

Four blasts hit Baghdad, 14 wounded

Author:

By QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA | AP

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Sat, 2019-09-07 18:07

BAGHDAD: A senior Iraqi security official says four bombs have exploded in the capital, Baghdad, wounding a total of 14 people.

The official said the bombs targeted commercial districts in east, south, central and west Baghdad.

The official spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for Saturday's attacks.

Iraq declared victory against Daesh in 2017, but the group continues to carry out attacks through sleeper cells.



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In divided Iraq, 'electronic armies' threaten activists, media
Iraqi authorities face new rage over Daesh-linked families

Iran seizes ship for alleged fuel smuggling in Gulf, holds 12 Filipino crew

Author:

Reuters

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Sat, 2019-09-07 07:47

TEHRAN: Iran seized a boat and arrested 12 Filipinos as it busted a "fuel-smuggling ring" in the Strait of Hormuz on Saturday, the semi-official news agency ISNA reported.

"A foreign tugboat was confiscated as well as 283,900 liters (75,000 gallons) of petrol worth 233.71 billion rials (\$20.2 million)," ISNA said, citing the coast guard chief in the southern province of Hormozgan.

"Twelve Philippine nationals were arrested and the relevant judiciary officials are currently taking the required legal measures," Major Hossein Dehaki was quoted as saying.

Dehaki said the group was suspected of operating a fuel-smuggling ring and the confiscated shipment had been intercepted close to Sirik county in the Strait of Hormuz.

The seizure comes amid tensions in the Gulf after the United States unilaterally withdrew from a nuclear deal putting curbs on Iran's nuclear program in return for relief from sanctions.

The escalation has seen ships mysteriously attacked, drones downed and oil tankers seized in the Strait of Hormuz – a chokepoint for a third of world's seaborne oil.

Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps detained a "foreign tanker" in Gulf waters on July 14 for allegedly smuggling contraband fuel.

"With a capacity of two million liters and 12 foreign crew on board, the vessel was en route to deliver contraband fuel received from Iranian boats to foreign ships," the Guards said at the time.

Maritime tracking service TankerTrackers reported the Panamanian-flagged MT Riah, used in the strait for fueling other vessels, had crossed into Iranian waters, and at that point its automatic identification system stopped sending signals.

In the most high-profile seizure, the Guards impounded the British-flagged

Stena Impero tanker in the Strait of Hormuz on July 19 for breaking “international maritime rules.”

Iran also seized another ship on July 31 with seven foreign crew onboard over fuel smuggling, but it has not revealed the vessel’s identity or the nationality of its crew.



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Iran warns ‘not much time left’ to save nuclear deal
Satellite images show Iran tanker Adrian Darya-1 sought by US off Syria

[Israel strikes in Gaza after rocket](#)

attack

Author:

AFP

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Sat, 2019-09-07 06:47

JERUSALEM: Israeli forces attacked Hamas positions in Gaza after rockets fired from the Palestinian enclave hit the Jewish state, the military said early Saturday.

The exchange came hours after two Palestinian teenagers were killed by Israeli fire during clashes on the Gaza border.

Late Friday, "five projectiles were launched from the Gaza Strip toward Israel," the army said.

The projectiles hit open fields in southern Israel, army spokesman said.

In response, an "aircraft and tank struck a number of Hamas military targets in the northern Gaza Strip, including a post and military positions," the army said in a statement.

A Hamas security source said there were no casualties resulting from the Israeli strikes.

During border clashes on Friday, two Palestinians aged 14 and 17 were shot dead by Israeli forces, the Gaza health ministry said, with another 46 Palestinians wounded.

The Israeli army said thousands of Palestinians took part in "especially violent" demonstrations along the border fence, which included throwing "fire bombs and explosive devices" at soldiers.

Palestinians have been holding regular mass protests along the fortified border since March 2018.

The protesters have called on Israel to end its crippling siege of the coastal enclave and demanded the right to return to lands their families fled during the war that accompanied the creation of Israel in 1948.

