

# Report: Turkish Forces, Allied Militants Shell Villages in Syria's Raqqah

**DAMASCUS (Dispatches) – Turkish military forces and their allied militants have reportedly shelled residential areas in the countryside of Syria's northern province of Raqqah, as Turkey is apparently preparing for a new cross-border offensive in the Arab country.**

The shelling struck the villages of Abu Surra, al-Dibs and the M4 international highway in the Ayn Issa subdistrict, which lie near the border with Turkey, Syria's official news agency SANA reported, citing local sources.

The sources added that the strikes caused material damage in the targeted areas, and disrupted traffic on the international highway.

The development took place only two days after Turkish army soldiers and their allied militants heavily shelled the northwestern Syrian city of Tell Rifaat, located roughly 40 kilometers north of Aleppo.

At least two civilians lost their lives and ten others sustained injuries as a result.



*A Syrian boy watches as Turkish military vehicles, part of a U.S. military convoy, take part in joint patrol in the Syrian village of Hashisha on the outskirts of Tell Abyad town along the border with Turkey.*

On August 8, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan hinted at his country's plan for a new cross-border operation in Syria to remove members of the U.S.-backed Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) militant group, which is the backbone of the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).

"We will continue our fight

against terrorism. Our decision to establish a 30-kilometer-deep (18.6-mile) secure line along our southern border is final," Erdogan said in an address to Turkish diplomats attending the 13th Ambassadors Conference in the capital Ankara.

Last month, Erdogan stated that a new Turkish operation against the

YPG militants will remain on the agenda until security concerns are addressed.

Both Iran and Russia, which have been aiding Damascus in its anti-terror campaign, have warned Turkey against launching such an offensive.

Turkey has deployed forces in Syria in violation of the Arab country's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Ankara-backed militants were deployed to northeastern Syria in October 2019 after Turkish military forces launched a long-threatened cross-border invasion in a declared attempt to push YPG fighters away from border areas.

Ankara views the YPG as a terrorist organization tied to the homegrown Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which has been seeking an autonomous Kurdish region in Turkey since 1984.

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and other senior officials have said Damascus will respond through all legitimate means available to Turkey's ongoing ground offensive.

## Lebanese Submarine Finds 10 Bodies on Sunken Migrant Ship

**BEIRUT (AP) – A Lebanese submarine has found the remains of at least 10 migrants who drowned when their boat sank earlier this year off the coast of Lebanon with about 30 people on board, the navy announced.**

The boat, carrying dozens of asylum seekers trying to migrate by sea to Italy, went down more than 5 kilometers from the port of Tripoli, following a confrontation with the Lebanese navy.

Ten bodies were recovered that night, including one of a child, while 48 survivors were pulled from the Mediterranean Sea. According to navy estimates, 30 people were believed to have

gone down with the boat.

Since Monday, the small, 3-person underwater craft — a Pisces VI submarine — has been searching for the remains. The wreck was located on Wednesday, at a depth of some 450 meters (about 1,470 feet).

The circumstances of the vessel's sinking are disputed to this day. Survivors say their vessel was rammed by the Lebanese navy, while the military claims the migrants' boat collided with a navy vessel while trying to get away.

Capt. Scott Waters, who operated the craft, told reporters at a press conference in Tripoli Friday

that the first body they found was outside the wreck but much of it had decayed since the sinking, with mostly bits of clothing and some bones remaining intact. He said the second body was found coming up from the wreckage.

Waters said the crew identified four more bodies inside the wreckage and a substantial amount of debris around the vessel. At least four other bodies were found away from the wreck.

Some of the people who tried to escape the boat, he assumed, got "tangled in that debris."

"One of the very last footage and images we took," he added, was of the remains of a person, an

arm around another. "They died holding each other."

Tom Zreika, a Lebanese-Australian and the chairman of Australian charity AusRelief that helped bring the submarine to Lebanon, said the boat was a "fair degree under silt," making it difficult to retrieve it.

Zreika said what's next is for Lebanon to bring the sunken boat out but that remains a difficult task.

Lebanon's navy chief, Col. Haitham Dinnawi, said all the video footage from Waters' crew will be handed over to the judiciary as it investigates the sinking.

## Videos Show Egyptian Forces Executing Minor, Alleged Militants in Sinai

**CAIRO (Middle East Eye) – Videos have emerged appearing to show pro-government paramilitary forces in Egypt's war-torn North Sinai killing alleged militants, including one minor, after arresting them.**

One video shows a boy, confirmed by tribal sources to be Anas Al-Tiyaha, a 16-year-old member of the Al-Tiyaha tribe. He can be seen in the video wounded and lying on his stomach, possibly following an explosion, with his right hand torn. He can be heard being interrogated by a man about the frequency of his handheld transceiver. He is later seen being shot with three bullets in the head.

