

DAMASCUS (Xinhua) – The Syrian air defenses on Wednesday thwarted an Israeli missile attack near the Syrian capital Damascus, the Syrian army said in a statement. The incident occurred at around 15:10 Wednesday local time (1210 GMT) when two missiles were launched from the direction of the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, targeting military sites in the vicinity of Damascus, according to the statement. The Syrian air defenses destroyed one of the missiles while the other caused limited material damage. While the military statement didn't give more details, the pro-government Sham FM radio said the attack took place south of Damascus, specifically in the al-Sayeda Zainab suburb.

There are two things that I fear for you most: following one's passions and forever hoping, because following one's passions impedes truth, and forever hoping causes one to forget the Hereafter.

Amir al-Momeneen Ali (AS)

Iraq Condemns Deadly U.S. Strikes as 'Dangerous Escalation'

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) – Iraq's government condemned overnight U.S. airstrikes south of Baghdad that killed eight members of Iraqi popular resistance forces Kataib Hezbollah, saying they were a "dangerous escalation" not coordinated with authorities.

The Iraqi government condemned the U.S. strikes as "a clear violation of sovereignty and an attempt to disrupt the stable internal security situation," while also noting attacks by armed groups went against Iraq's national interest.

Prominent Iraqi politician Hadi al-Ameri called on Washington to withdraw its troops from Iraq after five members of Iraqi resistance forces were killed in the U.S. airstrike.

Hadi al-Ameri, the head of Iraq's al-Fatah Alliance reacted to the United States army's move in targeting the Iraqi resistance



U.S. Green Berets conduct a medical evacuation exercise during a patrol within the 55km de-confliction zone in the al-Tanf region of southeastern Syria on May 27, 2020.

group's positions and emphasized the need for the immediate withdrawal of American troops and the international coalition from Iraq.

The resistance group Kataib Hezbollah said in a statement earlier on Wednesday that five of its members were killed in its stronghold of Jurf al-Sakhar,

south of Baghdad in U.S. strikes that Washington said were in response to intensified attacks by those resistance fighters against its troops over the past few weeks.

The Islamic resistance in Iraq intensified their attacks on the occupying US troops after Oct. 7 when the Zionist Israeli regime backed by the United States army

launched its aggression on the Gaza Strip in Palestine.

U.S. forces have been attacked 66 times in the Middle East since the uptick in violence that began in mid-October, Defense Department deputy spokesperson Sabrina Singh has confirmed.

"U.S. forces have been attacked approximately 66 times since October 17. Thirty-two separate times in Iraq and 34 separate times in Syria," Singh said during a media briefing on Tuesday.

U.S. personnel have sustained approximately 62 injuries in these attacks, Singh added, noting that the number of injuries does not include those sustained during the Monday night attack because they are still being evaluated.

U.S. soldiers in Iraq and Syria have seen a significant increase in the number of attacks since the breakout of the Zionist regime's aggression in early October.

Hezbollah Leader Holds Talks With Top Hamas Officials Amid Gaza War



Secretary General of Lebanon's Hezbollah resistance movement Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah (R) meets with senior Hamas officials Khalil al-Hayya (2nd L) and Osama Hamdan (1st L) in Beirut, Lebanon, on November 22, 2023.

BEIRUT (Dispatches) – The secretary general of Lebanon's Hezbollah resistance movement met with a delegation of senior officials with the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas amid the Zionist regime's onslaught on the Gaza Strip.

Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah met with prominent figures from the Gaza-based group, including Khalil al-Hayya and Osama Hamdan, in the Lebanese capital city of Beirut on Wednesday, Lebanon's Arabic-language al-Mayadeen television news network reported.

During the meeting, Nasrallah and the Hamas officials reviewed the latest field developments following the large-scale and surprise attack, dubbed Operation Al-Aqsa Flood, which Palestinian resistance movements launched against the Tel Aviv regime on October 7.

The two sides also evaluated potential scenarios on all resistance fronts, especially in the Gaza Strip, and underlined the need for closer coordination and greater steadfastness in order to emerge victorious

in the Gaza war.

The meeting came on the same day that Hezbollah fighters launched a series of retaliatory strikes against Israeli military positions in the northern part of the occupied territories.

Lebanon's Arabic-language al-Manar television channel, citing a Hezbollah statement, reported that the group had pounded the al-Raheb outpost with a heavy-caliber Burkan (Volcano) missile, directly hitting the designated targets.

Moreover, the Lebanese resistance fighters struck Israeli military posts in Bayyad Blida and Yiftah regions, causing casualties in the targeted areas.

On Tuesday, Hezbollah Deputy Secretary General Sheikh Naim Qassem stated, "Israel aims to terrorize Palestinians and force them to abandon the resistance by massacring the people in the Gaza Strip."

The Hezbollah official said, "Arab and Muslim countries must contribute, even a little, to disturbing and hurting the occupying Israeli regime."

