

US may have brought down second Iranian drone last week: US general

Author:

daniel fountain

ID:

1563907686555025100

Tue, 2019-07-23 21:49

WASHINGTON: A US Navy ship may have brought down a second Iranian drone in the Strait of Hormuz last week, the head of US Central Command said on Tuesday.

The US said on Thursday that a Navy ship had “destroyed” an Iranian drone in the Strait of Hormuz after the aircraft threatened the vessel, but Iran said it had no information about losing a drone.

“We are confident we brought down one drone, we may have brought down a second,” General Kenneth McKenzie told CBS News in an interview.

A US official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, told Reuters that the warship Boxer may have brought down a second drone last week, though they were still working to confirm it.

“We brought down one for sure. ... There might have been a second,” said the official.

Tensions in the Gulf region are high, with fears that the US and Iran could stumble into war.

The United States has blamed Iran for a series of attacks since mid-May on shipping around the Strait of Hormuz, the world’s most important oil artery. Tehran rejects the allegations.

Iran in June shot down a US military surveillance drone in the Gulf with a surface-to-air missile. Iran says the drone was in its airspace, but Washington says it was in international skies.

President Donald Trump said at the time the United States had come close to launching a military strike on Iran in retaliation for the downing of the US drone.

The increased use of drones by Iran and its allies for surveillance and attacks across the Middle East is raising alarms in Washington.



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Suspected 'Iranian' spy drone caught near Pakistan's Reko Diq gold mine
The Coalition forces intercept a Houthi drone targeting civilians and civilian structures in Jizan

[Former Israeli PM apologizes for killing of Arab protesters](#)

Author:

Associated Press

ID:

1563894078294032900

Tue, 2019-07-23 12:55

JERUSALEM: A former Israeli prime minister is apologizing for the killing of 13 Arab protesters by Israeli police in 2000. Ehud Barak, who has made a political comeback ahead of September's elections, said Tuesday in an Israel Radio interview that "there is no place for

protesters to be killed by their country's security forces."

Barak was responding to an op-ed written by a parliament member from the left-wing Meretz party who called on him to apologize for the October 2000 killings, which came in the opening weeks of the second Palestinian uprising, when he was serving as prime minister.

Barak's campaign hinges on uniting liberal parties in a bid to oust Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's longest-serving prime minister.



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[Iraqi forces clear farmland near Baghdad of Daesh militants](#)

Author:

Associated Press

ID:

1563887833703498700

Tue, 2019-07-23 12:59

TARAMIYAH: Iraqi security forces are sweeping villages and farmland north of Baghdad as part of an operation aimed at clearing remaining militants belonging to the Daesh group from around the country's capital. A military helicopter flew over army units in the area as troops on the ground searched for weapon caches and bombs in farmland in Taramiyah on Tuesday. The area is about 50 kilometers, or 31 miles, north of Baghdad. The dragnet is part of the operation dubbed "Will to Victory," which started two weeks ago along the border with Syria and was extended last week to areas north of Baghdad and in the Diyala, Salahuddin and Anbar provinces. Although Iraq declared victory against IS in July 2017, the extremists continue to carry out attacks around the country.



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[Iraq exhumes bodies thought to be Kurds killed by Saddam](#)

Author:

AFP

ID:

