

# [UAE begins first flights to support counter-terrorism operations in the Sahel](#)

Sun, 2021-04-25 18:55

LONDON: The UAE has launched “logistical support flights” as part of French-led counter-terror operations in the African Sahel.

The first flight took off from Abu Dhabi watched by Maj. Gen. Saleh Mohammed Al-Ameri, commander of joint operations at the Ministry of Defense, and Xavier Chatel, France’s ambassador to the UAE.

Maj. Gen. Al-Ameri said the UAE’s efforts would contribute to achieving security and stability in the Sahel region.

Chatel thanked the UAE for its contribution in backing the efforts of the international community and France in supporting operations in the African region, state news agency WAM reported.

The operations include several flights scheduled to transport humanitarian aid.

France has more than 5,000 troops deployed as part of operations to bring stability in the Sahel countries of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger.

Meanwhile, Mauritania received medical and food aid from by the UEA, including 10,000 vaccines against COVID-19 and 60 tons of food, the Mauritanian News Agency reported.



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[Ministry of Defense](#)

[Maj. Gen. Saleh Mohammed Al-Ameri](#)

[Xavier Chatel](#)

Macron: no immediate change to French military presence in Africa's Sahel  
US defense chief's rare Algeria visit points to Sahel region threats

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## [Egypt's El-Sisi receives coronavirus vaccine](#)

Author:

Reuters

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1619358742949928800

Sun, 2021-04-25 13:48

CAIRO: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi has received a coronavirus vaccination under a nationwide vaccination drive, his office said on Sunday. The statement from the presidency did not give details on the type of vaccine El-Sisi received.

Egypt has started administering doses of AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine under the global COVAX agreement to provide vaccines for lower-income countries, as well as jabs produced by China's Sinopharm.

Awad Tag el-Din, El-Sisi's adviser for health affairs, told a local news channel on Friday that around half a million people in Egypt had been vaccinated so far.

The number of coronavirus cases has been steadily rising in recent weeks and the health ministry reported 912 new cases and 39 more deaths as of Saturday.



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[Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi](#)

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Dana Gas cancels planned \$236m sale of Egypt assets

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## [Egypt's El-Sisi meets with Abu Dhabi Crown Prince in Cairo](#)

Author:

Sat, 2021-04-24 22:31

CAIRO: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi received the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi on Saturday.

During the meeting, El-Sisi expressed Egypt's keenness to continue strengthening bilateral cooperation with the UAE in various fields, and to



increase the frequency of meetings between senior officials from the two countries to coordinate responses to developments in the Middle East region.

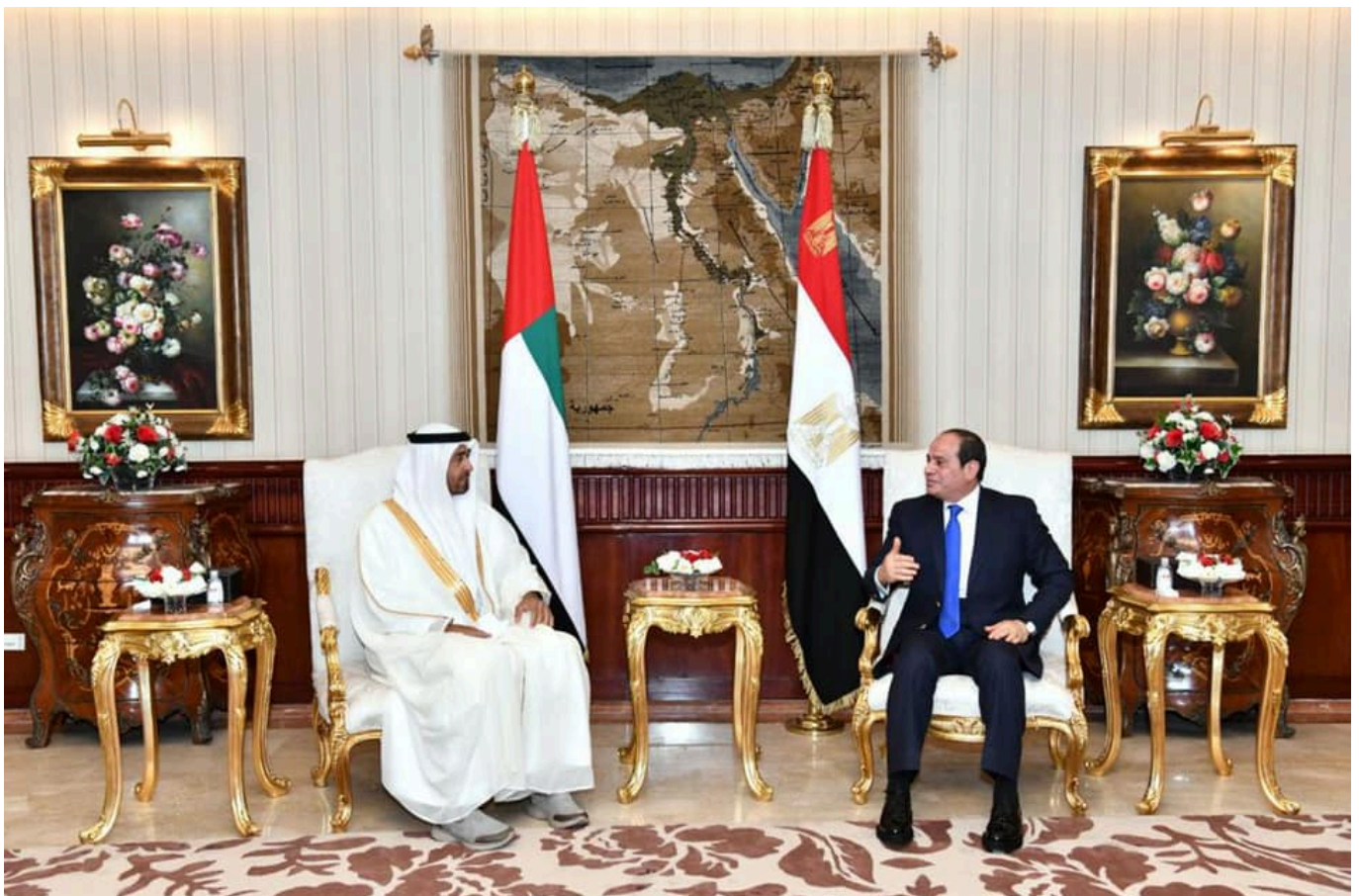
Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan praised Egypt's pivotal role in the region, and the great development witnessed by Egyptian-Emirati relations in the political, economic, security and military fields.