Israel says any such return would mean its end as a Jewish state and accuses Gaza's Islamist rulers Hamas of using the protests as cover for attacks.

At least 308 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire in Gaza since the protests began, the majority during the demonstrations.

The protests have calmed in recent months.

Israel and Gaza's Islamist rulers Hamas have fought three wars since 2008.



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Israeli troops kill two Palestinians at Gaza border protest Israel lifts Gaza fuel restriction after calm returns

[Iran warns 'not much time left' to save nuclear deal](#)

Author:

Reuters

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Sat, 2019-09-07 05:52

TEHRAN: Iran has begun injecting uranium gas into advanced centrifuges in violation of its 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, a spokesman said Saturday.

Behrouz Kamalvandi of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran made the remarks in a news conference carried on live television. He spoke from a podium with advanced centrifuges standing next to him.

Iran already has breached the stockpile and enrichment level limits set by the deal, while stressing it could quickly revert back to the terms of the accord, if Europe delivers the sanctions relief promised in return for curbing Tehran's nuclear program.

US Secretary of Defense Mark Esper in a joint press conference with his French counterpart, meanwhile said, "I am not surprised that Iran has announced a violation of the nuclear agreement again."

"We seek to push Iran to respect the nuclear deal," French defense minister Florence Parly said.

The U.S. and European moves to strengthen security in the Gulf must be "complementary and well coordinated", she added.

France has ruled out joining a U.S.-led coalition of countries protecting oil tankers and cargo ships from threats posed by Iran in the Strait of Hormuz, but has pushed for a European alternative.

Kamalvandi warned that Europe had little time left to save the deal. President Donald Trump withdrew America from the accord over a year ago before imposing crippling trade sanctions on Iran.

"As far as the other side does not implement their commitments, they should not expect Iran to fulfill its commitments," Kamalvandi said.

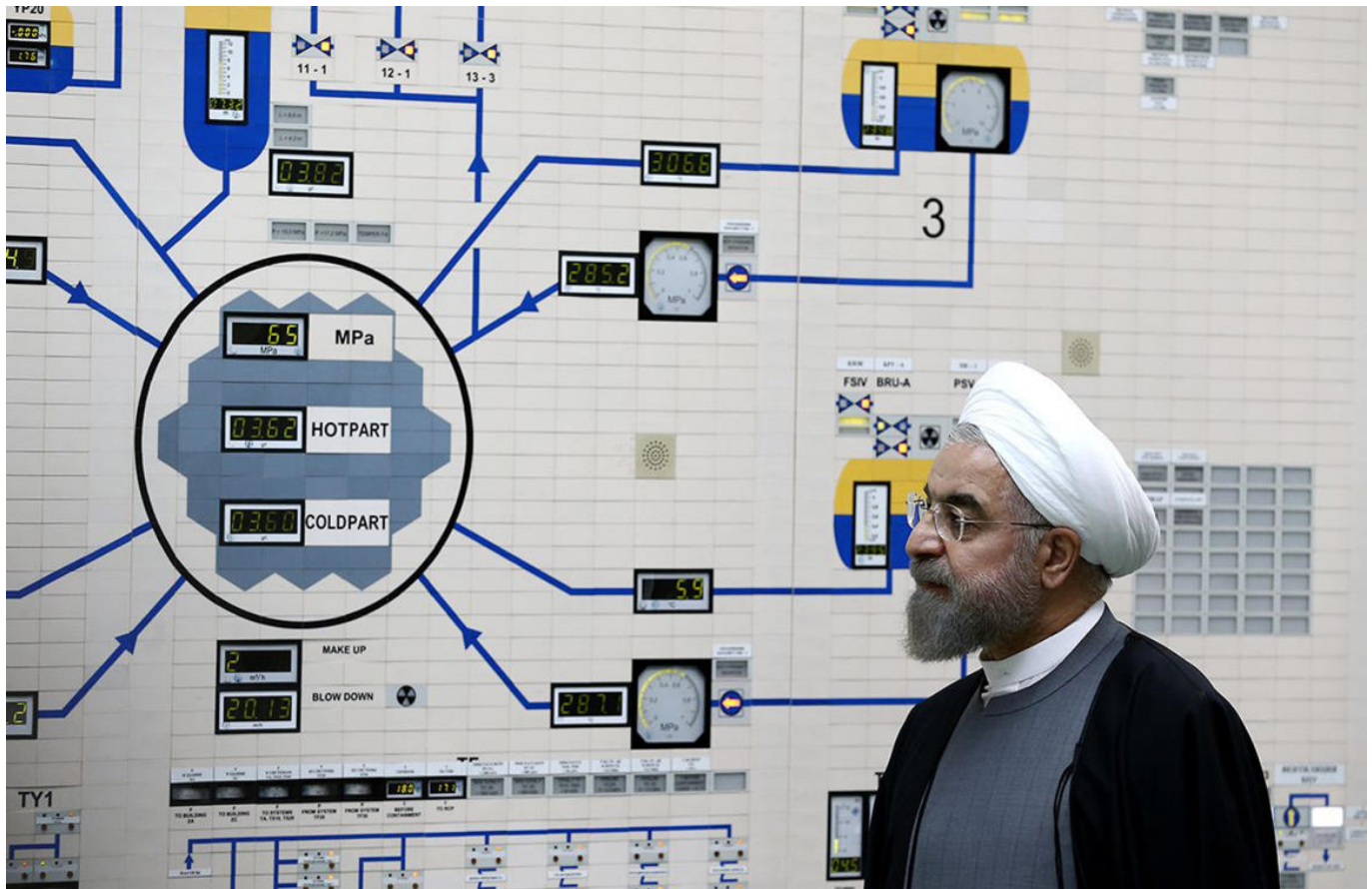
Kamalvandi said Iran had the ability to go beyond 20 percent enrichment of uranium. Analysts say 20 percent is just a short technical step away from 90 percent enrichment, which is weapons-grade level.

