

Yemen president orders troops to foil Houthi attacks on Marib

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AL-MUKALLA: Yemeni President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi has repeated accusations about the Houthis serving Iran's agendas by fueling a "futile" war in Yemen, the official Saba news agency reported.

In a telephone conversation with the governor of Marib, Sultan Al-Arada, and the defense minister, Mohammed Al-Maqdishi, Hadi hailed army troops and allied tribesmen who have pushed back Houthi attacks on the central city of Marib and other areas in Yemen – and vowed to foil Iran's plots against the country.

The Yemeni president said that the Houthis had dispatched thousands of "deceived" fighters to Marib and other contested areas, fueling a war that only served the agendas of their masters in Tehran.

According to Saba, Hadi thanked the Arab coalition for the military support to government troops, ordering army commanders to join forces to thwart Houthi attempts to seize control of new areas in Taiz, Jawf, Marib, Al-Bayda, Sanaa, Dhale and other contested locations.

Hadi's repeated commitments to challenge the Iran-backed Houthis came as his forces, backed by the Saudi-led coalition's air cover and military logistics, engaged in heavy battles with the rebels in the province of Marib.

Despite local and international calls to cease their attack on the densely populated Marib, the Houthis have sent thousands of fighters to the province over the past couple of weeks in an attempt to defeat government forces that have pushed them back, Yemeni officials say.

Rights groups fear that the Houthi invasion of Marib could trigger a huge humanitarian crisis and displacement since the city hosts more than a million people who have fled Houthi occupation of their home provinces.

Yemen is still reeling from the world's worst humanitarian crisis caused by Houthi military expansions since late 2014.

SPEEDREAD

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Yemen's army website reported on Friday that more than 3,000 Houthis, including senior commanders, were killed or wounded, in addition to losing

150 military vehicles and tanks and drones last month.

The army's chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Sagheer bin Aziz, said that military operations against the Houthis would continue until the rebels were driven from the areas under their control, including the capital, Sanaa.

Inspecting battlefields in the northern province of Jawf, the chief of staff vowed to defeat the Houthis, saying the army and tribesmen had scored large victories.

On Friday, the army announced the seizing of control of a strategic mountain north of Houthi-controlled Hazem, the capital of Jawf, and the besieged Labenat military base in the province.

Yemeni Army's spokesperson, Abdullah Abdu Majili, said that the continuing battles against the Houthis in Jawf, Al-Bayda and Marib had greatly diminished Houthi manpower and equipment, adding that Arab coalition warplanes played a role in paving the way for government forces to advance on the ground.

In Marib, hundreds of people on Friday attended the funeral of Roubesh Wahban, a member of parliament who was killed in fighting with the Houthis in Marib province.



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Yemeni vice president slams Houthis for blocking international peace

[El-Sisi backs Egyptian companies building major dam in Tanzania](#)

Author:

Sat, 2020-09-05 21:59

CAIRO: President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi has expressed his support for the construction of a dam at the Julius Nyerere Hydropower Station in Tanzania by two Egyptian companies.

Arab Contractors and Elsewedy Electric were awarded the contract for the construction of the dam on the Rufiji River by the Tanzanian government in December 2018, at a cost of \$2.9 billion.

Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly has held a meeting to follow upon the project. He said President El-Sisi wanted the dam in Tanzania “to express the ability of the Egyptian contracting sector to complete major projects to the highest quality.”

Minister of Housing Assem Al-Jazzar confirmed that the project aims to generate energy with a capacity of 2115 megawatts, to be transmitted through 400 kV lines.

Head of the Central Agency for Reconstruction Maj. Gen. Mahmoud Nassar said the Julius Nyerere dam protects the surrounding environment from the dangers of flooding and will store about 34 billion cubic meters of water in a new lake that ensures the constant availability of water throughout the year for agriculture and fishing and the preservation of surrounding wildlife.

He said that the project consists of the main concrete dam body and four supplementary dams to form the water reservoir, two temporary dams in front and behind the main dam, and a hydroelectric power station. He explained that a housing complex and a temporary and permanent road network will be established to serve the project, which will also involve a spillway, a 703-meter tunnel, a permanent concrete bridge and two bridges over the Rufiji River.

Gen. Nassar said that despite the challenges faced by those working on the project, mainly caused by four floods between December 2019 and March 2020, they had still managed to complete a large part of the project. The number of employees working on it stood at 5,233 workers, made up of 526 Egyptian workers, and 3,974 Tanzanian workers, as well as 733 foreign workers from other countries.



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[**NATO sets up talks in search for solution to Turkey-Greece conflict**](#)

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Sat, 2020-09-05 21:33

ANKARA: NATO has taken the initiative to reconcile Turkey and Greece over their spat in the Eastern Mediterranean, but tensions are still running high and experts are skeptical about any immediate outcome.

