

DOHUK, Iraq (AP) – A helicopter crash in northern Iraq has killed at least five people, allegedly including militants belonging to an outlawed Kurdish insurgency group, according to statements from the Iraqi Kurdish-run counterterrorism agency and the region's president. The AS350 Eurocopter crashed in the district of Chamanke in Dohuk province in Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdish region on Wednesday night, the counter-terrorism agency said in a statement posted on social media. At least five passengers were killed, said Lawk Ghafari, spokesperson for the Kurdish region's President Nechirvan Barzani. "The investigations are ongoing by security officials to determine the ownership of the helicopter," Ghafari said in a post on Twitter.

It is a sad sight to see that in one moment we commit them to earth and in the next we take hold of the things left by them as if we are going to remain permanently in this world after them. The fact is that we forget sensible advice given to us and become victim of every calamity.

Amir al-Momeneen Ali (AS)

More Palestinians Martyred, Several Wounded in Zionist Raid on Jenin

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – Four Palestinians were martyred in a raid by Zionist troops on Jenin in the occupied West Bank on Thursday, including a teenage boy, according to the Palestinian health ministry.

Among those killed was 16-year-old Omar Muhammad Awadin, as well as Youssef Saleh Barakat Shreim, Nidal Amin Zaidan Khazem, and Louay Khalil al-Zughair.

Eighteen people with gunshot wounds were also hospitalized, four of them in serious condition, said the ministry.

The Zionist regime's army acknowledged that regime troops "are currently operating in the Jenin refugee camp".

Hamas resistance movement mourned the death of the four Palestinians killed in the Jenin raid.

"The cowardly assassination of two resistance leaders [in the raid] will not go unpunished," the movement said in a statement.

"The occupying regime is certain that the response to its actions is imminent, and that resistance fighters with continue their struggle



People attend the funeral procession of four Palestinians who were killed during a Zionist raid in the city of Jenin, the occupied West Bank, on March 16, 2023.

until full liberation [of Palestinian lands]," Hamas added.

"Our steadfast people will not sit idly by, and will continue to defend Al-Quds and the sacred Al-Aqsa Mosque compound. Resistance fighters well know the path and how to confront the Occupation," the resistance movement noted.

Hamas spokesman Abdul-Latif Qanu also said in a statement that

the Tel Aviv regime's targeted killing of two resistance commanders in Jenin raid will not go unanswered.

He underlined that Palestinians and resistance groups are fully capable of delivering a stinging blow to Israel and making it pay a heavy price for its crimes.

"The Palestinian resistance in the West Bank will persist. No one will

be able to either stop its expansion or prevent it from responding to the crimes of the occupying Israeli regime," Qanu said.

Tensions have been high in the occupied territories in recent months as Zionist attacks in the West Bank intensify, and Palestinian resistance grows.

Thursday's shootings bring the number of Palestinians martyred by Zionists this year to at least 85, including 16 children.

It's the bloodiest start to a year since 2000, according to the Palestinian health ministry.

Fears are growing that there could be a wider outbreak of violence in April when Passover, Easter, and Ramadan all overlap.

Most of the raids have focused on Nablus and Jenin, where Zionist troops have been trying to stifle a growing Palestinian resistance in the occupied cities.

Local and international rights groups have condemned the occupying regime's excessive use of force and "shoot-to-kill policy" against Palestinians.

Syrian President: U.S. 'Most Rogue State' in World



Members of the 5th Special Forces Group of the United States Army Special Forces conduct weapons training at the al-Tanf military base in southern Syria.

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has accused the West of hypocrisy and lies, saying that the United States is the "most rogue state in the world."

In an interview with Russia's RT Arabic television news network, Assad condemned a surprise visit by Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Army General Mark Milley to an army base in Syria's northeast, which is under the control of the Kurdish-led and so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), saying that the unannounced trip shows that the U.S. is the most rogue state in the world.

In his snap visit on March 4, Milley met U.S. troops stationed in areas of war-torn Syria under the control of the SDF. About 900 U.S. soldiers are deployed in several bases and posts across northeastern Syria, in what Washington claims to be as part of the fight against Daesh remnants.