Kamalvandi warned several times in his comments that Iran was rapidly approaching a point that would mean a full withdrawal from the deal.

"Our stockpile is quickly increasing, we hope they will come to their senses," he said.

However, he stressed that Iran would allow UN inspectors to continue to monitor sites in the country. A top official from the UN's International Atomic Energy Agency was expected to meet with Iranian officials in Tehran on Sunday.

Tensions between Iran and the US have risen in recent months that have seen mysterious attacks on oil tankers near the Strait of Hormuz, Iran shooting down a US military surveillance drone and other incidents across the wider Middle East.



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Bolton: No sanctions relief until Iran stops lying and spreading terrorUS says Iran nuclear commitment cuts 'unacceptable'

[Satellite images show Iran tanker Adrian Darya-1 sought by US off Syria](#)

Author:

AP

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Sat, 2019-09-07 03:23

DUBAI: Satellite images appear to show the once-detained Iranian oil tanker Adrian Darya-1 near the Syrian port of Tartus, despite US efforts to seize the vessel.

Images obtained by The Associated Press early Saturday from Maxar Technologies showed the vessel there.

Iranian officials haven't acknowledged the ship went to Syria. The ship turned off its Automatic Identification System late Monday. The new images matched a black-and-white image earlier tweeted by John Bolton, the US national security adviser. Bolton had tweeted: "Anyone who said the Adrian Darya-1 wasn't headed to #Syria is in denial."

Anyone who said the Adrian Darya-1 wasn't headed to [#Syria](#) is in denial. Tehran thinks it's more important to fund the murderous Assad regime than provide for its own people. We can talk, but [#Iran](#)'s not getting any sanctions relief until it stops lying and spreading terror! pic.twitter.com/saar05T8wt

– John Bolton (@AmbJohnBolton) [September 6, 2019](#)

Authorities in Gibraltar had seized the ship in July over concerns it would break European Union sanctions on Syria. They later released it after they say they received a promise from Iran that the vessel wouldn't go there.



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[Adrian Darya I](#)

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Iran oil tanker Adrian Darya 1 pursued by US turns off its tracker near
SyriaUS blacklists Iranian oil tanker Adrian Darya I