[Russia's ambassador to Egypt dies, aged 68](#)

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1567443907318766200
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MOSCOW: Russia's Foreign Ministry says that its ambassador to Egypt has died. He was 68.
The ministry said Sergei Kirpichenko died suddenly Monday morning in a hospital in the Egyptian capital, Cairo. It did not name the cause of death.
A career diplomat, Kirpichenko was Russia's ambassador in Egypt since 2011 and also served as Russia's envoy to the Arab League, which is based in Cairo. He was previously posted in the United Arab Emirates, Libya and Syria.
The flag over the Russian Embassy in Cairo is flying at half-staff in Kirpichenko's memory.

Main category:
[Middle-East](#)
Tags:
[Egypt](#)
[Russia](#)
[ambassador](#)

Russia and Iran to hold joint naval drills in Indian oceanRising seas threaten Egypt's fabled port city of Alexandria

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Damascus hails Hezbollah attack on Israel across the Lebanese border

Author:
AFP
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1567433544708013400
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DAMASCUS: The Syrian government on Monday hailed Hezbollah's strike the previous day on an Israeli military vehicle.
Hezbollah said it had fired anti-tank missiles into northern Israel on Sunday, destroying a military vehicle.
Israel's army said it responded with around 100 artillery shells after Hezbollah fired two or three anti-tank missiles at a battalion headquarters and military ambulance, hitting both.
On Monday, the Syrian government threw its support behind Hezbollah, whose fighters have since 2013 been fighting on President Bashar Assad's side in Syria's civil war.
"The Syrian Arab Republic expresses its pride at the… operation that the Lebanese national resistance carried out against the military patrol of the Zionist occupier," a source at the ministry of foreign affairs told state news agency SANA.
"Syria repeats that it stands fully by the Lebanese national resistance and its legitimate right — side by side with the Lebanese army — to work toward preserving the sovereignty of Lebanon," the source said.
Sunday's exchange of fire over the Lebanese-Israeli border comes one week after Hezbollah accused Israel of carrying out a drone attack on its southern Beirut stronghold.
On August 24, Israel also said it had carried out strikes in Syria to avert an Iranian drone attack on the Jewish state. Hezbollah said those strikes killed two of its members.
Israel has carried hundreds of strikes in war-torn Syria, mostly against what it says are Iranian or Hezbollah targets.

Main category:
Middle-East
Tags:
Hezbollah
Lebanon
Syria

Lebanon-Israel border quiet after Hezbollah clashHezbollah and Israel exchange fire on the Lebanese border

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[Four wounded in rocket fire on Libyan capital's airport](#)

Author:
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1567344622559626200
Sun, 2019-09-01 13:03

TRIPOLI: Rocket fire by forces loyal to strongman Khalifa Haftar against the Libyan capital's sole functioning airport wounded four civilians overnight, the UN-recognized government said on Sunday.
The strikes coincided with the arrival of a Libyan plane inbound from the

Saudi Arabia, which was carrying pilgrims on their way back from Makkah.
Three pilgrims, including a woman, were among four civilians wounded, said
Wedad Abu Niran, a spokesman for the UN-recognized Government of National
Accord's health ministry.
Airport director Lotfi Al-Tabib said Mitiga's runway was damaged and a Libyan
Airlines plane was hit by shrapnel, putting it out of service.
Flights have been suspended "until further notice," Tabib added.
The Tripoli-based GNA controls the former military air base east of the city,
which has been used by civilian traffic since Tripoli international airport
suffered severe damage during fighting in 2014.
In a statement, the GNA blamed what it called a "terrorist attack" on forces
of Haftar and urged the international community to assume "its
responsibilities concerning the protection of civilians."
Haftar's self-styled Libyan National Army launched an offensive on April 4 to
conquer Tripoli.
The two sides have since been embroiled in a stalemate on the capital's
southern outskirts and Haftar's forces have allegedly repeatedly targeted
Mitiga, accusing the GNA of using it for "military ends."
A similar strike on Mitiga killed a guard and wounded several security agents
on August 15.
Last week, the airport closed temporarily due to a rocket strike that hit as
two planes were arriving, though no causalities were reported.
Haftar's forces say they are targeting "Turkish drones" that they claim take
off from the airport to conduct strikes on their troops in the south of
Tripoli.
The UN mission in Libya said it is concerned by the "growing frequency" of
these attacks, which have come close to hitting civilian aircraft.
Since April, fighting between GNA and Haftar forces has killed at least 1,093
people and wounded 5,752, while some 120,000 others have been displaced,
according to the World Health Organization.
Libya has been mired in chaos since a NATO-backed uprising that toppled and
killed dictator Muammar Qaddafi in 2011.

