

Monitor: 9 militants killed in Russia strikes on Idlib

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AFP

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BEIRUT: Nine militants were killed Saturday in Russian airstrikes on Syria's war-torn province of Idlib, a monitoring group said.

"Russian strikes this morning targeted the Hurras Al-Deen group and Ansar Al-Tahwid in eastern Idlib... killing nine jihadists," said the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, adding eight others were wounded.

Six of the dead were members of the Al-Qaeda linked Hurras Al-Deen, a group which is also targeted by the US-led coalition.

Moscow is a key ally of Syria's President Bashar Assad in the country's civil war, and despite an Idlib cease-fire deal reached on August 31, the province has continued to be targeted by Russian air attacks.

Russia-backed regime fighters have for weeks been chipping away at the edges of the province bordering Turkey that is the last militant stronghold outside of Assad's control.

Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham – a group led by Syria's former Al-Qaeda affiliate – extended its administrative control over the whole of Idlib in January, but other rebel factions remain present.

In late August, clashes between anti-government fighters and regime forces left more than 50 dead on both sides, when the militia attacked loyalist positions in the south.

Last month, Russia and China vetoed a UN Security Council resolution backed by 12 of the 15 member states that called for a cease-fire in Idlib province.

It was Russia's 13th veto of a UN resolution since the Syrian conflict erupted in 2011, highlighting the Security Council's impasse over the issue.

The Syrian war has killed more than 370,000 people and displaced millions since it erupted in 2011 with the brutal repression of anti-government protests.



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Erdogan says Turkey plans military operation east of Euphrates in SyriaUS accuses Syria of chemical weapon attack in May in Idlib, sanctions firms aiding Russia

[Secondary school reopened, named after Mo Salah in his hometown](#)

Author:

Sat, 2019-10-05 03:18

CAIRO: The Egyptian city of Bassioun, in the governorate of Gharbia, has inaugurated the Mohamed Salah Military Industrial Secondary School, the first of its kind in the city and among the best 27 technical schools in Egypt. The school, named after the 27-year-old Egyptian Liverpool star, is located in Salah's hometown Nagrig, 100 km north of Cairo. It was renovated for 12.3

million Egyptian pounds (\$770,000), is built on 12,447 square meters and accommodates 2,715 students, with an average of 37 students a class. Salah paid for the renovation and also financed a football field in the school to discover new emerging talents.

“Mohamed Salah is the pride of Egyptian and international football,” Mohamed Hassan, a teacher in the school, said. “I am proud that he was one of my students 10 years ago. May God bless him.

“The achievement by Salah is unique. Thanks to God, the people of Egypt have an ambassador to the world,” Hassan added.

Former Governor Ahmed Daif Saqr took the initial decision to name the school after Salah when he scored the goal that sent Egypt to the 2018 World Cup. The school stands as a tribute to the successes of Salah after his achievements in the Premier League and Champions League that have attracted worldwide recognition.

Maher Shetay, the mayor of Nagrig, said the village people were happy to build the school, noting that it is being supervised by the Ministry of Education and the province of Gharbia.

Shetay pointed out that the school has great facilities and a remarkable playground, stressing that everyone looks up to the big role that it will play to shape the future of the children of Nagrig.

HIGHLIGHT

The school, named after the 27-year-old Egyptian Liverpool star, accommodates 2,715 students, with an average of 37 students a class.

“Parents are racing to admit their children,” Shetay said.

“I play football on the streets every day for hours hoping to become like Mohamed Salah one day,” Abdel-Rahman Marzouk, a 14-year-old living in Gharbia, told Arab News.

“It’s my dream. The new school has a playground and I’m excited to learn and play at the same time.”

Nasser Hassan, undersecretary of the Ministry of Education in Gharbia, said that in accordance with the new directives, classes do not exceed 45 students in kindergarten, which is unprecedented in the history of the province.