It announced that Turkey and Greece have agreed to hold "technical talks" to calm military tensions in the region over disputed gas drilling activities. Greece denied it had agreed to hold NATO-brokered talks with Turkey and demanded the immediate withdrawal of all Turkish ships from the Greek

continental shelf as a pre-condition to calm the tension. Ankara, however, backs the idea and expects that talks would focus on preventing accidental clashes.

The differences over exclusive maritime borders and energy exploration rights between the two regional rivals remain as sharp as ever, and commentators said they were unlikely to be resolved immediately through NATO-brokered talks.

"The current crisis between Turkey and Greece has similarities to the 1974, 1987 and 1996 crises between the countries and hence, while there is clearly a chance for escalation, these two countries also have a record of limiting the level of violence between them," Gallia Lindenstrauss, senior research fellow at the Institute for National Security Studies in Israel, told Arab News.

According to Lindenstrauss, the matter of delimitation of exclusive economic zones (EEZ) will be tackled at some point through negotiations, but the question is whether the sides are ready yet for serious talks.

Athens delivered a letter on Turkey's activities in the Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Friday, requesting him to submit it to the Security Council.

"It seems that the Greek side is still holding to its past positions and that Turkey is using this crisis for a larger agenda than just the legal dispute. Hence, even if the sides will move to negotiations, I would not expect them to achieve more than partial delimitation, if anything," Lindenstrauss said. Germany is taking steps to initiate more dialogue between Greece and Turkey, after Chancellor Angela Merkel held talks with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Thursday.

Paul Antonopoulos, an expert on Turkish-Greek relations, agreed that technical talks between Greece and Turkey will not produce any results due to the disagreements over pre-conditions.

"As Turkey not only refuses to send its ships back to port, but has actually increased war and invasion rhetoric against Greece, discussions will not occur under these conditions," he said.

Antonopoulos thinks that Turkey's recent moves in the East Mediterranean, as well as in Syria, Iraq and Libya, have been motivated by a maximalist push for neo-Ottomanism.

"It is unsurprising that Turkey's military interventions have all been in countries that are not only former Ottoman territories, but are energy-rich," he said. "When we look at Turkey's military escalations wanting to control energy deposits and its flows to support the country's growing population and economic progress, dialogue to resolve issues with Greece will not be fruitful."

Madalina Sisu Vicari, an independent expert on energy geopolitics, thinks that the ideal solution for all the disputes related to the Aegean and East Mediterranean, would be if Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus could settle their maritime issues through bilateral and trilateral negotiations, eventually assisted by a third party.

"However, though in flux, the current relations between the three countries, in conjunction with the late power competitor dynamics triggered by France's goals and actions in East Mediterranean, have dramatically reduced the likelihood of such a solution," she said.

Another option for Vicari would be to bring the matters to the International

Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague or to international arbitration. "But the latter, in principle, has the disadvantage of being less acceptable in case of an unfavorable verdict, and Ankara is not keen on the former option. So a more feasible option would be for the parties to ask the ICJ to rule on the principles that must be applied for the resolution of the disputes, and leave the final settlement to themselves," she said. Vicari noted that the delimitation of the continental shelf in the North Sea, followed by the agreements between Germany and the Netherlands, and between Denmark and Germany, occurred following such an ICJ ruling.



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Turkey must drop 'threats' for talks to begin: Greek PM Erdogan raises rhetoric in Greece standoff in Mediterranean

[What is the US aiming for by lifting](#)

the Cyprus arms embargo?

Sat, 2020-09-05 01:10

ANKARA: A new element has been introduced to ongoing disputes in the Eastern Mediterranean, with US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announcing on Tuesday that a 1987 arms embargo on Cyprus was being partially lifted.

Experts are divided about Washington's motive and whether this decision is connected to Ankara's maneuvers in contested waters where it is drilling for gas.

The US decision, which was strongly criticized by Turkey's Foreign Affairs Ministry on Wednesday, gives the green light for non-lethal weapons sales to Cyprus for a year. Turkey made it clear that it would take unilateral action if Washington did not reconsider its decision.

Ankara said that the US move might discourage Greek leaders from engaging in long-standing reunification talks with the Turkish side of Cyprus.

But for Aaron Stein, who is director of the Middle East program at the Foreign Policy Research Institute, the US decision was about Russia rather than Turkey.

"There is a strain of American thinking that is pushing for a US effort to begin to push back against Russian influence on the island," he told Arab News.

Under the 2019 Eastern Mediterranean Security and Energy Partnership Act, Washington has boosted ties with Greece and Cyprus and provided them with security assistance in a bid to stop Russian military vessels from docking and refueling at Cyprus' Limassol Port.

According to Stein, Turkey is so unpopular that it has no support in US Congress to stop these efforts. "So, the US State Department folks that were pushing this line were able to get it through," he added.

In the meantime, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg announced late Thursday that Greece and Turkey had agreed to enter into technical talks under NATO auspices to "establish deconfliction mechanisms and reduce the risk of incidents and accidents" in the eastern Mediterranean.

