

# US launches strike in southern Libya as UN warns of escalation

Author:

Wed, 2019-09-25 21:12

CAIRO: US forces said on Wednesday they killed 11 suspected militants in their second airstrike in a week near the southern Libyan town of Murzuq, as the UN envoy warned of a growing risk of armed escalation and rights abuses in the country.

The strike comes as rival factions have been locked in a battle around the capital Tripoli, about 800 km to the north, which forces loyal to eastern-based commander Khalifa Haftar have been trying to capture since April.

The US attack, carried out on Tuesday deep in Libya's southern desert, followed a Sept. 19 strike that the US said had killed eight suspected militants.

This airstrike was conducted to eliminate Daesh terrorists and "deny them the ability to conduct attacks on the Libyan people," Maj. Gen. William Gayler, director of operations for US Africa Command, or AFRICOM, said in a statement.

AFRICOM said the Murziq area was also targeted in Thursday's airstrike, which killed eight Daesh militants. Some Daesh militants retreated south into Libya's desert as the group lost its stronghold in the coastal city of Sirte at the end of 2016.

The US, which has carried out occasional strikes in desert areas, has said it will not allow militants to use the fighting around Tripoli for cover.

The offensive on Tripoli by Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA) upended UN-led plans to broker a political settlement in Libya and soon stalled in the capital's outskirts.

The conflict has spread outside Tripoli, with air and drone strikes against the port city of Misrata, Sirte, and Jufra in central Libya, UN Libya envoy Ghassan Salame told the UN Human Rights Council on Wednesday. It had also triggered a "micro-conflict" in Murzuq, where more than 100 civilians are reported to have been killed over the past two months, he said.

"The conflict risks escalating to full-blown civil war," Salame said by video link. "It is fanned by widespread violations of the UN arms embargo by all parties and external actors."

"Serious violations of human rights and humanitarian law have been committed with total impunity, including increased summary executions, enforced disappearances, torture and ill-treatment as well as conflict-related sexual violence."

Libya has been divided between rival factions based in Tripoli and the east since 2014, three years after a NATO-backed uprising ended Muammar Qaddafi's four-decade rule.

Haftar's LNA is battling forces aligned with the Government of National Accord (GNA), which was set up in 2016 following a UN-brokered deal.

At least 128,000 people have been displaced by the fighting since April, according to UN estimates.



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Three killed in suspected Daesh attack on southern Libya: officialLibya airport hit by drone and rocket fire; 2 Haftar troops killed

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## [Israel president tasks Netanyahu to form new govt: statement](#)

Wed, 2019-09-25 20:08

JERUSALEM: Israel's president on Wednesday tasked Prime Minister Benjamin



Netanyahu with forming a new government after last week's deadlocked elections, his office announced.

The announcement followed a joint meeting between President Reuven Rivlin, Netanyahu and the premier's challenger Benny Gantz.

Netanyahu will have 28 days to form a government, with a possible two-week extension.

If all attempts fail, Rivlin can then assign the task to someone else.

Rivlin has been urging Netanyahu and Gantz to form a unity government, but a compromise appears a long way off.

Final results from September 17 elections gave Gantz's centrist Blue and White 33 seats, ahead of Likud's 32 out of parliament's 120.

Neither has a clear path to a majority coalition.

Netanyahu received the endorsement of 55 members of parliament for the post of prime minister after the election, while Gantz received 54.



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[benny gantz](#)

Israel's main parties begin talks on coalition government  
Israeli president meets Netanyahu, Gantz in bid to break deadlock

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## Iran still holding British tanker despite lifting detention order

Author:

Wed, 2019-09-25 19:50

STOCKHOLM: British-flagged oil tanker Stena Impero is still being held in Iran, despite Tehran lifting a detention order on the vessel, its owner said on Wednesday.

Sweden's Stena Bulk said it was not in negotiations with Iran and not aware of any formal charges against the crew or the company.

Iran's foreign ministry said earlier that a lifting of the detention order had been finalized, but that an investigation into the vessel was ongoing.

"We haven't been accused of anything. Not through any formal letter or anything else to the company. We are still in the dark over why we are anchored in Bandar Abbas," Stena Bulk CEO Erik Hanell told Reuters by telephone.

He said the ship was fueled and ready to sail for a port in the United Arab Emirates as soon as it was cleared to leave.

Iranian forces seized the Stena Impero on July 19 for alleged marine violations two weeks after British marines detained an Iranian tanker off Gibraltar. The Iranian vessel was released in August.

The actions followed attacks on other merchant vessels in Gulf oil shipping routes which Washington blamed on Tehran. Iran has denied responsibility. Hanell said tensions in the region had seen the company tighten security around its ships.

