

US to provide \$720 million Syria aid, \$108 million for South Sudan

Thu, 2020-09-24 21:58

WASHINGTON: The United States said on Thursday it would provide more than \$720 million in humanitarian assistance for the response to the crisis in Syria and nearly \$108 million for South Sudan.

Deputy Secretary of State Stephen Biegun made the announcement on Syria at an event on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York. He said the money would go "both for Syrians inside the country and for those in desperate need across the region."

At the same event, Acting USAID Administrator John Barsa announced nearly \$108 million for the humanitarian crisis in South Sudan.

Biegun said the additional funds for Syria would bring total US support since the start of the crisis there to more than \$12 billion.

A crackdown by Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad on protesters in 2011 led to civil war, with Iran and Russia backing the government and Washington supporting the opposition. Millions have fled Syria and millions have been internally displaced.

In July, the United States imposed new sanctions aimed at cutting off funds to Assad.

To help address the crisis created by the brutal military campaign of the Assad regime, Russia, and Iran, the United States is announcing more than \$720 million in humanitarian assistance to support civilians affected by the ongoing conflict in Syria.

– Secretary Pompeo (@SecPompeo) [September 24, 2020](#)

Syrian authorities blame Western sanctions for civilian hardship in the country, where a collapse of the currency has led to soaring prices and people struggling to afford food and basic supplies.

Washington says its sanctions are not intended to harm the people and do not target humanitarian assistance.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said heavy rains, fighting between armed groups, food insecurity, a deteriorating economic situation, and the COVID-19 pandemic had compounded an already dire humanitarian crisis in South Sudan. He said the funds for South Sudan would go to help South Sudanese in the country and in neighboring states.

In 2018, South Sudan formally ended five years of civil war that killed an estimated 400,000 people, caused a famine and created a massive refugee crisis, but efforts to conclude a peace process have stalled.



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Syrian director Waad Al-Khateab among Time's 100 most influential people
US military strengthens deployment in Syria

[How Erodgan-led Turkey went from NATO ally to liability](#)

Wed, 2020-09-23 22:55

MISSOURI: Reflecting a new Turkish naval doctrine, the phrase "blue homeland" is widely used in Turkey today. Developed by former Turkish Rear Admiral Cem Gurdeniz, the blue homeland doctrine envisions Turkey ignoring the internationally recognized coastal rights of islands and laying exclusive claim to huge chunks of the Aegean and the Mediterranean Seas. The new Turkish territorial waters doctrine would leave nothing for Greek Cypriots and encircle most of the Greek islands in the Aegean.

Newly discovered rich gas deposits in the eastern Mediterranean may lie at the heart of Ankara's new naval doctrine, which pits Ankara against Greece, Cyprus, Egypt and Israel. France has sent some of its warships to the Mediterranean to back Greece and the others, as a dangerous dance of gunboat diplomacy and naval drills is played out adjacent to gas explorations vessels in contested waters.

France and Greece are members of NATO as well, of course, but this has not prevented a barrage of bellicose exchanges between them and Turkey over maritime boundaries in the Mediterranean. While Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has warned France "not to mess with Turkey," French President Emmanuel Macron has said the Turks "only respect actions rather than words" and that he has "set red lines for Turkey."

Things were not always so bad between Turkey and its NATO allies. For 50 years after its admission into NATO in 1952, Turkey played a key and model role in the alliance. Bordering the Soviet Union's Georgia and Armenia and controlling the Bosphorus straits to the Black Sea, the Turks offered the alliance unparalleled benefits and the second largest land army in NATO. In return, the Turks received NATO's protection against the Russians, who had since the 19th century been Turkey's greatest external threat, as well as top-of-the-line NATO military hardware and expertise.

THE CONTESTED GREECE-TURKEY MARITIME BORDERS

Continental plate and Turkish exclusive economic zone (EEZ), according to Ankara

Greek EEZ limit

Cypriot EEZ limit



During those years a staunchly secular Turkey made significant sacrifices on behalf of the NATO alliance. A key NATO radar base was built in Kurecik in eastern Turkey, along with the very important shared NATO-Turkish airbases in Konya and Incirlik. Turkey contributed troops to the war in the Korean Peninsula in the early 1950s, the 1991 Gulf War, NATO operations in the Balkans during the 1990s, and the 2002 war against the Taliban in Afghanistan.

