

RIYADH (NBC) – U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) is opening a new testing facility in Saudi Arabia to help develop new military technologies against unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) or drone attacks. The base is expected to be called the Red Sands Integrated Experimentation Center and it will be tasked with developing and testing integrated air and missile capabilities, the report said, citing U.S. military officials. The site for the new base has not yet been selected, but its missions will also include developing a wide variety of electronic warfare advanced systems including signal-jamming and directed energy, according to the report.

# Zionist Troops Kill Another Palestinian in Raid Near Ramallah

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – Zionist troops have killed a Palestinian near the city of Ramallah in the central part of the occupied West Bank, only a day after slaying a Palestinian youth elsewhere in the Tel Aviv-occupied territory.

The killing was carried out near the main entrance to the Beitin village, northeast of Ramallah, in early Thursday, the International Middle East Media Center (IMEMC), a Palestinian-run media organization, reported.

It cited Zionist sources as claiming that the Palestinian had attacked the regime's forces "with a hammer" before a Zionist trooper opened fire and killed him.

"The Israeli army said one soldier sustained mild facial wounds and received treatment at the scene," it added.

On Wednesday, Zionist troops fatally shot a 20-year-old Palestinian youth at the al-Faraa refugee camp, near the city of Tubas in northern West Bank.



Zionist troops take aim during clashes with Palestinian protesters in the center of Al-Khalil in the occupied West Bank, March 4, 2022.

The Ramallah-headquartered Palestinian Authority's health ministry said the victim, identified as Younis Ghassan Tayeh, was killed with a bullet to his chest.

According to Al Jazeera television network, Younis's uncle, Mohammed Hassan Tayeh, said the shooting had been unprovoked, and that

his nephew had been "in an open area, exposed to the soldiers" when he was shot by a sniper.

In another development, Zionist prime minister Yair Lapid has come out in full support of the soldier who shot dead Palestinian journalist Shireen Abu Akleh in May, saying the regime's forces have the

"full backing" of the occupying regime, turning a deaf ear to international calls for punishment of those behind the cold-blooded murder.

Lapid claimed on Wednesday that the Zionist trooper behind the killing of Abu Akleh — who was wearing a vest clearly marked "Press" when she was shot — was "protecting himself" during exchanges of fire with Palestinians.

He said he would not allow the soldier to "be prosecuted just to receive applause from abroad."

"No one will dictate our rules of engagement to us," he said, adding that Zionist troops have the full backing of the regime and the Israelis.

Lapid was reacting to an Israeli military report that conceded for the first time that Abu Akleh, a U.S.-Palestinian citizen, was likely shot by a Zionist soldier.

Abu Akleh was killed on May 11 while covering a Zionist military raid in the West Bank city of Jenin,

## Syrian FM Calls for International Support, Sanctions Removal

DAMASCUS (Xinhua) – Syrian Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad said on Thursday that his country deserves international support and the removal of U.S. economic sanctions, according to the state news agency SANA.

Mekdad told a UN meeting via a video conference from Damascus that Syria had fought global terrorism and paid "unprecedented prices" from its human and economic resources.

The Syrian people, who have suffered immensely from the crimes committed by terrorist

groups, deserve the international community's support to uphold their rights to sustainable development and early recovery, he noted.

The Syrian people are subject to an economic siege imposed by the U.S. and its Western allies, he said.

He urged the international community to help in ending the coercive economic sanctions and expelling the illegal foreign forces in Syria.

In another development, the Syrian government strongly condemned the recent Zionist

airstrikes on the Aleppo International Airport in the northern part of the Arab country, saying it amounts to a "war crime."

The missile strike on Tuesday damaged the international airport's runway and rendered it out of service for the second time in less than a week.

"The recurring Israeli attacks, especially the systematic and deliberate targeting of civilian objects in Syria – the latest of which was the targeting of Aleppo International Airport yesterday – amounts to an act of aggression and a war crime

according to international law," the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates said in a statement on Wednesday.

The ministry statement said the Zionist regime "must be held to account" for the latest aerial aggression in the war-ravaged Arab country.

"The occupying Israeli regime is once again threatening peace and security in the region, endangering and intimidating civilians, and jeopardizing the safety of civil aviation in Syria and the region," the statement noted.

## Rights Group: 34 Political Prisoners on Verge of Execution in Saudi Arabia

RIYADH (Dispatches) – A Europe-based human rights organization has expressed concerns over the imminent execution of dozens of political prisoners in Saudi Arabia, as Saudi courts continue to hand heavy punishment to human rights activists for expressing their opinion.

The European Saudi Organization for Human Rights (ESOHR) said in a statement that 34 people are currently on the verge of execution in the oil-rich Persian Gulf country, noting that Saudi authorities have put at least 120 people to death since the beginning of January until the end of May this year.

ESOHR said that Bahraini nationals Jaafar Mohammad Sultan and Sadeq Majeed Thamer, who have been accused of terrorism-related crimes, face imminent "arbitrary" execution and could be killed at any moment.

"Due to the escalation of repressive measures in Saudi Arabia, the lives of these two Bahraini youths are in danger. Many other political detainees are at the risk of execution as well," the human rights organization said.

Back in May, Saudi Arabia's Supreme Court upheld the death sentences of Thamer and Sultan after finding them guilty of "smuggling explosives" into the kingdom

and involvement in terrorist activities.