Main category:
Middle-East
Tags:
Libya
Tripoli
Airport

[Iranian judo star seeking asylum after being ordered to lose fight to avoid Israeli competitor](#)

Author:
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1567344347429603600
Sun, 2019-09-01 12:58

TOKYO: Iranian judo star Saeid Mollaei, who claimed he was ordered to deliberately lose a world championship fight, could compete under a refugee flag at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, officials said Sunday.
International Judo Federation (IJF) president Marius Vizer has thrown his support behind former world champion Mollaei, who reportedly complained he had been instructed by Iranian authorities to throw a match in Tokyo last

week to avoid facing Israeli Sagi Muki.

"It is our mission to protect our athletes – that's clear," Vizer told AFP. "We will do our best that he will compete in the Olympic Games. Later we will see in which team – there are different options, but one of them will be applied for the Olympics."

Vizer was quoted by local media as saying that Mollaei had told him pressure was being exerted on his family in Iran, prompting him to lose to Belgium's Matthias Casse in the semi-finals of the men's 81-kilo class.

The 27-year-old Tehran native subsequently fled to Berlin where he is currently seeking asylum, Vizer told Japan's Asahi newspaper.

Germany's interior ministry refused to comment on the case when contacted by AFP at the weekend.

The IJF will issue a statement on Monday, Vizer confirmed, but insisted: "First of all we will do everything to support the athlete so he can continue his career and participate in the Olympic Games."

Vizer added that an emergency meeting would be convened this week to investigate whether Mollaei and his family had been the victim of political coercion or threats and subsequently to decide whether to punish the Iranian judo federation.

"It's a part of life and part of the surprises that can happen," said Vizer. "But we have rules. Everything has to happen according to the statutes of the international federation and the Olympic charter.

"Some countries have different rules – they can apply those rules in their country, but not at an international sports event," he added.

"It's a special situation. We have to live with that and act accordingly."

Among some of the more colourful online and social media reports, it was claimed Vizer had booked a car to whisk Mollaei from the world championship venue in Tokyo to the airport in a daring escape.

Iran's Fars news agency accused Mollaei of pre-planning his defection, quoting Iran's judo head coach Majed Zarian as saying: "Everything was set in advance – someone in Iran must have helped him."

Iran does not recognise Israel and Iranian passports remind holders in bold red they are "not entitled to travel to occupied Palestine".

There have been previous examples of Iranian athletes being told to lose to avoid facing Israeli opponents, most notably wrester Alireza Karimi, whose coach was caught yelling "Alireza you must lose, the Israeli won" in a video that went viral in 2017.

Karimi was suspended for six months for throwing his bout, while his coach was banned for two years.

Vizer insisted his support of Mollaei was a question of "sporting values" and not politics.

"I'm not in favour or against any country," he said.

"We are here to protect the interests, the integrity and the fairness of the sport."

Main category:
Middle-East
Tags:
Middle East
Iran
judo
asylum

Wave of Iranian asylum seekers puts UK on alertJapan judo head resigns in wake of scandals

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[Hezbollah and Israel exchange fire on the Lebanese border](#)

Author:
Reuters
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1567339856319171700
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Kiryat Shmona, ISRAEL: Israel and Hezbollah exchanged fire along the Lebanese border on Sunday after a week of rising tensions, sparking fears of an escalation and prompting UN calls for restraint.