In the case of the Gulf War, Turkey's cooperation with its NATO allies cost the country a great deal economically. Iraq had been a key Turkish trading partner and major source of oil imports, but Turkish Prime Minister Turgut Ozal fell in line with the US and other NATO allies in applying sanctions on Saddam Hussein and ending this trade.

Since joining NATO in 1952, Turkish military officers trained at military academies in the US and developed a close working relationship with their NATO counterparts in Brussels.

INNUMBERS

639k Size of Turkish armed forces.

11 Rank in Global Firepower military strength.

\$19bn Annual military budget.

The only real glitch during those first 50 years of Turkey's NATO membership occurred over Cyprus, culminating in the 1974 Turkish invasion of Cyprus. During that conflict, Turkey and fellow NATO member Greece almost went to war against one another.

The blame for the 1974 episode resides more with Greece, however, which had just lost its civilian government to a military coup. Greek nationalists in Athens were busily trying to upset the status quo in the Mediterranean, supporting enosis (Cypriot union with Greece) and the persecution of Cyprus' Turkish minority.

At the time, Greece stood out as the liability in the NATO alliance, violating the terms of Cyprus' founding treaty of independence and simultaneously not contributing very much to the NATO alliance. The Greek and Turkish roles in NATO look very much reversed today. Since 2003, Turkey has increasingly become a liability and even a danger to other NATO members. The irredentism in the region now comes from Ankara rather than Athens.

Whereas Turkey once pursued a prudent foreign policy and largely eschewed military adventurism in the region, the country under Erdogan's leadership looks very different today. Turkish forces occupy large swaths of northern Syria, engage in regular strikes in northern Iraq (despite Baghdad's protests), lead thousands of mercenaries in Libya and advise and assist Muslim Brotherhood-linked politicians in Yemen.

In his speeches, Erdogan increasingly criticizes the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne and the borders it created, claiming that Mosul and the islands in the Aegean were stolen from Turkey. Turkish media (which is overwhelmingly government-controlled these days) frequently show maps of Turkey that depict the Greek islands, all of Cyprus, parts of mainland Greece and Bulgaria, and most of northern Syria and Iraq as part of Turkey.

Besides Turkey's dispute with Greece and France in the Mediterranean, Ankara and Paris back different sides in the civil wars in Libya and Syria, as well. France and Greece are not the only NATO allies at odds with Turkey. While Washington, Paris and London backed Syrian Kurdish forces against the so-called Islamic State, or Daesh, Ankara stood accused of backing both Daesh and other radical Islamist groups in Syria. Turkey's invasions of northern Syria in 2018 and 2019 were not welcomed by its NATO allies and threatened to unravel the Kurdish-led offensive against Daesh.

The catalogue of problems Erdogan's Turkey has caused for NATO since 2002 is lengthy and complex. Besides its support for Islamist and radical groups in

Syria, Libya, Yemen and elsewhere, Turkey for a long time denied NATO permission to use shared airbases in Turkey against Daesh. Erdogan repeatedly threatened to unleash waves of refugees on Europe if the EU did not pay Turkey to host the refugees and even, on two occasions, if the EU dared to criticize Turkish invasions of Syria.

During the 2016 attempted coup in Turkey, the government accused the Americans of involvement in the coup attempt and even cut off electricity to the Incirlik base – where the US forces maintain several nuclear warheads. Erdogan's government has repeatedly helped Iran to evade US sanctions.

In 2015 Turkey shot down a Russian warplane flying along its border with Syria, which threatened to drag NATO into an unwanted war with Moscow. Just a few years later, however, Ankara not only repaired relations with Moscow but went on to purchase advanced Russian military hardware, including the S400 air defense systems. Since the Russian equipment, operating in conjunction with the new American F-35 fighter aircraft, could potentially expose critical vulnerabilities in the latter (allowing the Russians to learn the F-35's weaknesses), the Americans were forced to remove Turkey from the F-35 fighter program.

The list goes on and could include Turkey's slide into authoritarianism and Erdogan's overt disdain for Europe, the Americans and the West in general, but the point is that Turkey has become an unpredictable, dangerous force for instability in the region that seems very much at odds with the interests of its NATO "allies."