Following the visit, a Syrian foreign ministry official said that Damascus "strongly condemns the illegal visit of the American chairman of the chiefs of staff to an illegal American military base in northeast Syria."

Milley's visit was "a flagrant violation of the sovereignty and integrity" of Syrian territory, the official added, according to SANA, calling on "the U.S. administration to immediately cease its systematic and continued violation of international law and support for separatist armed groups."

Heading a ranking a "large ministerial delegation," the president of Syria arrived in Moscow on Tuesday for high-level talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

In another interview, Assad said U.S. occupation forces have turned their military base in the Arab country's strategic al-Tanf region near the bor-

ders with Iraq and Jordan into a bastion for terrorists.

"We are in a state of direct confrontation with terrorist groups near al-Tanf region. Al-Tanf serves entirely as a base for training terrorists, and has no purpose other than that. What benefits do American forces drive from their deployment in the desert region?" Assad, who is in Moscow on an official trip, said in an exclusive interview with the Arabic-language service of Russia's Sputnik news agency.

He added, "There is no doubt that the U.S. has barracks for terrorists, where tens of thousands of them and their families are accommodated. They are transferred between different areas from time to time in order to carry out terror attacks against Syrian army soldiers, and cause chaos. We are quite sure of these moves, and have abundant pieces of evidence in this regard."

Assad's remarks come days after Syria's official news agency SANA, citing local sources, reported that U.S. occupation forces had airlifted dozens of members of the Daesh Takfiri terrorist group from a prison in Syria's northeastern province of Hasakah to nearby military facilities before transferring them to al-Tanf base.

A number of captured Daesh terrorists have already confessed to close cooperation with U.S. military forces stationed at al-Tanf base in the central Syrian province of Homs on carrying out various acts of terror and sabotage.

During confessions broadcast on Syria's state-run television network in May 2020, several terrorists revealed that they were instructed by American forces to target Syrian government troops in and around the ancient city of Palmyra, the Tiyas Military Airbase – also known as the T-4 Airbase, the Shaer gas field as well as nearby oil wells.

U.S. Senate Takes First Step in Repealing Iraq War Authorizations

WASHINGTON (AP) – The U.S. Senate took a first step Thursday toward repealing two measures that give open-ended approval for military action in Iraq, pushing to end that authority as the United States marks the 20th anniversary of the Iraq invasion.

Senators voted 68-27 to move forward on legislation that would repeal the 2002 measure that greenlighted that March 2003 invasion of Iraq and also a 1991 measure that sanctioned the U.S.-led Persian Gulf War to expel Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein's forces from Kuwait. Nineteen Republicans joined Democrats in supporting the repeal.

The bipartisan effort comes as lawmakers in both parties are increasingly seeking to claw back congressional powers over U.S. military strikes and deployments, arguing that

the war authorizations are no longer necessary and subject to misuse if they are left on the books. President Joe Biden has backed the push, and the White House issued a statement Thursday in support.

Sens. Tim Kaine, D-Va., and Todd Young, R-Ind., said they believe the 68 votes in support send a powerful message to Americans who believe their voice should be heard on matters of war and peace. Kaine and Young have led the push for repeal and have worked for several years on the issue.

"It is time for Congress to have its voice heard on these matters, and I believe this will establish a very important precedent moving forward," Young said.

It's unclear whether leaders in the Republican-controlled House will bring the bill up for a vote, even if it

passes the Senate. Forty-nine House Republicans supported the legislation when then-majority Democrats held a vote two years ago, but current House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., has opposed it.

The October 2002 votes to give President George W. Bush broad authority for the invasion — coming just a month before the midterm elections that year — became a defining moment for many members of Congress as the country debated whether a military strike was warranted. The U.S. was already at war then in Afghanistan.

Illinois Sen. Dick Durbin, a Democrat who was in the Senate at the time and voted against the resolution, said on the floor before Thursday's vote that "I look back on it, as I'm sure others do, as one of the most important votes that I ever

cast."

The Bush administration had drummed up support among members of Congress and Americans for invading Iraq by promoting false intelligence claims about Saddam's weapons of mass destruction.

After the initial March 2003 invasion, American ground forces quickly discovered that the allegations of nuclear or chemical weapons programs were baseless. But the U.S. overthrow of Iraq's security forces precipitated a brutal fight and violent campaigns by militant groups in Iraq. Car bombings, assassinations, torture and kidnapping became a part of daily life in Iraq for years.