1563884183953076100

Tue, 2019-07-23 12:08

BAGHDAD: Iraq on Tuesday began exhuming the remains of dozens of victims, including children, likely killed during ex-dictator Saddam Hussein's campaign against the country's Kurds, a forensics official told AFP. The mass grave was uncovered in Tal Al-Sheikhiya, about 300 kilometers (200 miles) south of Baghdad, said Zaid Al-Youssef, the head of Baghdad's Medico-Legal Directorate which is tasked with identifying the remains. "More than 70 bodies including women and children, ranging from newborns to 10 years old" have so far been exhumed, Youssef said. Those remains were recovered from the surface layer of the site, he said, but "there could be a second deeper layer" with additional bodies. "The evidence collected indicates they were summarily executed in 1988," said Youssef, which coincides with Saddam's brutal "Anfal" campaign against Iraq's Kurds. The operation took place between 1987 and 1988 and saw nearly 180,000 Kurds killed and more than 3,000 villages destroyed. "The female victims were blindfolded and killed by gunshots to the head, but also have traces on various parts of their bodies of bullets that were fired randomly," Youssef said. The grave lies in the southern province of Mutahanna, also home to the notorious Nigrat Salman prison camp. Many Kurds and political opponents of the previous regime were held there, and survivors shared tales of humiliation, rape and detention of minors as part of Saddam's 2006 trial. Iraq has been hit by wave after wave of conflict in recent decades, culminating in the fight against the Daesh group which ended in late 2017. Those years of conflict left grave sites all across the country where the remains of thousands of victims from Iraq's diverse ethnic and religious communities have been uncovered. IS alone left behind an estimated 200 mass graves that could hold up to 12,000 bodies, the United Nations has said. Authorities are testing remains from the most recent conflict as well as wars dating back three decades in an effort to identify the fates of missing Iraqis. According to Iraqi authorities, Saddam's regime forcefully disappeared more than one million people in the 1980s and 1990s, and many of their families are still trying to find out what happened to them.



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More Basra water crises unless Iraq government fixes 'failures' Iraqi forces launch anti-Daesh operation north of Baghdad

[Israel says 12 Palestinian buildings destroyed in controversial demolition](#)

Author:

AFP

ID:

1563881248472676600

Tue, 2019-07-23 11:09

JERUSALEM: Israel said Tuesday a total of 12 Palestinian buildings it considered illegally constructed were demolished in a controversial operation the previous day, while a UN preliminary assessment showed 24 people displaced.

The demolitions of Palestinian homes, most of which were still under construction, drew condemnation from the European Union and UN officials.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia condemned on Tuesday Israel's demolition, urging world powers to "stop this aggression".

"The cabinet strongly condemned and denounced authorities of the Israeli occupation for the demolition of dozens of houses in... east Jerusalem," said a statement carried by the official Saudi Press Agency.

"It called on the international community to intervene to stop this aggression and dangerous escalation that targets Palestinians."

Israel says the homes south of Jerusalem were built too close to its separation barrier cutting off the occupied West Bank, posing a security risk, and the demolitions were approved by its supreme court following a lengthy process.

Palestinian leaders expressed outrage at the demolitions in the Sur Baher area, which straddles the occupied West Bank and Jerusalem.

They note that most of the buildings were located in areas meant to be under Palestinian Authority civilian control under the Oslo accords of the 1990s.

Before dawn Monday, hundreds of Israeli police and soldiers sealed off buildings in the area while residents and activists were dragged out.

A statement from Israeli defense ministry unit COGAT said "12 buildings and two building foundations were demolished," adding that they were "built illegally."

Israel's supreme court "ruled that the buildings may be demolished as they constitute a security danger to the area of the security fence," the statement said.

UN humanitarian agency OCHA said a preliminary assessment showed 24 people, including 14 children, were displaced.

More than 300 people were affected by the demolitions, it said.

Prior to the demolitions, OCHA said the buildings were to include some 70 apartments. It said those being displaced were from three households.

On June 18, a 30-day notice was given by Israeli authorities informing of their intent to demolish the buildings.

Residents fear another 100 buildings in the area in a similar situation could be at risk in the near future.

Israel occupied the West Bank and east Jerusalem in the 1967 Six-Day War. It later annexed east Jerusalem in a move never recognized by the international community.

It began construction of the separation barrier during the bloody second Palestinian intifada, or uprising, in the early 2000s and says it is necessary to protect against attacks.

Palestinians see it as an "apartheid wall" and a potent symbol of the Israeli occupation.



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