

US blames Iran for helping Houthis shoot down drone in Yemen

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Sun, 2019-06-16 15:27

WASHINGTON: The Houthis in Yemen recently shot down a US government-operated drone with assistance from Iran, the US military said in a statement on Sunday.

Lt. Col. Earl Brown, a spokesman for the US Central Command, said the altitude at which the MQ-9 drone was shot down on June 6 marked "an improvement over previous Houthi capability," a fact that led the military to conclude the group had help from Iran.

Brown also noted that on June 13, Iran separately tried to shoot down yet another US drone over the Gulf of Oman in an effort to disrupt surveillance of Iran's attack on Kokuka Courageous, one of two oil tankers attacked on Thursday.

US officials have blamed Tehran for those attacks, raising fears about a potential confrontation between the United States and Iran.



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Saudi Arabia tells UN Security Council Houthis responsible for Abha Airport attack
Human Rights Watch declares Houthi Abha airport attack a 'war crime' as another missile targets city

[Libyan prime minister calls for elections in 2019 to end war](#)

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Sun, 2019-06-16 14:48

CAIRO: The head of Libya's UN-supported government on Sunday proposed holding nationwide elections to end the war in the North African country, as the forces of the rival military commander Khalifa Haftar continue their two-month-long battle to take the capital, Tripoli. Prime Minister Fayez Al-Sarraj told a news conference in Tripoli, the seat of his administration, that he is proposing a "Libyan forum" aimed at finding a peaceful solution to the conflict. The talks would draw up a road map for parliamentary and presidential elections to be held before the end of 2019.

There are fears that the battle for Tripoli could ignite a civil war on the scale of the violence after the 2011 uprising that toppled and killed longtime dictator Muammar Qaddafi.

Libya is divided between the weak government of Al-Sarraj in the west, and Field Marshal Haftar, whose self-styled Libyan National Army (LNA) holds the east and much of the south. Haftar opened a military offensive on the capital in early April, advancing on the city's southern outskirts and clashing with militias loosely affiliated with the UN-recognized government.

Haftar has presented himself as a strong hand who can restore stability. In recent years, his campaign against militants across Libya has won him growing international support from world leaders who say they are concerned the North African country has turned into a haven for armed groups, and a major conduit for migrants bound for Europe. His opponents view him as an aspiring autocrat and fear a return to one-man rule.

Al-Sarraj said all Libyans who "call for a peaceful and democratic solution" would take part in his proposed talks. He called on the UN to support the forum and to oversee elections.

He did not say whether Haftar or his representatives would be included. The two sides last held talks in the UAE in February.

HIGHLIGHT

Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar has presented himself as a strong hand who can restore stability. In recent years, his campaign against militants across Libya has won him growing international support from world leaders.

Al-Sarraj also demanded an international probe into alleged “war crimes and crimes against humanity,” since Haftar launched his offensive. The fighting for Tripoli has killed over 650 people, including combatants and civilians, according to the World Health Organization.

A spokesman for Haftar did not immediately answer phone calls and messages seeking comment.

Haftar’s forces meanwhile pursued Daesh militants in the country’s south, killing more than a dozen militants over the past three days, officials said on Sunday.

The officials said that LNA forces began its attack on a militant hideout in the mountainous area of Haruj earlier this week. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to brief the media.

Daesh acknowledged the ongoing LNA attack and claimed to have killed and wounded dozens of LNA troops.

The group was driven from Sirte in 2016 and from Derna, another stronghold, earlier this year. However, the extremists have found refuge in the vast deserts of central and southern Libya, where they continue to stage attacks.



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Libyan navy says it intercepted 91 Europe-bound migrants
Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt call for a cease-fire in Libya

[Iranian opposition groups protest in Brussels](#)

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Sat, 2019-06-15 21:02

LONDON: Iranian opposition groups protested outside the Council of the European Union in Brussels on Saturday against the regime in Tehran. The protests mark the upcoming anniversary of protests in 1981, when the People's Mujahedin of Iran demonstrated against the impeachment of the then president Abolhassan Banisadr.

Several European politicians, including the former Italian Foreign Minister Giulio Terzi and the former Vice President of the European Parliament Alejo Vidal-Quadras, gave speeches at the protest in support of the Iranian opposition.

The President-elect of the National Council of Resistance of Iran Maryam Rajavi called on the "EU to designate the mullahs' Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and their Ministry of Intelligence (MOIS) as terrorist entities." She also said that the Iranian "regime's mercenaries must be tried, punished and expelled."

Rajavi also saluted "supporters of the Iranian people's Resistance, and the Human Rights advocates who have come from various European and Arab countries."









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US grants Iraq sanctions waiver for Iranian electricity importsUK-Iranian begins fresh hunger strike in Tehran jail

[Explosion hits 'military zone' in Damascus: state media](#)

Sat, 2019-06-15 18:51

DAMASCUS: An explosion hit a military zone in the Syrian capital Damascus on Saturday, state media reported.

"The blast heard in Damascus is a result of an explosion in a military zone in Mashrou Dummar", a western suburb, state news agency SANA said. The source of the explosion was not immediately clear.



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Syria flare-up kills 35 fighters, including 26 pro-regime forcesHounded by war planes, Syrians dig Idlib graves in advance

Not including regional states in Iran deal was a mistake: UAE FM

Sat, 2019-06-15 14:53

The United Arab Emirates Foreign Minister, Abdullah bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, said on Saturday that lack of regional participation in the Iran nuclear deal was a mistake, UAE state news agency WAM reported.

“The P5+1 deal had two major flaws. The first being the lack of involvement with regional countries during the dialogue process,” the foreign minister said, referring to the nuclear deal, during a press conference in the Bulgarian capital, Sofia.

“The second, not containing Iran’s ballistic missiles capabilities, and its interference in the internal affairs of neighbouring countries,” he added.

The UAE minister asserted that stability in the region would only be attained when regional powers work together.

“Our region is the main energy supplier to the world; our safety and security is key to ensuring prosperity and stability for all,” he affirmed, stressing that the region has many resources such oil that the world needs.

“We want the flow of said resources to remain safe, and to ensure the stability of the global economy,” he said.

The minister’s comments came following tension in the region over the recent attacks in the Gulf of Oman. International powers, including the United States and the United Kingdom blamed Iran for attacking oil tankers near the strategic Strait of Hormuz.

Last month, four oil tankers were also attacked off the coast of Fujairah. The UAE foreign minister said the attacks were caused by underwater explosions, utilising sophisticated technology.

“These capabilities are not present in illegal non-state actors or groups. These are disciplined processes carried out by a state. However, until now, there is insufficient evidence to point to a particular country,” he said.

He went on to note that the area in which the incidents took place has vital economic and geopolitical significance and that interruptions like the four attacks can lead to impeding the global supply of oil.

The foreign minister explained that there were some 184 oil and shipping vessels, among others, in the area where the first attacks took place last month.

“This was a real threat to global maritime shipping,” He warned.

“We must work together to spare the region from escalation, and give the voice of wisdom a chance,” he reiterated.



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UAE says Gulf tanker attacks ‘dangerous escalation’