

[UAE and Syria agree to 'enhance economic cooperation'](#)

Sun, 2021-10-10 22:39

DUBAI: The UAE and Syria have agreed on plans to enhance economic cooperation and explore new sectors.

The Emirates' economy ministry announced the agreement on Sunday.

The ministry said value of non-oil trade between the two countries in the first half of 2021 was one billion dirhams (\$272 million).

It added that the UAE is "Syria's most prominent global trade partner."

The announcement came after the UAE's Minister of Economy Abdulla bin Touq Al-Marri met with his Syrian counterpart.

The UAE re-opened its mission to Damascus in late 2018 after closing it due to the Syria conflict.



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Syria's Assad allows exiled uncle to return to avoid prison
Israel strike on Syria base wounds six: state media

[Arab coalition: Air operations halt Houthis' incursion into Abdiya](#)

Sun, 2021-10-10 21:24

RIYADH: The Arab coalition's air operations have stopped the Houthis' incursion into the Abdiya district in Marib over the past 18 days, an official said.

Spokesman Brig. Gen. Turki Al-Maliki said coalition forces carried out 118 attacks to protect civilians in Abdiya during the past 96 hours.

Al-Maliki added that 15 military vehicles belonging to the Iran-backed Houthi militia have been destroyed, with more than 400 casualties on the Houthi side.

He also called on the UN and international organizations to assume their humanitarian responsibility toward civilians in Abdiya.



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[Col. Turki Al-Maliki](#)

100 Houthis killed in heavy fighting outside central Yemeni city of Marib
Houthis under fire for killing displaced civilians in Marib

[Migrants in Libya fearful and angry after crackdown and killings](#)

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Reuters

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Sun, 2021-10-10 17:53

TRIPOLI: Hundreds of migrants and refugees waited outside a United Nations center in Tripoli on Sunday to seek help in escaping Libya after what aid groups called a violent crackdown in which thousands were arrested and several shot.

The migrants say they have faced violent abuse and extortion in a country that has had little peace for a decade, but has become a major transit point for people seeking to reach Europe in search of a better life.

"We are guilty of nothing except emigrating from our country... but we are treated as criminals and not as refugees," said Mohamed Abdullah, a 25-year old from Sudan.

He said he had been beaten and tortured during his detention in five different centers in Libya, and that he had nowhere to go for shelter or food.

Armed forces in Tripoli began a series of mass arrests a week ago, detaining more than 5,000 people in overcrowded detention centers as aid and rights groups voiced alarm.

On Friday, guards in a center killed at least six migrants there as the overcrowding led to chaos, the UN migration agency IOM said, and scores managed to flee the area before being detained again.

Many of the people waiting outside the UN center in Tripoli, some sleeping on the pavement, were wounded, with bandages on their heads, legs or hands. Some walked only with crutches or the help of friends.

They spoke of hunger, desperation and abuse. "I was beaten and humiliated a lot in prison. Many were beaten and tortured," said Matar Ahmed Ismail, 27, from Sudan.

Libya's Government of National Unity said it was "dealing with a complex issue in the illegal migration file, as it represents a human tragedy in

addition to the social, political and legal consequences locally and internationally.”

The UN refugee agency UNHCR said it was trying to help people waiting at the center and urged crowds there to disperse so it could assist the most vulnerable. It added it was ready to assist with humanitarian flights out of Libya.

Nadia Abdel Rahman came to Libya three years ago from Eritrea via Sudan with her husband, her son and her sister, brother-in-law and nephew, hoping to reach Europe by sea.

She said her husband had been seized by criminals who demanded a ransom but killed him even though she paid. Her brother-in-law died at sea when attempting to cross the Mediterranean.

She was arrested last week in the crackdown, she said. “We only want one thing, and that is to not live in Libya,” she said.

Mousa Koni, a member of Libya’s three-man Presidency Council, which acts as interim head of state, on Saturday said he had intervened with the Interior Ministry “to end this suffering.”



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Cairo Airport receives first Libyan Airlines flight in 7 years
Libya’s NOC says oil spill under control

Ankara wants to upgrade air force with US jets

Sat, 2021-10-09 22:51

ANKARA: Amid ongoing talks to improve ties with the administration of President Joe Biden, Turkey reportedly made a surprise request to the US to buy 40 Lockheed Martin F-16 fighter jets and 80 modernization kits for its existing warplanes.

The request is subject to approval by the US State Department and then by the US Congress, where Ankara will require further lobbying efforts.

Washington, D.C.-based law firm Arnold & Porter has recently extended for one year its \$1.5 million lobbying contract with Turkey for “strategic counsel and legal consultancy services” over its participation in the F-35 fighter jet program.

Turkey’s removal from the F-35 program in 2019, after it purchased a Russian S-400 missile defense system, cost Ankara about \$1.4 billion, as it had already ordered more than 100 of the jets.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan met with Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin on Sept. 29, and said Turkey would proceed with its plan to the purchase a second batch of S-400s, despite US sanctions in December 2020, when the US blacklisted Turkey’s Defense Industry Directorate, its head and three employees.

Ankara is reportedly pondering new avenues of defense cooperation with Russia, including joint production of aircraft engines and warplanes.

Sine Ozkarasahin, an analyst at Istanbul-based think-tank EDAM’s security and defense program, thinks that after losing the F-35s and being exposed to US sanctions under the Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act on its arms industry, this latest request is surely a way out to some extent.

