

BEIRUT (Dispatches) -- Authorities in Lebanon have detained an individual involved in espionage for Israel and relaying intelligence that contributed to the assassination of several senior Hezbollah commanders, including Fuad Shukr and Ibrahim Aqil.

According to a judicial official, the spy, who is a Lebanese national, was arrested last week at Rafik Hariri airport in Beirut while he was getting ready to travel to Iraq. The man was affiliated with Israel's Mossad spy agency and is regarded as one of the most prominent espionage criminals identified by Lebanese authorities due to his access to classified information.

'Stealing Iraq's Oil': Resistance Slams Deal During PM Zaidi's U.S. Trip

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) -- U.S. and Iraqi officials are set to conclude a major energy deal as part of Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi's visit to Washington this week, according to Iraqi officials cited by AP on Wednesday.

"An agreement is slated to be signed Friday between Iraq, U.S. companies Chevron and TI Capital, and Qatar's UCC for construction of an oil pipeline that will connect southern Iraq's Basra to western Iraq's Haditha," the officials said.

The pipeline is meant to extend from Haditha to Turkey's Ceyhan port and the port of Baniyas in Syria.

A senior Trump administration official said that Washington is "facilitating conversation" between Iraq and Syria regarding potential future energy projects as Washington is forging closer ties with de facto Syrian president Abu Muhammad al-Jolani, a former Daesh and Al-Qaeda deputy.

Iraqi resistance faction Al-Nujaba Movement warned against making deals with Washington in Iraq.

"[Trump] will not continue living under the illusion of stealing Iraq's oil and wealth, whether through direct theft or under the cover of suspicious investments. The Islamic resistance will continue confronting U.S. forces and drive them from Iraq's land and skies," the movement's leader Akram al-Kaabi said in a statement on Wednesday.



Iraqi Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi meets U.S. President Donald Trump at the Oval Office on Tuesday.

The new Iraqi prime minister's visit to Washington is expected to last until Saturday.

During the meeting at the Oval Office, Trump called Zaidi "young" and "handsome," and that he had "tremendous chemistry" with the new Iraqi prime minister.

In a press briefing between the two leaders, Baghdad and Washington announced that U.S. combat troops would withdraw from Iraq by September 30.

Zaidi was sworn in as premier in May this year, succeeding former prime minister Muhammad Shia al-Sudani.

This came after Trump had threatened to "cut off" Iraq completely if former premier Nouri al-Maliki was re-elected.

Despite initially vowing to continue running, Maliki ended up withdrawing his candidacy. "Mark my words, I knew what I was doing," Trump said as he sat near Zaidi in the Oval Office on Tuesday.

"This man is going to be a great leader ... beyond Iraq. His influence is going to spread all throughout the [region]," he said, referring to Zaidi.

Zaidi's visit coincided with reports

of a major escalation of U.S. pressure tactics, aimed at forcing the Iraqi resistance to surrender its arms.

Sources told the New Arab on Wednesday that Washington has "hardened its stance" against resistance factions in the country.

The Trump administration has adopted a significantly more coercive approach than its predecessors to disarming the Iraqi resistance, stepping up pressure on Baghdad in recent months to dismantle the resistance factions swiftly.

Washington reportedly froze security programs with Baghdad and blocked dollar shipments to the country earlier this year to pressure Iraq into dismantling resistance groups.

Late last month, Baghdad issued a September 30 deadline for the disarmament of all armed factions in Iraq, including resistance movements.

After months of heavy U.S. pressure, some armed organizations have agreed to turn over weapons to the state. Many others, including resistance groups Kataib Hezbollah and Al-Nujaba Movement, have refused.

Iraqi resistance groups demand a full U.S. withdrawal, rather than the "transitional" pullout agreed on between Washington and Baghdad, which will see Washington shift from a "combat" to an "advisory" role, while still retaining a military presence in the country.

Yemen Shoots Down Drone, Warns Airlines to Avoid Saudi Airspace

SANAA (Dispatches) -- Yemeni forces shot down a Saudi Arabian Wing Loong II reconnaissance drone over Al-Bayda province, military spokesperson Yahya Saree said, as the conflict between the two sides escalated sharply following Saudi strikes on Sanaa International Airport.

The drone was "carrying out hostile missions" when it was intercepted with "appropriate weaponry" early on Tuesday, Saree said in a statement. He warned that Yemeni forces are "fully prepared to counter any violation of country's airspace and sovereignty".