Hassan said 30 new schools were built last year for 253 million pounds (\$16 million) and work is underway in 30 other schools this year in order to reach a maximum of 30 students in each classroom.

Fathi Abu Hindi, director of the technical education sector in Gharbia, said the school is a model and a “practical simulation” to promote technical education in Egypt.



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Egypt lowers fuel prices after protests

[Syrian opposition vows to back any Turkish operation into northeast](#)

Author:

Sat, 2019-10-05 03:05

BEIRUT: Turkey-backed Syrian opposition fighters pledged on Friday to back a potential cross-border offensive that Ankara has threatened to mount against Kurdish fighters in northeast Syria. The US-led coalition and Turkey conducted on Friday their third joint patrol in northeastern Syria, they said, part of a plan designed to defuse tensions between Washington's two allies – Ankara and the Syrian Kurds.

The two countries have agreed to set up a zone in northeast Syria along the border with Turkey, which wants to expel the Syrian Kurdish YPG militia from the frontier.

The patrol followed a telephone call late on Thursday between Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar and US Defense Secretary Mark Esper in which Akar reiterated that Turkey would not accept a delay in the creation of what it

calls “a safe zone” and would act alone if necessary to set it up.

Turkey has accused the US, which helped the YPG defeat Daesh militants, of moving too slowly to establish the zone.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Tuesday that given the lack of progress Turkey had no choice but to act alone – his most direct indication yet of a military incursion.

US support for YPG fighters has infuriated Ankara, which sees them as linked to the Kurdish PKK movement that has waged a decades-long insurgency inside Turkey.

“When it comes to the east of the Euphrates (river) ... it is our duty to fight,” Salim Idris, an official of the Turkey-backed Syrian opposition, told a news conference in southeast Turkey. “We stand in full force in support of our Turkish brothers in fighting all forms of terrorism represented by the PKK gangs.”

With ties between the NATO allies already under strain, diplomats and analysts say Erdogan would be unwilling to anger Washington with a full-scale incursion into northeast Syria, where US forces are stationed alongside the YPG.

When it comes to the east of the Euphrates (river) ... it is our duty to fight,” Salim Idris, an official of the Turkey-backed Syrian opposition.

Salim Idris, A Syrian opposition official

But Turkey, which has twice launched military offensives with its insurgent allies in northern Syria in recent years, has been pressing for more efforts to set up the border zone.

US and Turkish troops have so far carried out half-a-dozen joint air missions over northeast Syria and three land patrols, including one on Friday, in what Washington describes as “concrete steps” to address Ankara’s concerns.

Turkey, which backs opposition fighters holding tracts of territory in northwest Syria near its border, also has about a dozen military posts in the nearby Idlib region.

The Turkey-backed Syrian opposition also announced on Friday that a number of Idlib opposition factions were merging with the National Army, the main opposition grouping that Turkey supports in the northwest.

The move may help widen Ankara’s influence in Idlib province, where militants formerly linked to Al-Qaeda are the dominant force.



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US conducts new joint patrol with Turkey in northeast Syria 173 civilians killed by land mines in Syria this year

[Iran not 'drawing back' militarily after Saudi attack: US admiral](#)

Author:

Sat, 2019-10-05 03:00

WASHINGTON: Iran has not drawn back to a less threatening military posture in the region following the Sept. 14 attack on Saudi Arabia, the top US admiral in the Middle East told Reuters, suggesting persistent concern despite a lull in violence.

"I don't believe that they're drawing back at all," Vice Admiral Jim Malloy, commander of the US Navy's Bahrain-based Fifth Fleet, said in an interview. The US, Saudi Arabia, Britain, France and Germany have publicly blamed the attack on Iran, which denies involvement in the strike on the world's biggest crude oil-processing facility. The Iran-aligned Houthi militant group in Yemen has claimed responsibility.