Ex-Obama Adviser Says More Palestinian Kids Should Die in Islamophobic Rant

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) – A former senior U.S. official is facing a backlash after harassing a halal food vendor in New York. Stuart Seldowitz, who previously served as deputy director of the United States Department of State's Office of Israel and Palestinian Affairs, was captured on video taunting and threatening the vendor in Manhattan. Amid the apparent argument over the ongoing Gaza war, he told his adversary that more Palestinian children should die.

"If we killed 4,000 Palestinian kids, it wasn't enough," Seldowitz says calmly in one exchange captured on video

and posted on the social media platform X.

In other exchanges, he's heard casting slurs against Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him).

He also threatens to use his government connections to mobilize Egypt's secret police against the vendor, who he accuses of being a "terrorist".

"The Mukhabarat in Egypt will get your parents. Does your father like his fingernails? They'll take them out one by one," Seldowitz says smiling.

The vendor is heard repeatedly asking him to leave and telling him he does not speak English. Seldowitz says the vendor's

lack of English fluency shows he is "ignorant".

"You should learn English, it'll help you when they deport you back to Egypt and the Mukhabarat wants to interview you," he tells the vendor with a grin.

Seldowitz reportedly had a distinguished career with the State Department. He also served on the National Security Council's South Asia Directorate under then-President Barack Obama and went on to become foreign affairs chair at New York lobbying firm Gotham Government Relations, according to a 2022 press release from the company.

The former diplomat admitted in an interview with The New York Times that he had gotten angry with the Manhattan vendor and said things he "probably [regrets]".

He claimed the vendor enraged him after expressing sympathies for the Palestinian group Hamas, although none of the videos shows the vendor mentioning the group.

"I got rather upset and I've said things to him, that in retrospect, I probably regret," Seldowitz told the newspaper. "Instead of focusing in on him and what he said, I expanded into insulting his religion and so on."

Taliban Dismiss UN Report on Women's Rights

UNITED NATIONS (Dispatches) – Afghanistan's Taliban-led administration is "obligated" to consider religious values and will not allow interference in internal affairs, it has told the United Nations in response to an assessment on how the world could deal with the Taliban rulers.

The UN Security Council asked Secretary-General Antonio Guterres for the independent assessment, which was submitted this month. It proposes a path for political engagement aimed at reintegrating Afghanistan after the Taliban seized power in August 2021 as U.S.-led forces withdrew after 20 years of occupation.

The Taliban-led administration's desire for recognition - and the country's seat at the United Nations - is seen as key international leverage to press for an inclusive government and respect for rights, particularly for women, in Afghanistan.

"The basic rights of women and girls, including the right to education and to work, and representation in public and political life – are not only fundamental obligations of a state, but also critical to build state capacity for long-term development and economic growth and peace and security," read the assessment submitted to the 15-member council.

"Any formal re-integration of Afghanistan into global institutions and systems will require the participation and leadership of Afghan women," it read. The assessment was written by veteran Turkish diplomat Feridun Sinirlioglu.

Since the Taliban returned to power, most girls have been barred from high school and women from universities. The Taliban have also stopped most Afghan female staff from working at aid agencies, closed beauty salons, barred women

from parks and curtailed travel for women in the absence of a male guardian.

The Taliban say they respect rights in line with their law.

"This government is obligated to take into consideration the religious values and national interests of the country during all engagements, and will not allow anyone to interfere in our internal affairs," the Taliban-led administration wrote in a response this week to the assessment, seen by Reuters.

It said that since the end of the war Afghan women had been able to secure some of their most basic rights, that about 23.4% of all Afghan civil servants are women, and that unprecedented numbers of Afghan women were participating as leaders and job creators in the business, commerce and manufacturing sectors.

Pro-Palestinian Protesters Arrested at Australian Port

SYDNEY (Dispatches) – Australian police arrested 23 pro-Palestinian protesters for blocking roads near one of the country's largest container ports in Sydney, authorities said on Wednesday, after they protested against a ship owned by Israeli carrier Zim.

About 400 people had gathered near Port Botany on Tuesday evening for a planned protest activity, New South Wales state police said.

Protesters carried Palestinian flags, chanted "free Palestine" to banging drums, and held signs "Boycott ZIM" and "End the Gaza Blockade," television footage showed. Police forcibly removed some protesters from near the port's entrance.

The Zionist regime's aggression against Gaza has triggered protests from both Jewish and Palestinian groups across the

world, including in Australia, which has seen rallies in its largest cities.

Anti-Israeli stickers were plastered on the front doors and red paint was sprayed on the walls of an outlet of McDonald's and Starbucks in Melbourne early this week after a protest march on Sunday, media reported.

McDonald's said it was dismayed by the disinformation and inaccurate reports on its position and that it was not funding or supporting any governments involved in the conflict.

In Zionist regime attacks, at least 13,300 Palestinians have been killed, including at least 5,600 children.

Zionist prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Tuesday asked his cabinet to back a deal to clear the way for the release of some of the captives.