The downing came a day after Saudi Arabia struck Sanaa airport in an attempt to prevent an Iranian aircraft from landing. Yemen condemned the strike as "blatant aggression" and declared that the four-year informal truce with Ri-

yadh had effectively ended.

In retaliation, Yemeni forces launched ballistic missiles and drones at Saudi Arabia's Abha International Airport, forcing the suspension of flights. Saree also warned airlines against using Saudi airspace until the blockade on Sanaa airport is lifted.

The escalation marks the most significant clash between Yemen and Saudi Arabia since the 2022 ceasefire took effect.

Yemen's Sanaa-based Foreign Ministry described the Saudi action as a "declaration of war". The conflict in Yemen has been ongoing since 2014, when a Saudi-led coalition intervened in 2015 in support of a fugitive regime. The war has killed over 150,000 people and triggered one of the world's worst humanitarian crises.

Israel Continues Kidnapping Syrians as Jolani's FM Visits Saudi Arabia

QUNEITRA (Dispatches) -- Israeli forces detained a Syrian man before releasing him Wednesday during a new incursion into Quneitra province in southwestern Syria, according to SANA news agency.

They entered the village of Al-Muallaqa in the southern countryside of Quneitra, setting up a temporary checkpoint and searching passersby before withdrawing. The man was released several hours later.

The incursion followed similar operations on Tuesday in the villages of Maariya in the western countryside of Daraa and Al-Bassali in southern Quneitra.

Following the fall of Bashar al-Assad's government on December 8, 2024, Israel declared the 1974 disengagement agreement void and moved into the UN-monitored buffer zone. Since then, Israeli violations have intensified significantly.

A UN commission investigating Israeli violations in Quneitra documented that Israeli forces have arbitrarily detained 47 Syrian civilians since December 2024, demolished 16 homes in Al-Hamidiyah following forced displacement of residents, and established nine forward military positions inside Syrian territory.

The UN documented that Israeli violations have included over 1,000 strikes and 1,157 "incursions" into Syrian territory since December 2024.

Israeli forces have entered villages across Quneitra and Daraa provinces in repeated raids, with operations including arrests, land bulldozing, and shelling. The UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2824 in June 2026, reaffirming the validity of the 1974 Disengagement Agreement and calling for both parties to "scrupulously and fully" respect its terms.

Syria's new administration,

led by president Abu Muhammad al-Jolani has struggled to maintain control amid widespread insecurity. Jolani leads Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), a group with origins in Al-Qaeda that the UK says it "no longer assesses to be an alias of Al-Qaeda". However, the group's violent past remains a concern.

Sectarian violence has erupted across the country since the regime change. In March 2025, over 1,000 people were killed in just two days as sectarian violence targeted the Alawite community, with around 830 Alawites reportedly massacred.

Shocking footage showed uniformed militants savagely beating Alawite civilians, dragging them from their homes and executing them at point-blank range. Many soldiers at checkpoints reportedly carry Nusra flags rather than the new Syrian flag and openly refer to Alawites as "pigs".

Saudi Arabia has emerged as a key supporter of Syria's new administration, hosting Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani in Riyadh on Wednesday for talks with Saudi counterpart Prince Faisal bin Farhan. Jolani's first foreign trip after coming to power was to Saudi Arabia, where he met Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman.

Saudi Arabia was among the main backers of opposition forces during the years of war on Syria, arming, funding, and sponsoring militant groups—including some of the most violent terrorist factions—in the effort to topple Bashar al-Assad.

Analysts note that while Jolani seeks financial resources and international legitimacy, Saudi Arabia is cautiously engaging with Syria's new government as part of broader regional rivalry with Turkey and the UAE.

Trump's 'Peace' Plan in Shambles as Israeli Attacks Kill 13 in Gaza

GAZA CITY (Dispatches) -- Israeli airstrikes and ground fire killed at least 13 Palestinians across the Gaza Strip over the past 24 hours, according to health officials on Wednesday, as the U.S.-backed "Board of Peace" remains incapable of halting the violence.

The attacks included an airstrike on a police post in the Jabaliya refugee camp in northern Gaza, which killed at least seven people, including a senior police officer and a woman, medics said. The Hamas-run interior ministry identified one of the dead as Colonel Muhammad Marwan Salem, head of the Jabaliya police force.