US officials began publicly questioning Turkey's place in NATO several years ago. Dana Rohrabacher, the Republican chair of a House subcommittee on emerging threats, expressed serious doubts in 2016 when he said: "Ten years ago Turkey was a solid NATO ally and a staunch opponent of radical Islam and a friend of the United States, and today that's all in question ... Erdogan is purging pro-Western people throughout his country who are in positions of influence. He himself has become more aggressive in his Islamic beliefs, and there's reason for us to be seriously concerned."

The rupture between Erdogan and his NATO allies is so serious, in fact, that most of the Turkish military officers who trained with NATO in America and Belgium have come under suspicion in Ankara, with those abroad at the time of the 2016 attempted coup mostly requesting political asylum lest they be arrested in Turkey on trumped-up charges.

In a world where Russian expansionism is no longer the threat it was in Soviet times, such developments put in question Turkey's very place in NATO. There seems little doubt that today's Turkey would not be admitted to the Western military alliance. The problem, however, is that with an increasingly hostile Turkey already a part of the alliance, NATO lacks any mechanism for expelling members.

American policymakers in particular also seem to reason that expelling Turkey from NATO would only exacerbate Ankara's current tilt towards Russia and Islamist tendencies. They instead hope to use NATO to smoothen out relations

with the Turks, with NATO's headquarters in Brussels this week serving as a venue for negotiations between Turkey and France and their dispute in the Mediterranean.

Only time will tell if it is right to treat Turkey as the ally the Americans and other NATO members wish they still had rather than the liability that Erdogan and his government have become.

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Turkey to conduct naval exercises off Cyprus coastErdogan faces EU sanctions over escalating conflict with Greece, Cyprus

[UAE reports 1,083 new COVID-19 cases, a hike from the previous day](#)

Author:

Wed, 2020-09-23 22:44

DUBAI: The UAE on Wednesday recorded 1,083 new cases of COVID-19 and one

death, bringing the total to 87,530 and 406 respectively.

The Ministry of Health and Prevention said 970 cases had recovered in the previous 24 hours, bringing the total to 76,995 since the pandemic emerged. Meanwhile, Dubai Economy said it issued four fines to shops Al-Rigga and Al-Muraqqabat areas and gave warnings to two commercial establishments for not adhering to anti COVID-19 measures.

Dubai Economy emphasizes on the importance of following the precautionary measures and report any violation through the Dubai Consumer app. [#UAE #Dubai #DubaiEconomy #DubaiDED#We_Are_All_Responsibile](#)

– اقتصادية دبي (@Dubai_DED) [September 23, 2020](#)

Inspection teams have been carrying out daily tours to ensure shopping centers, open markets and commercial businesses are complying with the government's preventative measures.

Dubai Police said on Wednesday that a total of 721 violations have been committed on beaches from March to September .

Col. Saeed Al-Madhany said "maritime security teams operate patrols on foot, motorbikes and boats to monitor the public's adherence to the precautionary measures.

[.@DubaiPoliceHQ](#) records 721 violations of COVID-19 precautionary measures on beaches <https://t.co/V9ScT5T1yK>
[pic.twitter.com/Bcv7isLNpz](https://t.co/V9ScT5T1yK)

– Dubai Media Office (@DXBMediaOffice) [September 23, 2020](#)

The station also uses drones equipped with hi-tech infrared cameras and loudspeakers to broadcast messages to beachgoers.

Elsewhere, Kuwait recorded 616 new COVID-19 cases, bringing the total to 101,299, while the death toll stood at 590 after two new deaths were registered.

تعلن [#وزارة_الصحة](#) عن تأكيد إصابة 616 حالة جديدة، وتسجيل 729 حالة شفاء، و 2 حالة وفاة جديدة بـ [#فيروس_كورونا_المستجد](#) COVID-19 ،
[pic.twitter.com/jnAtjsPNQ3](https://t.co/jnAtjsPNQ3) ليصبح إجمالي عدد الحالات 101,299 حالة

– وزارة الصحة - الكويت (@KUWAIT_MOH) [September 23, 2020](#)

Oman recorded 628 new COVID-19 cases and 10 deaths, bringing the total numbers to 95,339 and 875 respectively.

#Statement No. 192

September 23, 2020 pic.twitter.com/uqNVEYUd2G

وزارة الصحة - عُمان (@OmaniMOH) [September 23, 2020](https://pic.twitter.com/uqNVEYUd2G)



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Over 1,000 more COVID-19 recoveries recorded in Saudi Arabia UAE confirms 852 new COVID-19 cases

Eastern Libyan forces say they killed Daesh leader

Author:

Reuters

ID:

1600889964463056700

Wed, 2020-09-23 19:35

BENGHAZI: Eastern Libyan forces said on Wednesday they killed the leader of Daesh in North Africa during a raid in the southern desert city of Sebha earlier this month.