The video was released on 20 August, but the operation took place in the first week of August, tribal sources told Middle East Eye.

Another video shows the execution of a man in his mid-30s, wearing a white jalabiya with his hands tied behind his back. He seems to be begging his captors not to shoot

him, as he can be heard saying "Please have mercy on me. God, please have mercy," before he is shot four times.

The videos were first published on the Telegram social media channel linked to the Union of Sinai Tribes (UST), a pro-government paramilitary faction. The UST fights alongside Egypt's military against Daesh militants in the Sinai Peninsula's north, a bloody eight-year campaign that has uprooted thousands and left many towns and villages pulverized.

In earlier footage, the man in the white jalabiya, whom tribal sources said they had identified but declined to tell MEE his name, can be seen along with another person surrendering as he walks half-naked and barefoot towards a group of paramilitaries and soldiers. The caption to that video, which was published on 13 July, read: "The message is clear and it is saying to the rats in their hideouts, 'You will

not have peace'. With every drop of blood of our heroes, necks will fly."

A fourth video shows an elderly man, whom tribal sources identified as Abu Tarek, a mid-ranking member of Daesh. On 2 July, pages affiliated with different pro-government paramilitaries published a video of Abu Tarek being interrogated by members of the military and paramilitary fighters.

Abu Tarek can be seen wearing a blue vest. In a later post by the Telegram channel of the Bir al-Abd Union paramilitary, pictures of the same man after he was shot dead were posted, with a caption that read "annihilation done".

One source from the al-Sawarka tribe in Sinai told MEE that the video of Tiyaha's killing has caused outrage among the region's tribes. He said that earlier this week, a high-ranking delegation from the military intelligence, accompanied by some MPs, visited

several tribes to calm them and assure them of the benefits they will gain after the defeat of the Daesh insurgency.

North Sinai residents have borne the brunt of the eight-year-long campaign in the region between Egypt's armed forces and Sinai Province, the local branch of Daesh. Militants first began staging attacks in 2011, while associated with Al-Qaeda. Later, they pledged loyalty to Daesh, and began to be known as Sinai Province.

Death tolls in the conflict are not publicly available, but according to a count compiled by independent researchers who maintain anonymity for their safety, more than 1,500 military personnel were killed between 2011 and June 2018.

Meanwhile, Human Rights Watch believes that over 100,000 of North Sinai's 450,000 residents have been displaced or left the region since 2013.

## U.S....

(Continued From Page One)

"Russians have been flocking to the Islamic Republic in recent months, often to discuss ways to circumvent sanctions, say Iranian businessmen. Russian is often heard in Tehran's shops and hotels these days, as Iran remains open to Russian travelers who have been cut off from much of the West," the paper added.

At the city's grand bazaar, Hussein, a carpet seller, said the number of Russian customers has doubled since February and now make up half its customer base, the paper recounted. "In the lobby of a luxury hotel in Tehran, the only Europeans were Russians who brought their laptops for a business meeting with Iranians in black suits."

Deals on the table include Iran selling clothing to Russian buyers to replace Western brands and automotive spare parts to embattled Russian car makers. Discussions have been held of an export corridor running from Russia to India through Iran and to set up a banking system totally insulated from U.S. sanctions, the paper said.

Tehran's National Iranian Oil Co. has also signed a deal with Russia's energy giant Gazprom PJSC to invest \$40 billion in Iran's natural-gas industry, it reported. "Both countries need trade partners badly, even if they are limited in their ability to help each other. The International Monetary Fund forecasts that Russian gross domestic product will contract 6% this year. The IMF expects Iran's GDP to grow by 3% this year but the country is struggling with 50% inflation and a currency that hit a record low against the U.S. dollar this year," the American paper said.

"Iran offers Russia expertise in avoiding Western sanctions while Moscow appears to have given Iran preference for agricultural exports amid fears of food shortages."

Among the most important signs of warming economic ties: Iran surpassed Egypt and Turkey as Russia's largest wheat buyer in July, scooping up twice as much as these two countries with deliveries of 360,000 metric tons, the Journal said, citing data-intelligence company Kpler.

Iran and Russia, the paper said, have both struggled to find banks to handle their commodities transactions. Their blossoming trade is a marriage of convenience at a time when European traders shun new contracts in Russian grain and other commodities, it added.

"Iran can only buy wheat from a limited number of sources," said Masha Belikova, a grains analyst at commodity price reporting agency Fastmarkets in London. "When the war started, Russia was targeted by sanctions and faced payments issues. Iran was one of the few countries ready to accept" such political risk.