In central Gaza's Deir al-Balah,

a helicopter strike on a residential building killed a family of four in the early hours of Wednesday, according to Palestinian medics. In Rafah, in the south, a 10-year-old boy was shot and killed by Israeli gunfire, while a strike in Khan Younis killed a 36-year-old man and wounded three others. Medics also reported a Palestinian killed near a mosque in western Gaza City.

The Gaza Health Ministry said hospitals received 13 bodies over the past 24 hours, with more than 1,100 Palestinians killed since the October 2025 ceasefire took effect.

The "Board of Peace," unveiled by U.S. President Donald Trump in January, was supposed to over-

see reconstruction and transition to a technocratic Palestinian administration. The plan requires Israel withdraw from occupied areas.

Neither condition has been met. The Palestinian committee meant to govern Gaza remains blocked outside the strip, with Israel refusing to permit its entry. Hamas leaders concluded another round of truce talks in Cairo this week, but sources said little progress was made toward implementing the peace plan's second phase.

The United States has used its veto power at the UN Security Council to block resolutions demanding an unconditional ceasefire, with 14 of 15 members supporting such measures on multiple

occasions. Washington insists on linking any ceasefire to Hamas disarmament—a precondition critics say has effectively enabled continued Israeli atrocities.

Since the ceasefire took effect, Israeli forces have expanded their control to occupy approximately 70% of Gaza, according to Palestinian officials. Aid agencies report Israel is blocking essential medical equipment from entering the strip, while the UN estimates rebuilding Gaza will cost over \$70 billion.

The Board of Peace has delivered neither peace nor reconstruction—only a diplomatic framework that masks continued Palestinian suffering while the killing goes on.

India Deepens Ties With Taliban as Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations Sour

KABUL (Dispatches) -- India and Taliban-ruled Afghanistan are rapidly strengthening diplomatic and economic relations, capitalizing on the dramatic deterioration in ties between Kabul and its former ally Islamabad.

The rapprochement marks a significant strategic shift for New Delhi, which historically viewed the Taliban with hostility due to the group's ideology and close affiliation with Pakistan's military establishment.

India supported the Northern Alliance against the Taliban during the 1996-2001 Afghan Civil War and was a close partner of the Western-backed government that assumed power following the US invasion in 2001.

The turning point came on January 8, 2025, when Indian External Affairs Secretary Vikram Misri met Taliban Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi in Dubai, facilitated by the United Arab Emirates. That meeting marked the first high-level engagement between the two sides since the Taliban's return to power in August 2021.

In October 2025, Muttaqi made a historic six-

day visit to New Delhi — the first by a senior Taliban minister to India. During the visit, India announced it would upgrade its technical mission in Kabul to the status of a full embassy. The UN Security Council temporarily lifted Muttaqi's travel ban to facilitate the visit.

Since then, four Taliban ministers have visited India. In November 2025, Industry and Commerce Minister Nooruddin Azizi led a trade delegation to New Delhi, where both sides announced the reactivation of the Kabul-Delhi and Kabul-Amritsar air freight corridors. Trade between the two countries has surpassed \$1.5 billion.

The thaw in India-Taliban relations coincides with a sharp downturn in Afghanistan-Pakistan ties. Pakistan historically viewed Afghanistan as a source of "strategic depth" in its rivalry with India, but this policy has backfired since the Taliban's return to power.

The core issue is the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which Islamabad says uses Afghan soil to launch attacks inside Pakistan — an accusation Kabul denies. Since October 2025,

border clashes between the two countries have escalated significantly, with Pakistan conducting airstrikes inside Afghanistan.

For India, engagement with the Taliban serves multiple objectives. New Delhi wants to prevent Afghanistan from re-emerging as a hub for militancy threatening Indian security. The Taliban have assured India they "will not allow any group to use our territory against others".

India also seeks to strengthen regional connectivity, viewing Afghanistan as a potential bridge to Central Asia. The resumption of air freight corridors and India's investment in Iran's Chabahar port offer alternative trade routes that bypass Pakistan.

The Taliban, for its part, seek to break diplomatic isolation and secure economic assistance as Western donor support has declined. The growing engagement with India signals the group's effort to diversify partnerships beyond Pakistan.

Despite the warming ties, India has not formally recognized the Taliban government. The ideological divide remains significant.