There were no casualties reported and the violence subsided in the early evening.
Israel said it responded with around 100 artillery shells after Hezbollah fired two or three anti-tank missiles at a battalion headquarters and military ambulance, hitting both.
Israeli officials refuted Hezbollah claims that it had killed and wounded those inside the military vehicle, saying there were no casualties.
"We are consulting about the next steps," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said.
"I have ordered that we be prepared for any scenario. We will decide on the next steps pending developments."

After the exchange of fire began, Lebanon's Prime Minister Saad Hariri contacted senior US and French officials to urge their countries and the international community to intervene.
France's foreign ministry later said it was engaged in "multiple contacts" aimed at averting an escalation.
The head of the UN peacekeeping force in Lebanon called for "maximum restraint."
Israeli military spokesman Jonathan Conricus told journalists that the "tactical event" near Avivim, an Israeli community near the Lebanese border, was most likely over.
But he said the "strategic situation is still ongoing," meaning tensions with Hezbollah remained.
Conricus said Israel had targeted the squad that fired the missiles.

Hezbollah said in a statement its fighters had "destroyed a military vehicle on the road to the Avivim barracks, killing and wounding those inside." Hezbollah-affiliated Al-Manar TV said that the group's attack targeted a Wolf armored vehicle that can fit eight soldiers.

After the initial reports of fire from Lebanon, an Israeli military spokesman said Israelis living within four kilometers (2.5 miles) of the Lebanese border should remain at home and prepare shelters.

The US State Department said Hezbollah should refrain from hostile actions which threaten Lebanon's security.

"This is another example of the destabilizing role of Iranian proxies in undermining peace and security in the region," a spokesperson said.

Tensions have risen in the last week between Israel and its enemy Hezbollah, the Lebanese Shiite movement backed by Iran.

Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah said Saturday his movement had decided to respond to an alleged Israeli drone attack on the group's Beirut stronghold.

The pre-dawn August 25 attack involved two drones — one exploded and caused damage to a Hezbollah-run media center and another crashed without detonating due to technical failure.

Israel has not claimed responsibility for the incident, which came just hours after it had launched strikes in neighboring Syria to prevent what it said was an impending Iranian drone attack on the Jewish state.

Hezbollah says two of its members were killed in that strike.

A source connected to Hezbollah called Sunday's missiles a response to those deaths and said a response to the alleged drone attack would take place in the air, alluding to a confrontation with Israeli drones.

Israel has carried out hundreds of strikes against what it says are Iranian and Hezbollah sites in Syria since the civil war began there in 2011.
It has pledged to prevent its main enemy Iran from entrenching itself militarily in neighboring Syria.
Iran and Hezbollah, along with Russia, have backed Syrian President Bashar Assad in the conflict.
But a drone attack by Israel inside Lebanon would mark a departure — what Nasrallah had called the first such "hostile action" since a 2006 war between them.
That conflict took the lives of 1,200 Lebanese, mostly civilians, and more than 160 Israelis, mostly soldiers.
UN peacekeeping force UNIFIL called Sunday for "utmost restraint" after what it called a "serious incident" that violated the UN resolution ending the 2006 conflict.
But mission head Maj. Gen. Stefano Del Col added that "general calm has been restored in the area and the parties have reassured me of their continued commitment to the cessation of hostilities."
On Thursday, Israel accused Iran of collaborating with Hezbollah to build precision-guided missiles in Lebanon.
British paper The Times reported last week that the suspected Israeli drone attack targeted crates believed to contain machinery to mix high-grade propellant for precision missiles.

Main category:
Middle-East
Tags:
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Lebanon

Israel accuses Iran of pushing Hezbollah missile plants in Lebanon