Nearly 5,000 U.S. troops were killed in the war. Iraqi deaths are estimated in the hundreds of thousands.

British Army Honors Soldier Who Assaulted Iraqi Detainees

LONDON (Middle East Eye) – The British military nominated a former soldier for one of the UK's highest honors for services to army boxing even after an official inquiry labeled him "shameful" for his involvement in assaulting Iraqi detainees in Basra in 2003.

Chris Roberts, a physical training instructor in the Queen's Lancashire Regiment, was found to have karate chopped at least one detainee and "kicked probably three more" by the inquiry into the death of Baha Mousa and the abuse of other prisoners on a British base in the southern Iraqi city.

Roberts, who held the rank of Staff Sergeant at the time, denied involvement in the violence against Mousa and nine other detainees.

But in his report into the episode, published in 2011, Judge William Gage said he did not accept Roberts' denial and found him to be a "very unsatisfactory witness".

Gage said Roberts' conduct represented a "shameful and serious breach of discipline"

and "very substantial breaches of duty".

"There can be no possible excuse or mitigation for what I find he did," Gage said.

Roberts nonetheless remained in the army until 2020 and was promoted to the rank of major.

In 2021, he was awarded an OBE (Officer of the Order of the British Empire) medal, after being nominated by the army for "services to British army boxing".

Since leaving the army, Roberts has built a career as a boxing official.

In July last year, he was named development director at the International Boxing Association, the global body which officiates amateur boxing.

Roberts previously served as the head of Boxing Scotland for 17 months.

Neither Roberts nor the IBA responded to requests from Middle East Eye for comment. A spokesperson for Boxing Scotland said: "No comment".

The Ministry of Defence told MEE it had investigated allegations of detainees being assaulted and had found there was no case against Roberts.

The three-year inquiry into Baha Mousa's death found that the 26-year-old hotel receptionist had been violently beaten to death in British military custody in September 2003.

It said British soldiers had inflicted "gratuitous violence" on nine other men detained with Mousa and had used five interrogation techniques banned by the British government and illegal under the Fourth Geneva Convention, which protects civilians from murder, torture, and brutality.

The inquiry found that the Ministry of Defence was guilty of "corporate failure" by failing to uphold its own rules relating to the interrogation of detainees.

Gage added that the abuse meted out by the first Queen's Lancashire Regiment was not a one-off.

Turkish FM to Visit Egypt in First Such Trip in Decade

ANKARA (Al Jazeera) – Mevlut Cavusoglu, Turkey's foreign minister, will visit Egypt on Saturday after an invitation by his Egyptian counterpart, Sameh Shoukry – the first such trip in more than a decade.

The Turkish foreign ministry said in a statement on Friday that the two top diplomats will discuss all aspects of bilateral relations, as well as exchange views on regional and international matters.

For its part, the Egyptian foreign ministry said Cavusoglu's visit "inaugurates path for restoring normal relations between the two countries".

Relations between Turkey and Egypt turned frosty in 2013 when the Egyptian military, then led by current President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, deposed president Mohamed Morsi, a Muslim Brotherhood leader and an ally of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

El-Sisi then outlawed the Muslim Brotherhood and branded it a "terrorist" organization.

Turkey has for years served as a refuge for opposition activists from Egypt,

further stoking tensions between the two regional powers.

Longstanding disagreements over the countries' opposing roles in war-torn Libya have also impeded efforts to achieve a full rapprochement.

After years of frozen ties, Egypt and Turkey held exploratory talks in May and September 2021 to discuss restoring ties.

In November 2022, el-Sisi and Erdogan shook hands in front of Qatar's emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, in Doha. The leaders met on the sidelines of the opening ceremony of the football World Cup in Qatar.

And last month, Shoukry visited Turkey following devastating earthquakes that killed tens of thousands of people. It was the first such trip by an Egyptian foreign minister in more than 10 years.

While diplomatic relations between Cairo and Ankara have often been thorny, economic ties have continued unabated. The volume of trade has nearly tripled from 2007 to 2020, according to the Carnegie Middle East Center.