Joe Macaron, a Middle East foreign policy analyst at the Arab Center, thought there were growing voices inside the US administration that were pressuring President Donald Trump to push back against Turkish policy in the Eastern Mediterranean.

"And this pressure will only increase now that Turkey has signed a contract to deliver the second batch of Russia's S-400 anti-aircraft missile systems," he told Arab News.

In late August Ankara and Moscow reportedly signed a contract to deliver a second consignment of air defense systems to Turkey, making it the first NATO member to buy such a system from Russia.

Macaron said that the pressure was evident in the recent US condemnation of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's meeting with Hamas, and now this partial lifting of the arms embargo on Cyprus. Both were issued by the US State Department not the White House, which meant Trump wanted to keep the lines open with Erdogan.

"The US is taking some distance from Turkey without necessarily siding with

France in the Eastern Mediterranean tensions, as this decision is valid for 1 year only and is restricted to nonlethal military equipment,” Macron said. Greece and Turkey, which are both conducting extensive research for energy in the eastern part of the Mediterranean, have conflicting understandings of maritime boundaries together with the long-standing quarrel between Turkey and Cyprus over offshore gas reserves around the divided island since 1974. Ozgur Unluhisarcikli, Ankara office director of the German Marshall Fund of the United States, agreed that the US decision was part of an effort to distance Cyprus from Russia.

“The timing may be related to the upcoming US elections as there are around 1.4 million Americans with Greek descent as opposed to around 350,000 Americans with Turkish descent,” he told Arab News.

Nevertheless, Unluhisarcikli added, while this move would not change the military balance on the island in any way, the timing was unfortunate as it may be perceived by Greek Cypriots as an endorsement of their current policy and disincentivize the start of dialogue with the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus on the exploitation of the island’s energy resources.

In the meantime, Brussels is expected to discuss a list of possible sanctions against Turkey during a leaders’ meeting later this month.



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French schools in Turkey on shaky ground Turkey must drop ‘threats’ for talks to begin: Greek PM

French schools in Turkey on shaky ground

Sat, 2020-09-05 01:03

ANKARA: Amid a diplomatic escalation of tension between Turkey and France over the East Mediterranean, the closure of French schools both in Ankara and Istanbul ranks high on the agenda of the Turkish government.

On Thursday, Turkey's pro-government press Yeni Safak called for the closure of French schools Lycée Pierre Loti and Lycée Charles de Gaulle, in Istanbul and Ankara, respectively, claiming that the schools were "illegally" founded and unlawfully operating on Turkish territories. A significant part of the Turkish business elite, as well as many journalists and members of academia, are graduates from French schools in Turkey, the roots of which stretch back to Ottoman times.

For the past few years, Ankara has been exploring ways to open Turkish state-controlled schools in French territories based on the reciprocity principle. However, in the context of the longstanding quarrel between French and Turkish leaders, education in a secular country like France remains a controversial and highly sensitive subject.

Last year, France insisted on training "local" imams to preach to its Muslim communities rather than letting Turkey send imams as a way to increase its soft power in the interests of Ankara.

"Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's legacy is almost destroying Turkey's secular education system," Soner Cagaptay, director of the Turkish Research Program at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, told Arab News.

According to Cagaptay, there are very few schools left that are sheltered from Erdogan's ideological re-crafting of Turkey's educational system.

"And these French schools are part of this minority. It is an unfortunate move. Even religious parents are avoiding sending their children to religious schools because at the end of the day, the issue is whether Turkey's education system is preparing its citizens to be competitive in a 21st century economy," he said.

Erdi Ozturk, a lecturer in International Relations and Politics at London Metropolitan University, said Turkey has lost its credibility to a significant extent due to its recent domestic and international moves.

"It still has some friends, but several European countries have turned their backs to Turkey, including France. From 2015-2019, there were many debates about spying activities and the influence of Turkey's state apparatus over its nationals living in France. Imams and teachers who were appointed by Turkey have been allegedly used as a polarization tool over the Turkish diaspora," he told Arab News.

Ozturk describes this as "transnational authoritarianism."

"It is completely reasonable that countries go beyond their national boundaries to exert influence. But I think Turkey implemented this strategy in an unprofessional manner, thus triggering a reaction from France. Now with

Macron loudly voicing his anti-Turkey discourse, the Erdogan regime has taken this opportunity to use counter-tools because the ruling government rejects multi-culturalism in its regime based on ethno-nationalism," he said. Experts think the recent re-conversion of the Hagia Sophia museum into a mosque marks a turning point and shows how capable the Turkish government is of turning its rhetoric into practice.

"After the controversial Hagia Sophia move, there is nothing that Erdogan can't do. If the Erdogan regime proceeds with the closure of French schools, it will be not only a tool to consolidate its state identity, but it will further undermine Franco-Turkish relations," Ozturk said.



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