall the Riyadh-friendly former president, Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi. The Saudi military campaign has, however, failed to achieve its goals.



Yemenis suspected of being infected with cholera receive treatment at a makeshift hospital in Sana'a on May 25, 2017.

The protracted war has already killed over 12,000 Yemenis, with the US and the UK assisting the Saudis in the aggression.

Cholera infection first became epidemic in Yemen last October and spread until December, when it dwindled. The second outbreak be-

gan in the Arabian Peninsula country on April 27.

Latest UN figures show that the conflict in Yemen has left 18.8 million of the country's 28 million population in need of humanitarian aid and almost seven million on the brink of famine.