

[Blast kills 31 regime fighters at Syria airbase](#)

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Sat, 2019-08-03 13:31

BEIRUT: A munitions blast killed 31 regime and allied fighters at a military airport in central Syria Saturday, the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said, increasing an earlier toll.

State news agency SANA reported earlier that a “technical fault during the transport of expired ammunition” had killed an unspecified number of victims at the Shayrat airbase in Homs province.

The Shayrat airbase is one of the regime’s most significant installations in the centre of the country.

In 2017, US air strikes hit the base in response to a suspected sarin gas attack on the rebel-held town of Khan Sheikhun in northwest Syria that killed more than 80 people.

According to the Pentagon, US intelligence had established that the base was the launchpad for the alleged chemical attack.



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Airstrikes halt in Syria's Idlib as truce goes into effect
First group of Lebanese, Syrian, Palestinian pilgrims leave Beirut for Hajj

[Libyans intercept boat carrying 75 Europe-bound migrants](#)

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Sat, 2019-08-03 11:38

CAIRO: Libya's coast guard says it intercepted 75 Europe-bound migrants off the country's Mediterranean coast.

Spokesman Ayoub Gassim said Saturday that a rubber boat carrying migrants from Bangladesh, Morocco, Somalia, Algeria and Sudan was stopped Friday some 110 kilometers (70 miles) west of the capital, Tripoli.

He says the migrants were given humanitarian and medical aid before being taken to a detention center in the northwestern city of Zawiya.

Libya became a major conduit for African migrants and refugees fleeing to Europe after the 2011 uprising that ousted and killed longtime ruler Muammar Qaddafi.



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[Iran will take 'third step' to reduce commitments to nuclear deal: Iranian FM](#)

Sat, 2019-08-03 08:45

GENEVA: Iran will take a third step to reduce its commitments to a landmark 2015 nuclear deal within the framework of the pact, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Saturday, according to parliamentary news agency ICANA.

Iran has repeatedly said it will reduce its commitment to the nuclear accord in stages and may even withdraw from the pact altogether unless the remaining signatories find ways to shield its economy from U.S. sanctions. Washington pulled out of the deal last year.

"The third step in reducing commitments to (the nuclear deal) will be implemented in the current situation," he said.

"We have said that if (the deal) is not completely implemented by others then we will also implement it in the same incomplete manner. And of course all of our actions have been within the framework of (the deal)."

Last month, Iran threatened to restart deactivated centrifuges and ramp up enrichment of uranium to 20% purity in a move away from the nuclear deal. Iranian officials have said that all of Tehran's moves in reducing its commitments to the nuclear deal are reversible as long as the remaining signatories uphold their commitments.

Fears of a Middle East war with global repercussions have risen since U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew last year from the 2015 deal and revived a panoply of sanctions meant to push Tehran into wider security concessions.

The United States on Wednesday imposed sanctions on Zarif himself, blocking any property or interests he has in the United States, although Zarif said he had none.

He added at a charity event on Friday night that he is proud to be sanctioned by America for defending the rights of Iranian people, the IRIB news agency reported.



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US will enforce Iran sanctions: PompeoUK FM to Iran: There will be no tanker swap

[Gargash: UAE is redeploying forces in Yemen with the agreement of Saudi Arabia](#)

Fri, 2019-08-02 18:50

DUBAI: The UAE is redeploying its forces in Hodeidah, Yemen with the agreement of Saudi Arabia, its Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Anwar Gargash said Friday.

The redeployment is the outcome of extensive dialogue with the Arab coalition, and the country has agreed on a strategy for the next phase in Yemen with Saudi Arabia, Gargash said.

He added that Saudi Arabia and the UAE are determined to avoid confrontation with Iran, and that the relationship between Riyadh and Abu Dhabi is “solid and lasting.”



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With UAE's support, Yemen's war victims get a healing touch in India UAE and Iranian officials meet in Tehran to discuss 'maritime affairs'

[Syria at peace talks says cease-fire depends on Turkey](#)

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Fri, 2019-08-02 12:11

NUR-SULTAN, Kazakhstan: Syria's representative at peace talks in Kazakhstan on Friday said the success of a cease-fire in the northwestern region of Idlib would depend on Turkey disarming rebels of heavy weapons and implementing a buffer zone.

Syrian negotiator Bashar Jaafari attacked the Turkish military presence in the northwest of the country and called Syria's cease-fire statement on Thursday "a test of Turkey's intentions."

The comments came during the second day of talks brokered by Syria's allies Russia and Iran, along with rebel-backer Turkey.

Jaafari also called on the guarantors of the talks to assume "their responsibilities by putting pressure on Turkey" to fulfil the conditions of an accord struck last year.

"The cease-fire agreement is conditioned on Turkey upholding the Astana and Sochi agreements by disarming terrorists of heavy and medium weapons," Jaafari said.

Jaafari accused the militant groups of shelling areas under regime control in northwest Syria "from areas Turkey controls in Idlib."

"Even though we are patient, this time our patience will be limited. We will not be waiting endlessly for Turkey to fulfil its commitments," he said.

Syria's state news agency SANA reported Thursday that the government had agreed to a truce in Idlib on condition a Turkish-Russian buffer-zone deal is implemented.

It cited a military source who announced the regime's "approval for a cease-fire in the de-escalation zone in Idlib starting from tonight" on the condition that jihadists and rebels withdraw forces and weaponry from a buffer zone as per a September accord.

Moscow welcomed the statement.

Idlib is the last major jihadist-run bastion in Syria after eight years of brutal conflict.

Idlib and parts of the neighboring provinces of Aleppo, Hama and Latakia are under the control of Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham, a jihadist group led by Syria's former Al-Qaeda affiliate.

The region is supposed to be protected from a massive government offensive by a September buffer zone deal, but it has come under increasing bombardment by the regime and its Russian ally over the past three months.

A joint statement on the talks in Kazakhstan's capital Nur-Sultan released by Russia, Iran and Turkey showed little progress toward ending Syria's conflict.

The war in Syria has killed more than 370,000 people and displaced millions since it started in 2011 with a crackdown on anti-government protests.



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Airstrikes halt in Syria's Idlib as truce goes into effect
Syrian regime gains ground in opposition bastion