“Right now, Turkey does not have the fifth generation aircraft that are crucial for keeping the military edge vis-a-vis Turkey’s geopolitical competitors. At present, the Turkish Air Force does not have another viable stopgap solution,” Ozkarasahin told Arab News.

“With its current technological know-how and familiarity with CONOPS, known as concept of operations, (the) F-16 Viper modernization package is a far better choice than the Russian alternative, (the) Su35. A switch to the Su35s as a stopgap would also require a significant shift in training, infrastructure and even in the military doctrine, since the Russian aircraft design philosophy drastically differs from that of western tactical aviation.”

Turkey's fighter jet fleet mainly consists of fourth-generation US-made F-16 Fighting Falcons and older F-4 Phantom IIs.

In February, Turkey's procurement and defense authorities initiated a new program to increase the structural life of the country's existing fleet of F-16 Block 30 jets from 8,000 flight hours to 12,000.

The upgrade program was considered by experts as a sign that Turkey wants to keep the F-16s as its main fleet until its planned indigenous fighter jet becomes operational.

According to Ozkarasahin, Turkey's National Combat Aircraft is expected to enter service only in the 2030s, while the first variants of the baseline will probably not be fully fifth generation aircraft – factors that would lead to a significant gap in Turkey's air warfare capabilities.

"To catch up with contemporary air warfare trends, Turkey urgently needs a stopgap solution and then a feasible plan to acquire fifth generation capabilities. The F-16 purchase can get the job done at least for the first objective," she said.

Ozkarasahin thinks that Washington can use the request as a political bargaining tool against Turkey.

"However, with the help of the defense industry giants like Lockheed Martin, Turkey can receive a conditional approval from Congress. Since both the Republicans and Democrats share (a) harsh stance toward Turkey, diplomatic talent will be the game changer," she said.

In case Turkey opts for Russian Su-35 fighter jets for the interim period until it fields a fifth generation fighter, that would undermine its relations with the Biden administration and risk further US sanctions, experts note.

Soner Cagaptay, director of the Turkish program at the Washington Institute, thinks that the latest Turkish move in requesting F-16 fighter jets and modernization kits from Washington also aims to test US sincerity and friendship.

"Perhaps it is also a way of asking the US decision-makers that although Washington removed Turkey from (the) F-35 fighter jet program over its purchase of S-400s, how about its policy over F-16s? The real question is whether the bilateral relations will get back on track or not," he told Arab News.

"Notwithstanding recent problems in Turkey-US ties, there are still few people among decision-makers and (the) Turkish military elite who do not want to let go of what remains of US-Turkey military ties. So they are trying to add a new layer to this relationship by trying to build new bonds, new bridges in this way," Cagaptay added.

Biden and Erdogan are expected to meet in Rome in late October.

On Sept. 23, during an interview with Turkish journalists in New York on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, Erdogan said Washington should either deliver F-35s to Turkey or reimburse it.



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Turkey could buy more Russian S-400 missiles despite US warningsRussia is playing S-400 card in Turkey for strategic purposes, say experts

[Hezbollah member wanted for role in 1985 hijacking dies](#)

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Sat, 2021-10-09 22:52

BEIRUT: Ali Atwa, a senior Hezbollah operative who was on the FBI's most wanted list for his role in one of the most notorious plane hijackings in aviation history, has died, the Lebanese militant group said Saturday. Atwa, who was believed to be in his early 60s, died of complications related

to cancer, Hezbollah said.

Atwa was placed on the FBI's Ten Most Wanted Fugitives list in 2001 with two other alleged participants in the 1985 hijacking of TWA Flight 847. The ordeal, which began in Athens, Greece on June 14, lasted 16 days and left a US Navy diver on the plane dead.

The hijackers demanded the release of Lebanese and Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli prisons.

The FBI had offered a \$5 million reward for information leading to Atwa's arrest. He was accused of conspiring to take hostages, committing air piracy that led to the slaying of an American, and placing explosives aboard an aircraft.

The flight, with 153 passengers and crew members, including 85 Americans, was commandeered by the hijackers after taking off from Athens bound for Rome. The plane was allowed to land in Beirut, where the hijackers freed 19 American women and children. They then flew to Algeria, where more hostages were released, before returning to Beirut.

There, the hijackers shot and killed US Navy diver Robert Stethem, 23, after beating him unconscious. They again returned to Algeria, released more passengers and were joined by Atwa, who had failed to get a seat on the flight and was arrested at Athens airport.

Greek authorities let him go after his co-accomplices threatened to kill more hostages. Atwa was filmed during his release in Athens covering his face with a bag.

Among those on the flight was Greek singer Demis Roussos, who was released in Beirut. On June 30, the last 39 passengers were freed in Damascus, Syria. Days later, hundreds of Lebanese prisoners were released from Israeli prisons.

One of the hijackers, Mohammed Ali Hammadi, was arrested in Frankfurt in then-West Germany in 1987 and was convicted of the hijacking and Stethem's slaying. Hammadi was sentenced to life in prison but was paroled in 2005 and returned to Lebanon.

A Hezbollah funeral was organized for Atwa on Saturday in Beirut.



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Lebanese judiciary resists Hezbollah threats and political pressure
Hezbollah threatens Beirut blast probe judge: reports