He also stressed his eagerness to further deepen Egyptian-Emirati relations.

Discussions between the two also addressed a number of regional issues, including the Renaissance Dam and ways of resolving the ongoing dispute.

The Egyptian president Abu Dhabi crown prince agreed that political settlements were the only solutions to a number of ongoing conflicts in the region, as well as the need for developing a comprehensive vision for Arab capabilities to meet challenges facing the region and increasing threats to regional security.

El-Sisi stressed Egypt's commitment to its firm stance towards the security of the Gulf and the rejection of any practices that seek to destabilize it.



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First Abu Dhabi Bank completes Bank Audi Egypt takeover  
Abu Dhabi's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan arrives in Jeddah

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## [Houthis slammed for recruiting primary school students for war](#)

Author:

Sat, 2021-04-24 22:07

AL-MUKALLA: Yemeni government officials and local human rights activists have accused the Houthis of brainwashing and training primary school students for war.

Their criticism came as videos on social media showed pupils wearing military attire and inciting each other to take up arms to fight the Houthis' enemies.

In one video, filmed at a Sanaa primary school, a child pretending to be a soldier appealed to another child to send him into battle so he could fight the enemies of Islam and Muslims.

"We must sacrifice so that the future generation lives in dignity and honor," the first child told the second, who was pretending to be the mother. The "mother" later told him to fight with "the House of the Prophet," a reference to the Houthis.

Officials said the videos showed the scale of Houthi indoctrination and the group's exploitation of children. They said the videos supported long-held accusations that the rebels were recruiting children to fight in the war.

The Houthis had also made changes to the education curriculum and were turning schools into military training camps, according to Education Minister Tareq Salim Al-Akbari.

"We repeat our condemnation of militarizing schools and students and exploiting educational facilities under Houthi control in their war against the state," the minister told Arab News, saying the group was seeking to pass its radical ideologies to students through school books and activities. "They have injected sectarian changes in the curricula that have nothing to do with the Yemeni identity and culture."

Officials said the Houthis had added some chapters to primary education books that glorified the group's founder, Hussein Al-Houthi, and Shiite figures.

The minister warned that the Houthis were raising a generation of extremists who would pose a threat to Yemen, the region and the world.

"The impact of the Houthi indoctrination of children is disastrous. It brings up a generation carrying sectarian ideology, away from the Yemeni peace-loving identity."

Activists who saw the videos also expressed concern.

Zafaran Zaid said that schools in Houthi-controlled territories had radicalized children.

"Schools in the areas controlled by the Houthi militia have posed a serious threat to the mentality and psyche of children," she tweeted.

Ali Al-Bukhaiti, a former spokesperson for the Houthi movement who switched sides and left Yemen, said the Houthis were exploiting schools to spread their ideologies as a way to keep the younger generation under their control.

"Watch how the Houthis cultivate violence in children through school," he tweeted. "They rig their minds with superstitions to direct them to the front of death."

Rights groups documenting Houthi abuse said the group had recruited thousands of children since the beginning of its military expansion in late 2014, with hundreds dying in battle last year.

