

Oman not mediating, but in contact with 'all parties' over navigation in Hormuz

Sun, 2019-07-28 17:31

TEHRAN: Oman is not undertaking any mediation efforts around rising tensions in the Gulf region but is in contact with "all parties" in order to maintain stability in the Strait of Hormuz, Oman's minister in charge of foreign affairs said on Sunday.

"We are not mediating, but what we are more concerned with, in this case, is securing the stability of navigation in the Hormuz Strait, so we are in contact with all parties," Yousuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah told Omani state TV after meeting Iranian officials in Tehran.

The emergency meeting with parties to Iran's 2015 nuclear deal was constructive but there are unresolved issues and Tehran will continue to reduce its nuclear commitments if Europeans fail to salvage the pact, Iranian official Abbas Araqchi said on Sunday.

The parties have been trying to salvage the pact since the US withdrew from it in May 2018 and re-imposed sanctions on Iran.

The Europeans say further breaches of the agreement by Iran would escalate confrontation at a time when Tehran and Washington are at risk of a miscalculation that could lead to war.

The seizure of the British tanker in the world's most important waterway for the oil trade has deepened a crisis between Iran and the West. Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said Britain's seizure of the Iranian oil tanker was illegal and would be detrimental for Britain.



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Oman's top diplomat in Iran talks amid mounting Gulf tensions
Oman urges Iran to let seized tanker depart

[Iran nuclear deal parties meet after month of friction](#)

Author:

Reuters

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Sun, 2019-07-28 11:12

VIENNA: Parties to Iran's 2015 nuclear deal met in Vienna on Sunday for emergency talks called in response to an escalation in tensions between Iran and the West that included confrontations at sea and Tehran's breaches of the accord.

Britain, France, Germany, Russia, China and Iran have been trying to salvage the pact since the United States withdrew from it in May 2018 and re-imposed and toughened sanctions on Iran, crippling an already weak economy. The European-led efforts to protect trade with Iran against the US sanctions have yielded nothing concrete so far. Earlier this month, Tehran followed through on its threat to increase its nuclear activities in breach of the agreement.

"All our steps taken so far are reversible if other parties to the deal fulfil their commitments," an Iranian diplomat told Reuters before the extraordinary meeting was due to start.

*****Read more:** [Iran says European naval mission in Gulf would be 'provocative'](#)***

In response to the sanctions, Iran said in May it would decrease its commitments under the nuclear pact. Under the deal, most international sanctions against Tehran were lifted in return for limitations on its nuclear work.

So far, Iran has breached the limit of its enriched uranium stockpile as well as enriching uranium beyond a 3.67% purity limit set by its deal with major powers, defying a warning by Europeans to stick to the deal despite US sanctions.

The UN nuclear watchdog, policing the deal, has confirmed the measures announced by Tehran.

"(Trade vehicle) INSTEX , along with other measures, will be discussed in the meeting. Other parties should accelerate their efforts, otherwise Iran will take a third step," the diplomat said.

Sanctions

The meeting in Vienna comes after Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards seized a British-flagged oil tanker on July 19, two weeks after British forces captured an Iranian oil tanker near Gibraltar which it said was violating sanctions on Syria.

Iran's senior nuclear negotiator Abbas Araqchi said on Sunday Britain's seizure of the Iranian oil tanker was a violation of the nuclear pact.

"We witnessed the seizure of an oil tanker carrying Iranian oil in the Strait of Gibraltar which in our view is a violation of (the nuclear deal)," Araqchi said.

"And the countries who are part of (the nuclear deal) shouldn't create obstacles for the export of Iranian oil."

Britain has called for a European-led naval mission to ensure safe shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, a vital international oil shipping route. An Iranian government spokesman said on Sunday such a mission would send a "hostile message."

Britain said on Sunday Royal Navy destroyer HMS Duncan had arrived in the Gulf to join a British frigate escorting British-flagged ships through the Strait.

Iran has threatened to disrupt oil shipments through the waterway, where several oil tankers have been attacked, if the United States tries to strangle its economy with sanctions on its vital oil exports.



