

## Russia to invest \$500 mln in Syrian port, build grain hub -Interfax

Author:

Reuters

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Tue, 2019-12-17 16:27

MOSCOW: Russia plans to invest \$500 million in the Syrian port of Tartus and build a grain hub there to boost its presence on Middle East markets, Interfax news agency cited Deputy Prime Minister Yury Borisov as saying on Tuesday.

Russia, the world's largest wheat exporter, has stepped up grain supplies to support Syrian President Bashar Assad in recent years since Moscow's 2015 military intervention on his behalf in Syria's civil war.

Construction of the necessary infrastructure at the port, which Russia rented out for 49 years from Syrian authorities in 2017, could begin next year, Borisov was quoted as saying.

Syria's Mediterranean coastal region has remained under firm government control throughout the war.

"Russia intends to organize the work of the old port and to build a new commercial port. The sum of investment for the next four years is valued at \$500 million," Borisov was quoted as saying.

Moscow will also begin delivering 100,000 tons of grain in humanitarian aid to Syria by the end of December – supplies that will continue until the second quarter, he said.

Ports in Crimea, which Russia annexed from Ukraine in 2014, have exported the Black Sea peninsula's surplus of grain to the port of Tartus in recent years to ensure Assad's Syria has a reliable source of food.

The Russian Navy also operates a military facility at Tartus, Russia's only naval foothold in the Mediterranean, and Moscow has previously said it plans to expand and modernize the port's facilities for its fleet.

Earlier on Tuesday, the Russian Defense Ministry's Zvezda TV channel said Russia and Syria had carried out their first joint military drills near Tartus. The drill involved more than 2,000 Russian and Syrian troops, 10 naval vessels as well as Russian aviation, the Zvezda report said.

Russia also has an air base in Syria's coastal Latakia province which it has used for air strikes against forces opposed to Assad. Last month, Moscow said it had set up a helicopter base at an airport in northeastern Syria.



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Regime bombardment kills 14 civilians in northwest Syria: monitor

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## [Suspected drug lord, 'Angels of Death' cartel leader Ridouan Taghi arrested in Dubai](#)

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1576597676941485500

Tue, 2019-12-17 18:53

LONDON: A suspected drug lord believed to be the Netherlands' most wanted man has been arrested in Dubai, police said on Tuesday.

Dubai Police announced the arrest of 41-year old Ridouan Taghi, who is alleged to be the leader of the "Angels of Death" cartel operating across Europe and Africa.

Taghi had been living in Dubai since 2016 and was arrested at a villa that he rarely left, director of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of Dubai Police Jamal Salem Al-Jallaf told Dutch media.

Al-Jallaf added that the Moroccan-born Taghi had been "careful, very careful," adding: "The curtains of the house were always closed, no light came out. You could not see from outside if there was someone inside."

The suspect also attracted international attention in September after a Dutch lawyer for a state witness in a major case against him was shot dead outside his home in Amsterdam.

Dubai Police said several international arrest warrants had been issued against Taghi last year on charges of ordering a series of murders, drug trafficking and of belonging to a criminal cartel, adding that his arrest was made possible through cooperation between Dubai Police, Dutch officers and INTERPOL, according to Emirates News Agency (WAM).

The Commander-in-Chief of Dubai Police, Major General Abdullah Khalifa Al-Marri, said the suspect entered the country through Dubai International Airport using official documents, which included a passport and a visa that were not his own, and that coming from the Netherlands the suspect was able to enter the UAE before a notification regarding him was issued by authorities in his own country.

He added that the suspect lived in one of Dubai's residential areas without engaging in any criminal activity and managed his daily affairs with the help of his acquaintances of various nationalities.

In connection with Taghi's arrest, Dutch police have arrested six people in a series of raids across the Netherlands.

"Following this arrest, eight house searches were made on Monday evening and six suspects were arrested. This concerns five men and a woman between the ages of 29 and 45," Dutch police said in a statement.