Addressing human rights activists in the central city of Marib last week, lawyer Huda Al-Sarari said that 1,410 children, aged between 10 and 15 and recruited by the militia, had been killed in fighting in 2020.

She added the Houthis had set up 52 military points for indoctrinating and training children, and that they had incorporated more than 40,000 children into the war during the last seven years.



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45 Houthis dead in raging fighting in Marib province

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## [Lebanon vows to punish drug smugglers as Saudi import ban bites](#)

Author:

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1619285830212698300

Sat, 2021-04-24 20:39

BEIRUT: Lebanon has vowed to punish drug smugglers after massive quantities of narcotics were intercepted and seized by Saudi Arabia and Greece.

Saudi authorities on Friday reported foiling an attempt to smuggle millions of amphetamine pills stashed in a pomegranate shipment from Lebanon at Dammam's King Abdulaziz Port. It said that five people involved in the case were arrested, four citizens and an expatriate.

There was another interception of a pomegranate shipment, also from Lebanon and also containing drugs, in Jeddah.

Shortly after the Saudi statement, Greek authorities announced seizing four tons of cannabis hidden in dessert-making machinery at Piraeus that was en



route from Lebanon to Slovakia. The value of the drugs was estimated to be around €33 million (\$39 million).

The Greeks said they received help on the case from Saudi Arabia's drug enforcement agency.

Lebanon's Foreign Ministry said that smuggling drugs in containers or trucks carrying fruit and vegetables from Lebanon to foreign countries was punishable by law. "Smuggling drugs harms the Lebanese economy, farmers and reputation," the statement added.

It urged authorities to exert "utmost efforts" to control all smuggling operations on border crossings in light of the laws that criminalized drug use, trafficking and smuggling.

Saudi Arabia said that Lebanese fruit and vegetable imports would be banned from Sunday because authorities had noticed an increase in smuggling operations targeting the Kingdom using Lebanese products.

The Kingdom's ambassador to Lebanon, Walid Al-Bukhari, said that the safety and security of the country and its people were the motives behind the ban. "Drug smuggling into the Kingdom reveals the extent of the challenges from local and international criminal networks being faced by Saudi Arabia," he told local media.

A security source told Arab News that the seized cargo was not Lebanese but had a Syrian certificate of origin, transiting through Lebanon from Syria between April 10 and 15.

Ibrahim Tarshishi, who is the head of the Bekaa Farmers' Association, said Lebanon's agricultural producers were innocent of smuggling drugs into Saudi Arabia, which imported more than 50,000 tons of Lebanese produce every year. He expressed his fears about the ban's impact.

"Lebanese authorities must contact their Saudi counterparts as soon as possible to confirm that Lebanon has no intention whatsoever of harming the Kingdom," he told Arab News. "Saudi Arabia is the largest importing country of our agricultural produce. Exports were supposed to kick off in May. The Saudi decision means that our exports will not reach further than Jordan and will not be transited through the Kingdom to the rest of the Gulf states. This is a disaster that threatens the whole agricultural sector in Lebanon." Lebanon did not have pomegranates to export and had been importing them from Syria, Egypt and Tunisia for the last 20 years, he said.

"We export our vegetables, citrus, peaches, pears, apricots and cherries to Saudi Arabia. This export relationship with Saudi Arabia was established 50 years ago and the exports are carried out by land, sea and air, and our work is completely legal."

Non-Lebanese agricultural cargo had transited through Lebanon and the drugs that were seized turned out to be smuggled in Syrian trucks, he said.

"Lebanese farmers have nothing to do with this matter. The cargo is controlled by Lebanese Customs. They go through a scanner at the Masnaa border crossing with Syria. However, scanners at Beirut airport have been damaged since the Beirut blast on Aug. 4. New scanners were provided but have not been installed yet. Therefore, cargo is emptied at the free zone where a customs' member handles the cargo before they are shipped."

The founding committee of the Lebanese-Saudi Friendship Association issued a statement expressing regret over the actions that had led the Kingdom to introduce the import ban. It was "proof of the regressive level" that Lebanon had reached due to some people trying "to take control of the country and its



assets and seeking to jeopardize its public institutions,” the statement added.

Lebanon’s security bodies have pounced on many drug factories, especially ones producing Captagon pills in the Bekaa valley, as well as drugs to be smuggled abroad.

On April 10, Hassan Daqou was arrested over suspicions of drug dealing, production and smuggling. He is from the town of Tufail, which is 57 kilometers from Damascus.

The former mufti of Baalbek, Sheikh Ayman Al-Rifai, said that the Hermel region suffered from drug use, dealing and production.

“This has led to several social problems and family issues that we are trying to solve,” he told Arab News, saying he wished that authorities would carry out more raids and arrests.



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Panic in Lebanon as desert locust swarms hit farmland