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[Israel: Arrow-3 anti-missile system passed live test in US](#)

Author:

Reuters

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Sun, 2019-07-28 08:15

JERUSALEM: Israel's US-backed Arrow-3 air defense system, billed as a bullwark against the ballistic missiles fielded by Iran and Syria, has passed a live interception test in Alaska, the Israeli Defense Ministry said on Sunday.

Jointly manufactured by Boeing Co, Arrow-3 is billed as capable of destroying missiles in space, an altitude that would destroy any non-conventional

warheads safely. It passed the first full interception test over the Mediterranean sea in 2015 and was deployed in Israel in 2017.



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Israel fires missiles into south SyriaSaudi Arabia urges UN to halt 'flagrant Israeli violations'

[Iran says European naval mission in Gulf would be 'provocative'](#)

Sun, 2019-07-28 10:49

TEHRAN: Iran on Sunday slammed as "provocative" a British proposal for a European-led naval mission to escort tankers in the Gulf, amid soaring tensions over the seizure of ships.

"We heard that they intend to send a European fleet to the Arabian Gulf which naturally carries a hostile message, is provocative and will increase

tensions,” government spokesman Ali Rabiei said, quoted by ISNA news agency.

The statements come as the head of Iran’s Atomic Energy Organization, Ali Akbar Salehi, told lawmakers on Sunday that Iran will restart activities at the Arak heavy water nuclear reactor, the ISNA news agency reported. ISNA cited a member of parliament who attended the meeting. Heavy water can be employed in reactors to produce plutonium, a fuel used in nuclear warheads.

In May, Iran announced planned measures to breach the nuclear agreement with major world powers following the US withdrawal from deal and Washington’s reimposition of tough sanctions.

On July 3, President Hassan Rouhani said Tehran would increase its uranium enrichment levels and start to revive its Arak heavy-water reactor after July 7 if the nations in the nuclear pact did not protect trade with Iran promised under the deal but blocked by the US sanctions.



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Iranian exiles rally in London to demand regime change in Tehran

Iraq Kurds accuse PKK of Turkish envoy's murder

Author:

Sat, 2019-07-27 23:02

ERBIL, IRAQ: The authorities in Iraqi Kurdistan have accused Turkish Kurdish rebels of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) of ordering the July 17 murder of the Turkish vice-consul in regional capital Erbil.

The federal government in Baghdad has often blamed the PKK for carrying out attacks against Turkish targets from its rear bases in Iraq's northern mountains but a statement issued late on Friday was a rare accusation against their fellow Kurds by the autonomous regional authorities.

The PKK's armed wing had denied responsibility for the assassination. But the Iraqi Kurdish authorities said that based on a detailed confession by the suspected Turkish Kurdish gunman, Mazloun Dag, 27, the murder was carried out on the orders of top PKK commanders.

Turkish Vice-Consul Osman Kose was gunned down with two Iraqis while they dined on a restaurant terrace in Erbil.

Iraqi Kurdish security services said that the murder had been three months in the planning by PKK commanders in their heavily fortified hideouts in Iraq's Qandil mountains.

They said they had arrested three Turkish and three Iraqi suspects.

Dag's arrest last Saturday was immediately seized on by the Turkish media as his sister Dersim is a member of Parliament for Turkey's main pro-Kurdish party, the People's Democratic Party (HDP).

The HDP, the country's second largest opposition group, is regularly accused by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of links to the outlawed PKK.

The HDP "strongly" condemned the Erbil attack, calling it an "absolutely unacceptable provocation attempt."

In May, Turkey launched a major ground offensive and bombing campaign against the PKK in Qandil, the latest of many in the military's three-and-a-half decade campaign against the rebels.

Analysts have suggested the attack on the Turkish diplomat might have been carried out in retaliation for the killing of several PKK commanders in the latest bombing campaign.

Following Kose's murder, Turkey broadened its cross-border operations, launching airstrikes against PKK bases and members in the Kurdish-held

Makhmur area south of Iraq's second city Mosul.



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Iraqi Kurds arrest suspects in killing of Turkish vice consul Turkish diplomat and two others killed in northern Iraq restaurant attack