"The suspects have been arrested for money laundering, possession of weapons and possession of drugs."



Dutch officials speak to the press after the announcement of the arrest of Ridouan Taghi. (AFP)

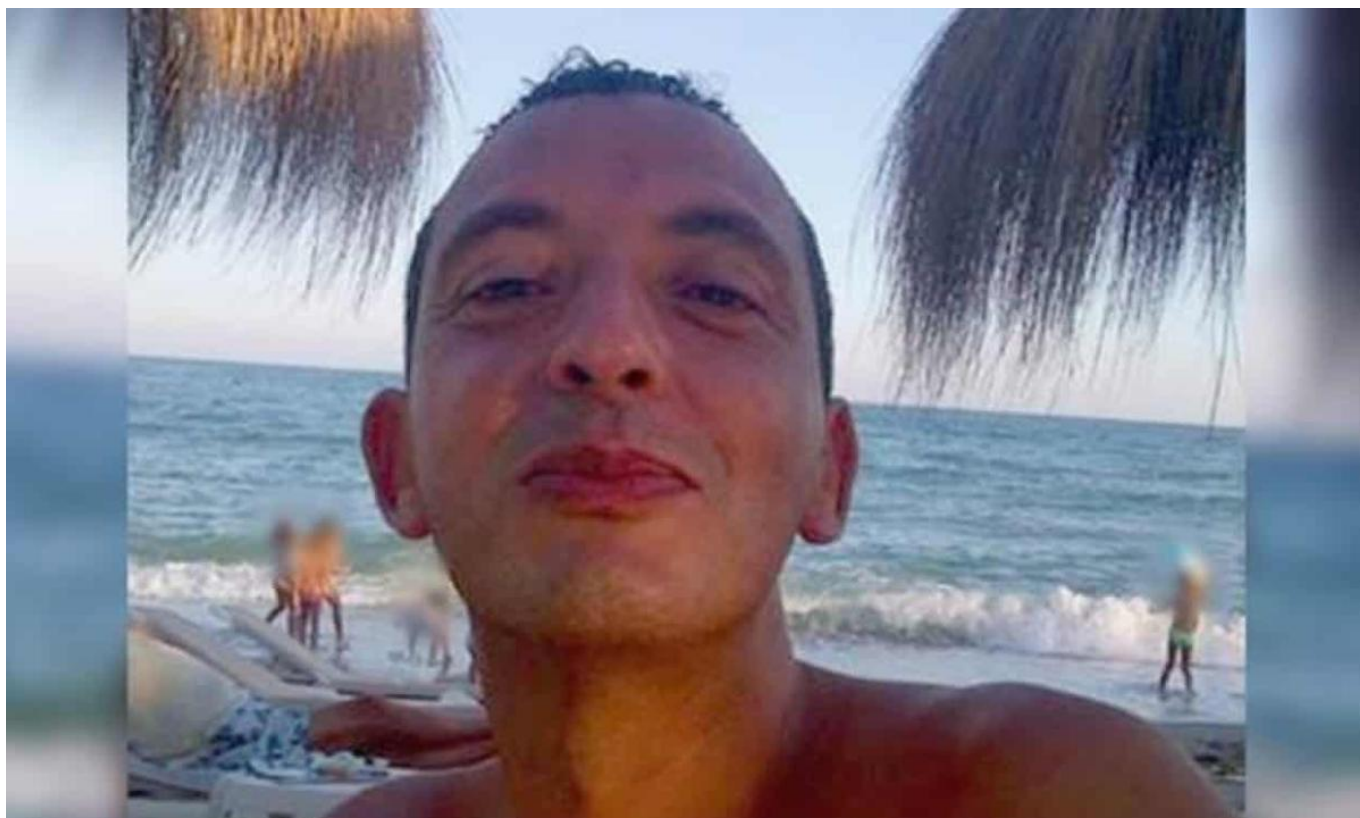
The searches were in various locations including the capital Amsterdam and the central city of Utrecht.