The increased military cooperation between Iran and Russia has alarmed U.S. officials, the paper said.

Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) is hosting a competition of military unmanned aerial vehicles, or UAVs, with the Russian army at their air base in Kashan, south of Tehran.

Tehran denies plans to assist Russia's war in Ukraine. Brig. Gen. Ali Balali, a top IRGC air-force officer, said last week the drone drills were aimed at fighting global terrorism. The military UAV competition, which also involves Russian allies Armenia and Belarus, was first launched in 2015.

On Aug. 9, Russia launched an Iranian satellite from a facility it controls in Kazakhstan. Iran says the satellite will help bolster "management and planning capacities" in agriculture, water resources, disaster management or border monitoring.

## Iranian ...

(Continued From Page One)

of 3,000 kilometers, which is rare in the world," he noted.

"Now we have reached a point where we proudly announce that all the equipment and systems used in the Air Defense Force of the Islamic Iranian Army are made by genius Iranian youths and we do not use any foreign equipment."

He warned the enemies any violation of Iranian airspace will be met with a "tough and destructive response", adding the enemies could never imagine our deterrence power would reach this level.

"If the enemies could hit us, they would make the Islamic Republic of Iran's airspace unsafe, whereas they never can, and this is due to the deterrence power of the armed forces and the existing military equipment," Sabahifard said.

The top commander noted Iranian drones can be armed with the required high speed rate to hit the targets.

## Envoy...

(Continued From Page 2)

accession to the NPT "without precondition and further delay" and the placement of all of its nuclear activities and facilities under the comprehensive IAEA safeguards are "essential in realizing the goal of universal adherence to the Treaty in the Middle East and the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East."

The occupying regime of Israel, which pursues a policy of deliberate ambiguity about its nuclear weapons, is estimated to possess 200 to 400 nuclear warheads in its arsenal, making it the sole possessor of non-conventional arms in West Asia.

The illegitimate entity has, however, refused to either allow inspections of its military nuclear facilities or sign the NPT.

What has emboldened Tel Aviv to accelerate its nuclear activities, according to observers, is the support from the U.S. and Europe, the two countries most critical of Iran's peaceful nuclear program.

The regime has assassinated at least seven Iranian nuclear scientists and conducted a series of sabotage operations against the Islamic Republic's nuclear facilities.

## Iran...

(Continued From Page 2)

that have been repeatedly misused and interpreted by the nuclear-weapon States as preconditions for implementation of nuclear disarmament obligations," he said.

On the negative security assurances, despite the strong demand of the overwhelming majority of the non-nuclear-weapon States including NAM for adopting an unambiguous declaratory commitment by nuclear-weapons States to not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States, Jahrom said, "it is disappointing to see that paragraph 32 (b) in the latest revised draft final document presented by the President of this Conference, merely reflects the dangerous position and policy of three NATO's nuclear-weapon States."

"On the nonproliferation pillar, the content of the review and forward-looking part of the draft document not only gives new interpretations of the existing obligations of the non-nuclear-weapon States parties under the Treaty and safeguards agreement but also imposes new commitments and constraints on them. The outcome documents of the Review Conferences should not impose new commitments on non-nuclear-weapon States while the nuclear-weapon States are not complying with their nuclear disarmament obligations and commitments and there is a lack of progress in this regard," he added.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, he said, remains steadfast in its support for upholding the integrity of the NPT in all three pillars.

"The continuing crisis of non-compliance with nuclear disarmament obligations as well as the failure to implement relevant disarmament commitments agreed at the Review Conferences has seriously undermined confidence in the Treaty. There is an urgent need for progress on implementation of nuclear disarmament obligations by nuclear-weapon States. The balance of the NPT should be restored by full, effective and urgent implementation of nuclear disarmament obligations."

## Iraq Takes Measures to Reduce Water Scarcity Effects on in Dhi Qar

**BAGHDAD (Arab News) – Iraq's ministry of water resources is taking a series of measures to reduce the effects of water scarcity in marshes in the southern governorate of Dhi Qar, according to the Iraq News Agency.**

The Marsh Revival center at the ministry said the low-lying lands have been suffering from water scarcity for the past three seasons, saying the "marches have paid the

price for the consequences of water scarcity."

The statement said the Ministry of Water Resources continues to put efforts to reduce the effects of this scarcity, which resulted from a decline in rainfall, and also reduced water flows from neighboring Turkey across the Tigris and Euphrates rivers to Iraq.

This has "greatly affected the waters that

reach the marshes and cut the size of agricultural plans in half," it added.

The statement said the center has implemented measures to address the issue since the beginning of this summer, by "refining the rivers feeding the marshes, and secondly by delivering water rations to ensure the stability of the local population and the ease of movement of their boats."