The two Bahraini nationals were arrested in May 2015 along the King Fahd Causeway, which connects Saudi Arabia and Bahrain.

They were held incommunicado for months after their arrest while being subjected to systematic and fatal torture with the aim of extracting false confessions from them.

In January, the UN special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions called on Saudi Arabia to halt the men's execution and investigate their allegations of torture and ill-treatment.

International human rights organizations have called upon Saudi authorities to stop the imminent execution of the two Bahraini men.

The organizations have urged the officials not to ratify the death sentences, but rather, quash their convictions and re-try them in line with international fair trial standards.

According to the European Saudi Organization for Human Rights, Abdullah al-Howaiti, Jalal al-Bad, Yusuf al-Manasif, Sajjad al-Yasin, Hassan Zaki al-Faraj, Mehdi al-Moshen and Abdullah al-Razi are among the Saudi teenagers sentenced to death.

Saudi courts, ESOHR went on, have recently imposed heavy punishment and de-

grades-long prison sentences against human rights activists and democracy advocates for expressing their opinion.

It noted that Saudi officials have sentenced Nourah al-Qahtani to 45 years in prison for her social media posts.

According to Democracy for the Arab World Now (DAWN), Qahtani received the heavy sentence on appeal after she was convicted of "using the internet to tear [Saudi Arabia's] social fabric" and "violating public order" via social media.

The Washington-based group added that she was convicted under the kingdom's so-called counter-terrorism and anti-cybercrime law.

Earlier, Saudi officials had sentenced women's rights activist Salma al-Shehab to 34 years in prison.

The United Nations Human Rights Council said in a statement that the jail term handed down to Shehab, a mother of two young children and a doctoral student at the United Kingdom's Leeds University, is the longest sentence ever given to a women's rights defender in Saudi Arabia.

The statement, nevertheless, came a week before Qahtani's 45-year imprisonment was revealed.

## Citing Civilian Harm in Yemen Lawmakers Call for More Oversight of U.S. Aid to Persian Gulf States



Yemenis inspect the wreckage of buildings after they were hit by Saudi-led coalition airstrikes, in Sana'a, Yemen, on January 18, 2022.

WASHINGTON (Middle East Eye) – A bipartisan group of lawmakers have urged the Biden administration to take further measures to ensure U.S. military support to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates does not contribute to civilian casualties in Yemen.

"A failure to reckon with the devastation the United States may be complicit in Yemen would represent a failure in the Biden administration's stated prioritization of human rights and our core democratic values," the lawmakers said.

Senators Elizabeth Warren, Bernie Sanders and Mike Lee sent letters to the State Department and Pentagon in response to a U.S. congressional watchdog report that found the U.S. had failed to determine how its aid to Persian Gulf allies was linked to civilian casualties.

The lawmakers called the findings "an unacceptable failure."

"We urge you to review whether or not the Saudi and Emirati governments are taking the necessary precautions to prevent harm to civilians in Yemen," the letters said.

"If either are found to be in violation, we urge state to halt all arms

sales to either country until it can verify they are taking steps to protect civilians."

The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) published the report, which was obtained by HRW and also reported by the New York Times. The authors said that neither the State Department nor the Department of Defense could "provide evidence" that they had "investigated any incidents of potential unauthorized use of equipment transferred to Saudi Arabia or UAE".

Saudi Arabia launched the devastating war on Yemen in March 2015 in collaboration with its Arab allies and with arms and logistics support from the U.S. and other Western states.

The objective was to reinstall the Riyadh- and Washington-friendly rulers and crush the Ansarullah resistance movement, which has been running state affairs in the absence of a functional government in Yemen.

While the Saudi-led coalition has failed to meet any of its objectives, the war has killed hundreds of thousands of Yemenis and spawned the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

## Erdogan: Turkey Captures 'Senior' Daesh Commander

ANKARA (AFP) – President Recep Tayyip Erdogan says Turkish security forces have arrested a "senior executive" of the Daesh terrorist group.

Erdogan said the commander was known as Abu Zeyd.

His real name was Bashar Khat-tab Ghazal al-Sumaidai, Erdogan told reporters on board his flight home from a tour of the Balkans.

Erdogan said a UN Security Council report published in July identified Sumaidai as "one of the senior executives of the (Daesh) terrorist organization."

Turkish media said there were some indications Sumaidai may in fact be the man known as Abu Hasan al-Hashimi al-Qurashi — an Iraqi who is the new self-proclaimed caliph, or leader, of the entire Daesh group.

Erdogan only referred to Sumaidai as a top Daesh official in Syria.

"In his interrogation, he also stated that he was a so-called 'qadi' of the so-called ministry of education and ministry of justice," Turkish

media quoted Erdogan as saying.

Erdogan did not say when the Daesh commander was captured.

"This terrorist's connections in Syria and Istanbul had been followed for a long time, and intelligence information was obtained that he would enter Turkey illegally," Erdogan said.

"This terrorist was caught in a successful operation of the MIT security service and the Istanbul police."

After a meteoric rise in 2014 in Iraq and Syria that saw it conquer vast swathes of territory, Daesh saw its self-proclaimed "caliphate" collapse under a wave of offensives.

It was defeated in Iraq in 2017 and in Syria two years later, but sleeper cells of the terrorist group still carry out attacks in both countries.

The foreign-backed war in Syria began in 2011 and has killed nearly half a million people and forced around half of the country's pre-war population from their homes.