Erik Akerboom, Commissioner of Netherlands Police, thanked the UAE authorities and Dubai Police for their cooperation and efforts to track down the accused, WAM reported.

He said that Dubai Police's help was of "vital importance" in making the arrest possible. The Commissioner further said that Dubai Police had "set an example for cooperation between authorities in combating organized crime around the world."

Dutch media reported that the Netherlands and Dubai have no extradition treaty but authorities in both countries were working on transferring Taghi possibly by the end of February.

*(With AFP)*



« waakzaam en dienstbaar »



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US judge blasts drug lord El Chapo's 'overwhelming evil,' imposes life sentence  
Mexican drug lord El Chapo described by witnesses as a pedophile:  
court papers  
Philippine police says crackdown targeting more drug lords  
Kill drug lords, cop tells Philippine addicts

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## [Beirut left reeling after online video sparks violent clashes](#)

Author:

AFP

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1576585188830343700

Tue, 2019-12-17 12:15

BEIRUT: Lebanon's capital was rocked by a third night of violence after an online video containing sectarian insults sent hundreds of protesters onto the streets to vent their anger at police and security forces.

The protesters, supporters of the Hezbollah and Amal movements, set cars ablaze, and threw stones and fireworks at police, who used tear gas and water cannon to disperse them.

Angered by the video, protesters from Beirut's southern suburb of Khandak El Ghamik used social media platforms late on Monday to issue calls to gather in the capital's squares, where they again targeted anti-government demonstrators.

It was the third consecutive night of violence in the capital following clashes between anti-government protesters and police on Saturday and Sunday. Riot police and army personnel responded to the attacks by firing dozens of tear gas canisters, wounding several people, including security personnel. More than 20 people were rushed to hospital after the clashes.

Appeals for calm by Amal and Hezbollah leaders failed to stop supporters from confronting police and security forces.

A local religious leader, Sheikh Mohammed Kazem Ayyad, appeared on television from the Khandak El Ghamik mosque urging protesters to "leave the street."

Youssef Khayat, manager of the Central Monroe Hotel close to the site of the clashes, told Arab News: "Our occupancy rate has fallen to zero. In order to survive, we have to reduce salaries and cut the number of employees. When the confrontations begin in the evening, we lock the doors and stay inside."

Anger over the incident spread to the cities of Sidon and Nabatieh, where young men destroyed protesters' tents in Elia Square and attacked a number of people.

Safety fears forced most schools in Sidon to close on Tuesday while the army carried out patrols throughout the city.

Hezbollah and Amal supporters also destroyed anti-government protesters' tents in Nabatieh.

Nora Farhat, who runs a women's beauty salon, said the attacks were expected. "Targeting Hezbollah and Amal leaders all the time is bound to cause an

explosion on the street. The protesters should accommodate other people, not provoke them. It is true that the protesters are not responsible for the inflammatory video, but everybody is tense.”

In an attempt to calm the political situation, caretaker Prime Minister Saad Hariri visited Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri – the first meeting between the two since the deadlock over forming a replacement government.

A statement issued after the meeting said that “it is imperative that the Lebanese demonstrate awareness and vigilance at this stage, preserve civil peace and national unity, and not be drawn into the strife that some are working hard to promote.”

Berri and Hariri said that “the need to accelerate the formation of the government has become more than urgent.”

Meanwhile, the Imam of Al-Basta mosque, Sheikh Ali Bitar, visited the Khandak El Ghamik mosque to meet Sheikh Ayyad. “We came to assure all Lebanese and the Muslim world that we are one body. We condemn the provocative video,” Sheikh Bitar said.

Beirut’s Public Prosecution Department planned to take action against the man who posted the online video but it later emerged he is living in Greece. The man’s uncle said on television: “The family has nothing to do with the words of my nephew.”

Later the man posted a second video apologizing for his actions.





