

Israeli tank, aircraft hit Gaza after cross-border shots: army

Author:

Fri, 2019-04-19 18:07

JERUSALEM: Israel on Friday struck Hamas targets in the Gaza Strip with tank and aircraft fire after shots were fired at troops on the Israeli side of the border, the army said.

“No injuries to soldiers were reported,” it said in a statement.

Palestinian security sources in Hamas-ruled Gaza told AFP that the Israeli fire hit Hamas military observation posts at three locations along the frontier.

They said there were no reports of Palestinian casualties.

Palestinians in Gaza have for more than a year gathered at least weekly along the border for often-violent protests, calling on Israel to end its blockade of the enclave.

The Israeli statement did not say if there were mass protests taking place at the time of Friday’s incident.

At least 264 Palestinians in Gaza have been killed by Israeli forces since the protests began.

The majority were killed during clashes, with others hit by tank fire or air strikes.

Two Israeli soldiers have been killed over the same period.



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Palestinian teen killed by Israeli fire in border clashes: Gaza ministry
Israel demolishes home of Palestinian charged with killing

Trump and Haftar discussed 'counterterrorism efforts' in Libya

Fri, 2019-04-19 16:43

LONDON: Donald Trump and the Libyan military commander Khalifa Haftar discussed "counterterrorism efforts" in the country during a phone call this week.

The two men also talked about the need to achieve "peace and stability in Libya" when they spoke on Monday.

Trump's contact with Haftar, who heads the Libyan National Army (LNA) loyal to the eastern government, is a significant diplomatic boost for the commander after his forces launched an offensive earlier this month against the rival administration based in the capital Tripoli.

In the call, Trump "recognized Field Marshal Haftar's significant role in fighting terrorism and securing Libya's oil resources, and the two discussed a shared vision for Libya's transition to a stable, democratic political system," the White House said on Friday.

Trump's national security adviser John Bolton also spoke recently to Haftar. It was unclear why the White House waited several days to announce the phone call.

The LNA launched its offensive against the capital after securing areas of the country's south earlier this year. Haftar says his forces, which have advanced into Tripoli's outskirts, are fighting to clear the country of "terrorist" elements.

His fighters are making "great sacrifices," LNA spokesman Ahmed Al-Mesmari said Friday. He added that the LNA is also engaged in a battle against countries that support "terrorism" in Libya. Al-Mesmari did not specify which countries.

He did however claim that extremist militants had travelled from Turkey to Libya to take part in the battle for Tripoli. An array of militias control the capital and parts of the countries east, and many hold a deeply conservative or extremist ideology.

On Thursday, militants attacked one of Haftar's bases in the far south of the country. The LNA killed 14 of the fighters who launched the assault on the Tamanhint air base near Sabha, Al-Mesmari said during a press conference. The offensive comes eight years after Arab Spring protests led to the downfall of dictator Muammar Qaddafi and a split in the country between rival governments in the east and west.

The conflict has also split the international community with the UN supporting the Tripoli government but regional powers, Russia and some European countries supporting Haftar. Countries like Egypt see Haftar as a bulwark against extremist groups.

On Thursday, both the US and Russia said they could not support a UN Security Council resolution calling for a ceasefire in Libya.

The British-drafted resolution blames Haftar for the latest flare-up in violence.

The United States did not give a reason for its decision not to support the draft resolution, which would also call on countries with influence over the warring parties to ensure compliance and for unconditional humanitarian aid access in Libya.

(With Reuters)



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UN warns of 'widening conflagration' in Libya as southern Haftar base attacked
Fighting over Libya's capital Tripoli has displaced 18,000: UN agency

[Israel demolishes home of Palestinian](#)

charged with killing

Author:

Fri, 2019-04-19 15:49

HEBRON, West Bank: The Israeli military has demolished the family home of a Palestinian charged with the killing of a 19-year-old Israeli woman. Israeli forces bulldozed two apartments belonging to the father of Arafat Erfayieh in the West Bank city of Hebron on Friday.

Erfaiyeh was arrested and charged in February with the killing of Ori Ansbacher, whose slain body was found in a West Bank forest near Jerusalem. Her brutal killing drew widespread media coverage in Israel, sparking calls for revenge from hard-line Jewish settlers. The Shin Bet security agency determined the act was politically motivated.

Israel often demolishes homes of alleged Palestinian assailants or their families, saying it deters future attacks. Human rights groups have long condemned such demolitions as a form of collective punishment banned by international law.





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Palestinian teen killed by Israeli fire in border clashes: Gaza
ministry Israel arrests brother of Palestinian protest icon

Turkey says understands NATO concerns over Russian missile deal

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Fri, 2019-04-19 10:48

ISTANBUL: Turkey is "taking into account" NATO concerns over its Russian missile deal, the country's foreign minister said on Friday, in more conciliatory remarks over a purchase stoking tensions between Washington and Ankara.

