

[US sanctions Lebanese businessman for Hezbollah support](#)

Tue, 2019-08-06 19:53

BEIRUT: The US Treasury has added Lebanese businessman Fadi Hussein Serhan to a list of sanctioned foreign nationals for providing material support to Hezbollah.

The US government has accused Serhan of aiding the militant group through his Beirut electronics store.



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[US Treasury Department](#)

Hezbollah accused of evicting mum, kids from home for criticizing party members
US puts sanctions on Hezbollah leader suspected of masterminding Buenos Aires 1994 attack

China 'might escort ships' in Gulf under US proposal

Author:

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Tue, 2019-08-06 12:47

DUBAI: China might escort Chinese commercial vessels in Gulf waters under a US proposal for a maritime coalition to secure oil shipping lanes following attacks on tankers, its envoy to the United Arab Emirates said on Tuesday. "If there happens to be a very unsafe situation we will consider having our navy escort our commercial vessels," Ambassador Ni Jian told Reuters in Abu Dhabi.

"We are studying the US proposal on Gulf escort arrangements," China's embassy later said in a text message.

Washington is lobbying other nations to join a maritime security coalition at a time of heightened tensions with Iran, which the United States has blamed for explosive blasts on tankers near the Strait of Hormuz, a charge Tehran denies.

President Donald Trump said in a June 24 tweet that China, Japan and other countries "should be protecting their own ships" in the Gulf region, where the US Navy's Fifth Fleet is based in Bahrain.

It was not clear if Washington had made an official request to Beijing, which has had to tread softly in the Middle East due to its close energy ties with both Iran and Saudi Arabia.

The United States has struggled to gain support for the coalition from European and Asian allies, who fear it would further stoke tensions with Iran.

So far only Britain has officially said it would join the mission to protect merchant ships after Iran seized a British-flagged vessel.

Tension has mounted since Trump last year quit a 2015 nuclear pact under which Iran agreed to curtail its atomic program in return for relief from economic sanctions crippling its economy.

France, Britain and Germany, which with Russia and China are party to the agreement, have tried to rescue the deal and reduce tensions.

China has traditionally played a small role in Middle East conflicts or diplomacy despite its reliance on regional oil, but has increased its profile under President Xi Jinping.

"We have the position that all disputes should be sorted by peaceful means and by political discussions, not ... military actions," Ambassador Ni said. Iran says securing the Strait, the world's most important oil artery, should be left to Tehran and other regional countries.

The UAE and Saudi Arabia, who support US policy against regional foe Iran, have called on the international community to safeguard maritime trade and security of global oil supplies.

Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan met President Xi during a visit to Beijing last month during which the two sides signed a military and

defense cooperation deal.

The ambassador said the agreement could lead to cooperation on tackling terrorism and intelligence sharing, adding that further discussions would take place.

China, which has a military base in Djibouti, has participated in regional escort missions in the Gulf of Aden and off the Somali coast as part of a United Nations Security Council anti-piracy mandate.



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Germany will not join coalition to protect shipping in the Strait of Hormuz
UK to join US-led maritime security mission in Gulf

[UK to join US-led maritime security mission in Gulf](#)

Author:

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Mon, 2019-08-05 14:38

LONDON: Britain said on Monday it was joining a US-led maritime security mission in the Gulf to protect merchant vessels traveling through the Strait of Hormuz.

Last month, Iran's Revolutionary Guards seized a British tanker, Stena Impero, near the Strait of Hormuz for alleged marine violations after Britain seized an Iranian oil tanker near Gibraltar, accusing it of violating sanctions on Syria.

"We look forward to working alongside the US and others to find an international solution to the problems in the Strait of Hormuz," Defense Minister Ben Wallace told reporters.

Foreign minister Dominic Raab said Britain remained committed to working with Iran to maintain the 2015 nuclear deal agreed with Tehran in return for an easing of sanctions.

A British security source said the focus of the new mission would be protecting the security of shipping and Britain would not be joining US sanctions against Iran.



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Iran seizes third foreign tanker in Arabian Gulf UK FM to Iran: There will be no tanker swap

[Syria army to resume military operations in Idlib](#)

Mon, 2019-08-05 15:51

AMMAN: The Syrian army said Monday it was resuming military operations in a Russian-led campaign in northwest Syria that has uprooted tens of thousands and killed hundreds, blaming Turkey for not abiding by its commitments under a truce deal.

Syrian state media said Thursday the ceasefire would depend on militants fulfilling a Russian-Turkish deal that tried last year to create an Idlib buffer zone.

“The agreement to a truce was conditional. This did not happen. We resume our military operations against terrorist organisations,” said the army statement.



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[Air strike on south Libyan town kills at least 43](#)

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Mon, 2019-08-05 10:55

TRIPOLI: A drone air strike by eastern Libyan forces on the southern Libyan town of Murzuq has killed at least 43 people, a local official said on Monday.

The eastern Libyan National Army force (LNA) forces loyal to Khalifa Haftar confirmed a strike late on Sunday on the town, but denied they had targeted any civilians.

The Tripoli-based internationally recognized government opposing Haftar said dozens were killed and wounded.

Reached by telephone, Murzuq municipal council member Mohamed Omar told Reuters: "The air strike resulted in 43 killed and 51 wounded. This is only an initial toll of casualties."

The LNA had at the start of the year taken Murzuq as part of an offensive to control the oil-producing south. But it later moved out to concentrate forces north where it has been trying to take the capital Tripoli in a four-month campaign.

The LNA said in a statement its strike had targeted "Chadian opposition fighters," a phrase that usually refers to Tebu tribesmen opposing them in the area.



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Libya's Mitiga airport halts air traffic following shelling
Libyan coast guard intercept boat carrying 75 Europe-bound migrants