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[Hezbollah](#)

Lebanese leaders 'trying to buy time,' warns UN envoy Kubis  
Technocratic government key to Lebanon's woes, former PM claims

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## [Egyptian officials unveil new archaeological finds](#)

Author:

By ISABEL DEBRE | AP

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1576592384590985500

Tue, 2019-12-17 12:56

CAIRO: Archaeologists in Egypt have unveiled two new artifacts from antiquity, a rare statue of one of the country's most famous pharaohs and a diminutive ancient sphinx.

Egypt's Ministry of Antiquities announced that a pink granite statue of celebrated ancient ruler Ramses II was found last week, describing the artifact as "one of the rarest archaeological discoveries."

Mostafa Waziri, secretary general of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, said the three-and-a-half-foot statue was crafted in a style that ancient Egyptians used to portray and capture an individual's essential nature, adding that it was the first such statue to be found fashioned from granite. A hieroglyphic inscription found on the back of the stone bore the name "strong bull," a reference to the king's "strength and vitality," he added. The statue, caked in mud, was found on the property of a man arrested earlier this month for carrying out illegal excavations near the ancient pyramids of Giza, according to the ministry statement. It did not say how the statue came to be on the man's property.

"It's in very good condition," Niveen Al-Areef, a spokeswoman for the antiquities ministry, told The Associated Press on Tuesday. "We are now studying its importance and trying to determine its inscriptions."

Ramses II, also known as Ramses the Great, ruled Egypt for around 60 years, from 1279 B.C. to 1213 B.C. He is credited with expanding ancient Egypt's reach as far as modern Syria to the east and modern Sudan to the south.

Over the weekend, Egyptian archaeologists also unearthed a dwarf limestone sphinx from a ditch in the southern desert province of Minya. At barely over one foot tall, the statue is no match for the towering Great Sphinx at the Pyramids of Giza, but the ministry said its finely carved face, which appears well-preserved, reflects impressive artistic skill and attention to detail. Egypt frequently touts its archaeological discoveries in hopes of spurring a vital tourism industry that has been reeling from political turmoil following the 2011 popular uprising that toppled longtime autocrat Hosni Mubarak.







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'The most beautiful place': Halima Aden wowed by Egyptian coast Egyptian civilian triggers discovery of ancient temple

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## [Regime bombardment kills 14 civilians in northwest Syria: monitor](#)

Author:

Associated Press

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1576587261930529000

Tue, 2019-12-17 12:49

BEIRUT: Syrian regime air strikes and artillery fire on Tuesday killed 14 civilians in the last major opposition bastion in the northwest of the

country, a war monitor said.

The militant-held region of Idlib is supposed to be protected by a months-old cease-fire deal to prevent a broad regime offensive, but deadly bombardment has continued.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said regime artillery fire killed six civilians from the same family – including a mother and her three children – in the village of Badama.

In the village of Maasaran, regime air strikes killed a further four civilians.

An AFP photographer on site saw a pool of red blood and clothes strewn on the pavement by a shop whose window had been shattered.

“That’s the regime for you,” a resident said, as he helped a shopkeeper pick up some items of clothing.

Pro-government bombardment also led to four other civilians losing their lives in other parts of the bastion, the Observatory said.

The Idlib region, which is home to some three million people including many displaced by Syria’s civil war, is controlled by the country’s former Al-Qaeda affiliate.

The Damascus regime has repeatedly vowed to take back control of it.

Pro-government forces launched a blistering offensive against the region in April, killing around 1,000 civilians and displacing more than 400,000 people from their homes.

Moscow announced a cease-fire in late August, but the Observatory says deadly bombardment and skirmishes have persisted.

It says more than 200 civilians have been killed in the region since the deal.

Syria’s war has killed over 370,000 people and displaced millions from their homes since beginning in 2011 with the brutal repression of anti-government protests.



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Syria hands oil exploration contracts to two Russian firms  
Nearly 70 dead in Syria regime clashes with Idlib militants