The Libyan National Army (LNA) spokesman Ahmed Al-Masmari said Abu Moaz Al-Iraqi was among nine militants killed during the raid but was only identified afterwards.

Daesh in Libya was formed by Al-Qaeda militants who took advantage of the chaos after the 2011 uprising against Muammar Qaddafi to seize territory and launch attacks.

The group took control of the central coastal city of Sirte in early 2015 and established a presence in the vast southern desert as well as active affiliates or cells in major cities.

However, it was driven from Sirte in late 2016 and its influence since then has been limited to occasional attacks including one on National Oil Corporation's headquarters in 2018 and another at the Foreign Ministry in 2019, both in Tripoli.

Masmari said Abu Moaz Al-Iraqi, also known as Abu Abdullah Al-Iraqi, had entered Libya in 2014 and became the group's leader in 2015 when his predecessor was killed.

Daesh's global threat has reduced in recent years after its self-proclaimed "caliphate" in Iraq and Syria was militarily defeated and much of its leadership killed. However, it remains capable of inspiring attacks around the world, security experts say.

The LNA controls eastern and much of southern Libya and has for years been in conflict with the Government of National Accord (GNA) in Tripoli.



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UK relatives of Daesh 'Beatles' victims relieved as trial nears
New Daesh leader was informant for US, says counter terrorism report

[Lebanon asks world's help 'trying to rise from its rubble'](#)

Author:

Wed, 2020-09-23 22:14

BEIRUT: Facing an economic meltdown and other crises, Lebanon's president on Wednesday asked for the world's help to rebuild the capital's main port and neighborhoods that were blown away in last month's catastrophic explosion. President Michel Aoun made the plea in a prerecorded speech to the UN General Assembly's virtual summit, telling world leaders that Lebanon's many challenges are posing an unprecedented threat to its very existence. Most urgently, the country needs the international community's support to rebuild its economy and its destroyed port. Aoun suggested breaking up the damaged parts of the city into separate areas and so that countries that wish

to help can each commit to rebuilding one.

"Beirut today is trying to rise from its rubble, and it is with the solidarity of all the Lebanese and your support that it will heal its wounds and rise as it has previously risen repeatedly throughout history," Aoun said. "There is a great need for the international community to support the reconstruction of destroyed neighborhoods and facilities."

The massive Aug. 4 explosion happened when about 3,000 tons of ammonium nitrates – which had been rotting in a port warehouse for more than six years – ignited. Nearly 200 people were killed, 6,500 injured and a quarter of a million people were left with homes that were not fit to live in.

The cause of the blaze that ignited the chemicals still isn't known, but the explosion is widely seen as the culmination of decades of corruption and mismanagement by Lebanon's ruling class.

It came on top of an unprecedented economic crisis which has seen the local currency lose up to 80 percent of its value and decimated people's savings, feeding despair among a population that has long ago given up on its leaders. Poverty and unemployment are soaring, made worse by the coronavirus pandemic. A local investigation into the blast is underway, but no one has been held accountable so far.

Aoun said Lebanon had requested technical assistance from certain countries, particularly soil samples and satellite images from the moment of the explosion.

"Teams from several countries came for technical assistance and to carry out the necessary research and we are still waiting for their information... as well as the satellite images to clear the ambiguity in this part of the investigation," he added.

Earlier Wednesday, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called for swift formation of a government to be followed by tangible steps to implement economic, social and political reforms.

Lebanon's government resigned under pressure in the wake of the port explosion, and Prime Minister-designate Mustapha Adib has been unable to form a new government amid a political impasse over which faction gets to have the Finance Ministry, as well as other disputes.

Guterres said the disastrous port explosion "must be a wake-up call."

"Without such action, the country's ability to recover and rebuild will be jeopardized, adding to the turmoil and hardship of the Lebanese people," Guterres added.

Guterres made his remarks during a meeting of the International Support Group for Lebanon held on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly meetings.



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[Michel Aoun](#)

[75th session of the United Nations General Assembly](#)

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UN General Assembly: Saudi Arabia's King Salman calls for Hezbollah to be disarmed
Lebanon 'going to hell' if fails to form government, says president