

As Relations Thaw

Riyadh Pledges to Cooperate With Baghdad ‘Against Daesh’

RIYADH (Dispatches) – Saudi Arabia and Iraq convened a new joint body to coordinate their fight against Daesh terrorists and on rebuilding Iraqi territory wrested from the group, the Saudi King Salman and Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi said in Riyadh on Sunday.

The rare senior meeting, signaling a thaw between states that have been at loggerheads for decades, was also attended by U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, who praised the accord between the two close U.S. allies.

“The joint coordination council will not only lead to closer cooperation in the fight against Daesh, but will also help support the rehabilitation of facilities and infrastructure in the areas liberated,” Tillerson told reporters.

“The council will also contribute to reforms that will grow and diversify Iraq’s private sector. Such reforms will encourage the foreign investment that is vital to Iraq’s reconstruction efforts. This will be critical to winning the peace that has been earned through the hard-fought military gains.”

Iraqi forces ejected the terrorists group from Mosul and other cities in northern Iraq this year, but the fighting left the whole neighborhoods in ruins and has hit Iraq’s economy.

Saudi Oil Minister Khalid al-Falih visited Iraq



U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Saudi King Salman speak before their meeting in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, October 22, 2017.

on Saturday to call for increased economic cooperation and praise existing coordination to boost crude oil prices, the first Saudi official to make a

public speech in Baghdad for decades.

Tillerson’s six-day trip will also take him to Qatar, Pakistan, India and Switzerland.

Syria Tells UN:

Zionist Regime Attacks on Golan Sign of Collusion With Terrorists



The picture, taken from the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, shows smoke billowing from Syria on June 26, 2017.

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – Syria has criticized the UN Security Council for its inaction towards the Zionist regime’s fresh acts of aggression against its territory in the Golan Heights, denouncing

the attacks as an example of Tel Aviv’s collaboration with terrorist groups.

In two letters sent to UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres and the president of the UN Secu-

riety Council, the Syrian Foreign Ministry condemned the regime’s recent attacks as Tel Aviv’s “desperate attempt” to support terrorist groups in the area.

The letters warned about the serious repercussions of the regime’s repeated acts of aggression which they said constituted a flagrant violation of the principles of the UN Charter and the rule of international law, and expressed shock over the Security Council’s failure to condemn such attacks.

The Zionist regime struck a Syrian artillery position near the southwestern town of Quneitra.

Meanwhile, the Zionist regime said it had attacked three Syrian government’s artillery positions in the Golan Heights in response to what it claimed to be the firing of five projectiles from Syria.

The Israeli military said the pro-

jectile attacks did not cause any damage or injuries in the area occupied by the Zionist regime, but warned that the regime may start escalating such “retaliatory” measures.

It was the regime’s second act of aggression against Syrian territory this week.

The occupying regime regularly hits positions held by the Syrian army in the Golan Heights, sometimes describing the attacks as “retaliatory.” Syria says the raids aim to help terrorists fighting against government forces.

On several occasions, the Syrian army has confiscated Israeli-made arms and military equipment from terrorists fighting government forces. The regime has also been providing medical treatment to terrorists wounded in Syria.

UAE Launches New Initiative to Safeguard Digital Wealth

DUBAI (Xinhua) – The United Arab Emirates has launched the Dubai IoT Strategy and the Data Wealth initiative aimed at safeguarding the emirate’s digital wealth, UAE state news agency WAM reported.

“Dubai’s push to build the future today has helped establish a digital infrastructure that is now a strategic national asset in the wake of the Fourth Industrial Revolution,” said Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai.

Dubai Digital Certificates were also awarded to outstanding gov-

ernment and private entities in the same occasion.

Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid said the Dubai Digital Certificates and the Dubai IoT Strategy “mark the official launch of smart living in the emirate and we have directed all government institutions to cooperate and fully implement the initiatives by the year 2021.”

He said that Dubai Digital Certificates are the benchmark against which all smart services in Dubai should be evaluated to preserve digital wealth, as he accepted the first certificate presented by Aisha Bint Butti Bin Bishr, director-general of the Smart Dubai Office.

Iraqi Electoral Commission Proposes May 12 Date for General Elections

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) – The Iraqi electoral commission on Sunday said it has suggested May 12, 2018 as a date for the next parliamentary elections for the next four-year legislative term, a commission official said.

The Council of Commissioners of the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) proposes the new date for the cabinet of Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi to be the date of the elections of the parliament for its next legislative term, Gatie al-Zouba’i, deputy head of IHEC’s Commissioners Council said in a statement.

According to the Iraqi Constitution, the par-

liamentary elections must be held at least 45 days before the end of the current legislative term, and the date of the elections must be set by a resolution of Abadi’s cabinet in coordination with the IHEC. The elections date must be ratified later by the current parliament before the endorsement of the Presidential Council to be fully approved.

Iraq’s previous general election was held on April 30, 2014, when Iraqis elected 328 lawmakers for the parliament, which in turn elected Abadi to form an inclusive government from the Shia alliance, Kurds and Sunnis.

Zouba’i did not say whether the elections

will be held simultaneously with the provincial elections, as the parliament on Aug. 7 voted by majority to merge the country’s parliamentary and provincial elections in 2018.

In addition, it is not yet clear whether the Kurdish parties will join the Iraqi elections following the referendum on September 25 on the independence of the Kurdish region and disputed areas, which won a majority of some 93 percent of the voters.