Malloy did not comment on any US intelligence guiding his assessment. But he

acknowledged that he monitored Iranian activities closely, when asked if he had seen any concerning movements of Iranian missiles in recent weeks. Malloy said he regularly tracks Iranian cruise and ballistic missile movements – “whether they’re moving to storage, away from storage.” He also monitors whether Iran’s minelaying capabilities head to distribution sites or away from them.

“I get a briefing of movements on a daily basis and then assessments as to what that could mean,” he said.

Relations between the US and Iran have deteriorated sharply since President Donald Trump pulled out of the Iran nuclear accord last year and reimposed sanctions on its oil exports.

FASTFACT

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For months, Iranian officials issued veiled threats, saying that if Tehran were blocked from exporting oil, other countries would not be able to do so either.

However, Iran has denied any role in a series of attacks that have followed, including against tankers in the Gulf using limpet mines earlier this year.

‘Deny it if you can’

Asked what the latest attack in Saudi Arabia showed him, Malloy said: “From my perspective, it is a land-based version of what they did with the mines ... quick, clandestine – deny it if you can.”

“Send a signal and harass and provoke,” he said.

His remarks came a week after the Pentagon announced it was sending four radar systems, a battery of Patriot missiles and about 200 support personnel to bolster Saudi defenses – the latest in a series of US deployments to the region this year amid escalating tensions.

Still, the latest deployment was more limited than had been initially under consideration.

Reuters has previously reported, for example, that the Pentagon eyed keeping an aircraft carrier in the Gulf region indefinitely, amid speculation that the USS Abraham Lincoln carrier strike group will soon need to wind up its deployment.

Malloy declined to speculate about future carrier deployments. But he acknowledged the tremendous value of aircraft carriers – as well as the ships in the strike groups that accompany an aircraft carrier.

That includes the contribution of destroyers now accompanying the USS Abraham Lincoln to a US-led, multinational maritime effort known as Operation Sentinel.



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Iranian hackers targeted a US presidential campaign, Microsoft says
US sanctions squeezing Iran-backed Hezbollah in Lebanon

[Algeria protesters demand army quit politics after cleric urges election](#)

Author:

Sat, 2019-10-05 02:41

ALGIERS: Tens of thousands of Algerian protesters chanted slogans on Friday demanding the army quit politics, a purge of the ruling elite, an end to corruption, and the freeing of opposition leaders. The demonstrations in the capital Algiers and several other cities follow a ruling by a prominent independent cleric this week urging people to vote in a December election backed by the army but opposed by the protest movement. The fatwa, or Islamic legal ruling, and another two weeks ago, represent the first significant comment on the months-long political crisis by major independent clerics, and may influence conservative Algerians. The army, which has emerged as the most powerful player in Algerian politics, sees December's presidential election as the only way to quell the protests

and end the constitutional limbo that has prevailed since President Abdelaziz Bouteflika stood down in April.

Demonstrators have rejected the election, however, saying it could not be free or fair while Bouteflika's allies and military leaders maintain senior positions in the government.

Sheikh Lakhdar Zaoui, a well-known conservative cleric, published a fatwa, or Islamic legal ruling, on Wednesday, saying a Muslim country could not be leaderless.

Another cleric, Sheikh Chemseddine Bouroubi, who has a daily television show "Please Advise Me" that answers people's questions about religion, said last month it was forbidden for Algeria to have no president.

Algeria plunged into crisis in February when massive protests erupted to stop the old, sick Bouteflika running for a fifth term in an election that was scheduled for July.

He resigned on April 2, and the election was postponed. The authorities have meanwhile tried a carrot-and-stick approach to end the demonstrations, arresting Bouteflika allies on corruption charges but also increasing policing at protests.

The leaderless protesters have said the arrests so far are not enough, demanding that the rest of the ruling elite be removed including interim president Abdelkader Bensalah and Prime Minister Noureddine Bedoui.



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Algeria army chief says Bouteflika brother's jail term 'just punishment'
Algeria court sentences Bouteflika brother to 15 years