"Our British-flagged ships are now escorted by British frigates. We have a higher level of risk management now," he said.

The head of Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization, Mohammad Rastad, said on Monday the Stena Impero was free to depart from Bandar Abbas port after legal hurdles had been cleared.

Hanell said there were still Iranian guards on the ship and he had no idea why the ship had not been allowed to leave yet.

"We had a dialogue with them up until the end of last week. We thought everything was ready (for the ship to be released)," Hanell said.

Iran freed seven of the 23 crew members earlier this month and Stena Bulk has tried to get the rest out as well, in part by offering a crew exchange.

"We thought it would have been reasonable, but we weren't allowed to do it," Hanell said.



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UK, France, Germany blame Iran for attacks on Saudi oil facilities

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## [Lawyers: 3 Egyptian activists detained amid wave of arrests](#)

Author:

Associated Press

ID:

1569415600716513200

Wed, 2019-09-25 12:15

CAIRO: Egyptian lawyers say security forces arrested three political activists known for their outspoken criticism of Egypt's government and the



president.

Egypt has seen a wave of arrests following small but rare anti-government protests over the weekend. Police quickly dispersed the protests, but they marked a startling eruption of street unrest.

Demonstrations have been almost completely silenced in recent years under President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi.

The lawyers, Nour Farahat and Khaled el-Masry, say the three detained activists are Hazem Hosny, Hassan Nafaa and Khaled Dawood.

The lawyers said Dawood was arrested Wednesday. He's an opposition leader and former head of the liberal Al-Doustour party.

Hosny and Nafaa are both political science professors at Cairo University, and were arrested Tuesday. El-Masry says security forces have detained over 1,200 people in the last week.



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CAA sends tourists home after Thomas Cook collapse, Egypt feels the pinch  
Egypt hands life sentence to Egyptian plane hijacker

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# First Arab set for ISS says voyage will make 'history'

Tue, 2019-09-24 21:23

MOSCOW: The Emirati astronaut who will make history by becoming the first Arab on the International Space Station said Tuesday he had received support from around the world before his "dream" mission.

Hazzaa Al-Mansoori, 35, is set to blast into space accompanied by Russia's Oleg Skripochka and NASA astronaut Jessica Meir onboard a Soyuz rocket from Baikonur in Kazakhstan on Wednesday.

Mansoori, who will spend eight days on the ISS, will be the first Emirati astronaut and the first Arab on the orbiting laboratory, but not the first Muslim.

"It is really an honor and we are looking forward to make this mission successful and to come back with a lot of knowledge," the pilot told a pre-flight news conference.

He said the trip was a milestone for his country and the Arab world.

"This achievement will be in history and it will be continued," he said. "The dream has come true."

The journey to [#Space](#) begins with a train ride! The [#Rocket](#) that's going to launch the [#Soyuz](#) MS 15 mission to space being transported to the launch site. 2 days to go![#MBRSC](#) [#MBRSpaceCentre](#) [#HazzaaAlMansoori](#) [#FirstEmiratiAstronaut](#) [#UAEInSpace](#) [@astro\\_hazzaa](#) [pic.twitter.com/G1xlcD3Gge](#)

– MBR Space Centre (@MBRSpaceCentre) [September 23, 2019](#)

Mansoori said that he would record his prayer routine on the ISS and broadcast it to people on Earth.

"As a fighter pilot I already prayed in my aircraft," he said, explaining that he had experience of prayers at high speed.

Mansoori also plans to conduct experiments and said he would take Emirati food with him to share with the crew.

I've spoken to Hazza Al Mansouri and Sultan Al Neyadi as they prepare for the space flight. The journey will see the UAE create history and will mark our entry into the world of space exploration, inspiring future generations to aim for greater glory. [pic.twitter.com/us1e0y4RAG](#)

– محمد بن زايد (@MohamedBinZayed) [September 23, 2019](#)

Skripochka, first-time flyer Meir and Mansoori will join a six-member crew on

the ISS and for a brief period of time the ISS will be home to nine astronauts.

Meir, 42, said it was “quite an achievement” for the United Arab Emirates to have a man in space, given that its program is so new.

She said the crew communicated by using “Runglish” – a mixture of Russian and English.

“We still need to work on our Arabic,” she joked.

Mansoori is set to return to Earth with NASA’s Nick Hague and Russian cosmonaut Alexey Ovchinin on October 3. Skripochka and Meir are set to remain on the ISS until the spring of 2020.



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[International Space Station \(ISS\)](#)

[Hazzaa Al-Mansoori](#)

All eyes on historic UAE space missionWe have lift-off: The Middle East gets with the space program as it marks World Space Week