The latest date for the elections came despite escalating tensions between Baghdad and the region of Kurdistan due to the controversial independence referendum.

Mission...

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predicted a rapid end to the crisis.

But before he arrived at Riyadh’s King Salman air base on Saturday, Tillerson indicated there had been little progress.

“I do not have a lot of expectations for it being resolved anytime soon,” he said in an interview with financial news agency Bloomberg. “There seems to be a real unwillingness on the part of some of the parties to want to engage.”

Aside from the Persian Gulf dispute and Iran, the conflict in Yemen and counter-terrorism will also figure in his talks, the State Department said.

On the Persian Gulf crisis, the goal will be to try to persuade the two sides to at least open a dialogue.

Simon Henderson, a veteran of the region now at the Washington Institute of Near East Policy, said the disputing parties do not want to lose face.

“Tillerson will say: ‘Come on kids, grow up and wind down your absurd demands. And let’s work on a compromise on your basic differences,’ ” he said.

Kuwait has tried to serve as a mediator, with U.S. support, but the parties have yet to sit down face-to-face.

During his trip Tillerson is also to visit New Delhi in order to build what he said in a recent speech could be a 100-year “strategic partnership” with India.

Tillerson will stop in Islamabad to try to sooth Pakistani fears about this Indian outreach, but also pressure the government to crack down harder on militant groups, AFP reported.

Russia...

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program in exchange for the removal of nuclear-related sanctions imposed against Tehran.

The JCPOA is regarded as the most significant diplomatic success for the 28-nation bloc in several decades.

Speaking at an international non-proliferation conference in Moscow on Friday, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov rejected the need for further inspection of Iran’s nuclear sites beyond the JCPOA requirements, noting that the IAEA “performs regular checks and confirms their (Iran’s) strict fulfillment of obligations.”

U.S. President Donald Trump delivered an anti-Iran speech on October 13, in which he said he would not be certifying Iran’s compliance with the terms of the JCPOA under a domestic American law.

While Trump did not pull Washington out of the JCPOA, he gave the U.S. Congress 60 days to decide whether to reimpose economic sanctions against Tehran that were lifted under the pact. Reimposing sanctions would put the U.S. at odds with other signatories to the accord and the European Union.

The U.S. president insists that the nuclear deal should be renegotiated, or else it may face the prospect of total collapse.

This is while all other signatories, including Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China have stressed their full commitment to the JCPOA.

Iran has vehemently rejected the possibility of renegotiation, warning that any hostile action against the JCPOA will jeopardize regional and global peace and security.

U.S.-Led...

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local security forces, de-escalate violence across Syria, and advance the conditions for lasting peace, so that the terrorists cannot return to threaten our collective security

again,” he said in a statement.

Kurdish militants in neighboring Iraq have also overrun territory, putting themselves on a collision course with the central government after their aborted bid to control the oil-rich Kirkuk.

On Thursday, Kurdish militants held a “victory” parade in Raqqah, during which they put up a huge poster of Abdullah Ocalan, the jailed leader of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) that is outlawed in Turkey.

Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim said the raising of the Ocalan banner by the U.S.-backed Kurdish forces was proof that Washington “is not only cooperating with terrorists, but they are endangering the future of Syria.”

It came after Saudi Arabia’s Persian Gulf Affairs Minister Thamer al-Sabhan and U.S. special envoy to the Syria war coalition Brett McGurk visited Raqqah.

In his statement on Saturday, Trump described the capture of Raqqah a “critical breakthrough” but Russia said the Syrian city “inherited the fate of Dresden in 1945, razed to the ground by Anglo-American bombings.”

The Russian Defense ministry said that Western countries were pumping humanitarian aid into Raqqah in a bid to mask the degree of destruction inflicted on the city.

FM Zarif ...

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Tehran abandoned its ties with the South African apartheid regime in favor of the African National Congress (ANC) that took over in 1994 and is currently the governing political party in the country.

The former government of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad promoted the notion of an Iranian “South-South” strategy, aiming to expand relations with Africa and Latin America. In 2006, Ahmadinejad famously attended the African Union summit in Gambia as a guest of honor.

However, those efforts have faced enmity from the U.S. and its allies, including the occupying regime of Israel which has been trying to expand its footprints in Africa, where it has a chequered history because of its close ties with the apartheid regime.

In November 2010, Gambia broke diplomatic ties with Tehran and expelled all its diplomats in what the Islamic Republic believes was American pressure to cut Iran’s efforts loose in the continent.

Somalia, Sudan, Djibouti and Comoros in January 2016 cut diplomatic relations with Iran following Saudi Arabia’s decision to sever ties with the Islamic Republic over angry protests outside the kingdom’s embassy in Tehran.

Earlier this month, President of the National Assembly of Mali Issaka Sidibe said during a visit to Tehran that his country “will always remain a friend of Iran and will never cooperate with its enemies.”

Hamas...

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Arouri thanked Iran for its patronage and noted that senior officials in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were interested in expanding ties with Tehran.

Velayati said Teheran would be increasing its support for Palestinian resistance groups.

“We want to prove to the Zionist entity that strategic relations between Iran and the Palestinian resistance, represented by Hamas and Islamic Jihad, will not ever be served. Rather, Iran’s support for the resistance will increase day by day,” he said.