The deal for Russian S-400 missiles riled Washington, prompting US officials to suspend Turkey's participation in the US-made F-35 jet program and warn of more sanctions against its NATO ally.

Washington says Turkey's adoption of Russian missile technology alongside US fighter jets would not be compatible within NATO defenses, citing security risks.

"We are taking into account NATO's concerns. It is not right to say Turkey is not considering them," Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu told a press conference in Ankara.

His remarks followed a visit by Turkey's defense minister to Washington and a meeting between US President Donald Trump and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's son-in-law at the White House, where they discussed the S-400 deal, local media reported.

"We don't find credible the concerns that the S-400 system will allow access to the F-35 technology if they are deployed in Turkey," the minister said. He said Ankara was still waiting for a US response to Turkey's proposal to set up a working group between them to work out differences over the Russian deal.

The S-400 purchase is one dispute fueling tensions between the two nations, who are also at odds over US support for Syrian Kurdish militias who Ankara brands a terrorist group and Turkish backing for US foe Venezuela.

This month, after repeated warnings, the United States said Turkey's decision to buy the S-400 system was incompatible with it remaining part of the emblematic F-35 jet program.

Turkey had planned to buy 100 F-35A fighter jets, with pilots already training in the United States.

With Turkey in recession for the first time in a decade after a currency crisis last year, analysts say Ankara may look to avoid imposition of new US sanctions that would further damage the economy.

Last year, a trade dispute with the US prompted Washington to impose

sanctions and tariffs on some Turkish goods, knocking around 30 percent off the value of the local lira currency.

Local Turkish media have reported Turkey may be considering options to ease tensions, such as the non-activation of the S-400 after delivery to Turkey, or the transfer of Russian missiles to a third country.



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Turkey freezes assets of senior Houthi militia leaders

[Algeria protesters keep up pressure on regime](#)

Author:

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Fri, 2019-04-19 09:51

ALGIERS: Hundreds of thousands of demonstrators returned to Algeria's streets on Friday to press demands for wholesale democratic change well beyond former president Abdelaziz Bouteflika's resignation, chanting "we do what we want," witnesses said.

Parliament named an interim president and a July 4 election date was set in a transition endorsed by Algeria's powerful military. But Bouteflika's April 2 exit failed to placate many Algerians who want to topple the entire elite that have dominated the country since independence from France in 1962.

Protesters gathered anew in city centers around Algeria demanding root-and-branch reforms – including political pluralism and crackdowns on corruption and cronyism, witnesses said. Numbers later surged after Friday prayers.

There was no official count but Reuters reporters at the scene estimated the number of demonstrators in the hundreds of thousands as on previous Fridays since the extraordinary mass dissent erupted on Feb. 22.

"We will not give up our demands," said Mourad Hamini, standing outside his coffee shop, where thousands of protesters were waving Algerian flags.

The crowd later chanted: "This is our country and we do what we want!"

Protesters also called for Abdelkader Bensalah, head of the upper house of parliament, to quit as caretaker president and for Noureddine Bedoui to stand down as interim prime minister.

"They must go. The B's must go," one banner read, referring to Bensalah, Bedoui and Moad Bouchareb, head of the ruling National Liberation Front (FLN) party.

Tayib Belaiz, chairman of Algeria's Constitutional Council and a fourth senior "B" official, resigned earlier this week.

A young man who was injured in protests in the Algerian capital last week died on Friday of injuries to the head, Ennahar TV said on Friday.

Ennahar said there were two accounts regarding the death of the 18-year-old. The first was that he was beaten during last Friday's protests and the second was that he fell from a truck on his way to the protests.

Police are investigating his death, Ennahar added.

On Tuesday, armed forces chief Lt. General Ahmed Gaed Salah said the military was considering all options to resolve the national political crisis and warned "time is running out."

It was a hint the military was losing patience with the popular upheaval shaking Algeria, a major oil and natural-gas exporter and a key security partner for the West against extremist militants in north and west Africa. Salah did not specify what measures the army could take but added: "We have no ambition but to protect our nation."

The army has so far patiently monitored the mostly peaceful protests that at times swelled to hundreds of thousands of people. It remains the most powerful institution in Algeria, having swayed politics from the shadows for decades.

Protesters want a clean break with "le pouvoir" (the power) – the secretive establishment comprised of veterans of the war of independence against France, senior FLN figures and associated oligarchs – and sweeping reforms. "The ninth Friday is a vote against the gang," read a banner held up by protesters on Saturday.

“The system will go sooner or later,” said Mohamed Dali, who was selling sweets to protesters.

Another banner read: “The country is ours and the army is ours.”



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Algeria protests loosen stranglehold on media
Algeria military chief 'looking at all solutions' to solve crisis