

# Much of southern Yemen flooded by heavy rainfall; 6 dead

Author:

AP

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SANAA: Yemeni officials say at least six people were killed when floods swept through much of the country's south following heavy rainfall.

The officials said Saturday that at least three people are still missing in the Abyan and Shabwa provinces hit by heavy rains over the past 24 hours.

The officials say rushing muddy water flooded dozens of farms, cutting off roads and sweeping away cars and cattle in parts of both provinces.

They added that power outages have also engulfed entire areas in Abyan and Shabwa. They officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to speak to the media.

Yemen is located at the southern corner of the Arabian Peninsula, overlooking the Red and the Arabian Sea. Its rainy season is in the spring and summer.



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## Syrian refugees in Turkey 'detained' and 'forced' to return to conflict zones

Sat, 2019-07-27 13:47

DUBAI: Syrians are being "detained" and "coerced" to go back to their war-torn country by Turkish authorities, according to a report published by Human Rights Watch on Saturday.

"Turkey claims it helps Syrians voluntarily return to their country, but threatening to lock them up until they agree to return, forcing them to sign forms, and dumping them in a war zone is neither voluntary nor legal," Gerry Simpson, associate Emergencies director at Human Rights Watch, said.

According to the report, Syrians are being coerced into signing forms saying they want to return to Syria, and then detained before they are sent back to conflict zones including Idlib and Aleppo, where more than 400,000 people already died in the armed conflict.

Although the Turkish Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu denied such claims, several Syrians testified to have experienced maltreatment from Turkish authorities, drawing criticisms from rights groups.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees called on states not to "forcibly return Syrian nationals and former habitual residents of Syria," and argues that asylum seekers "need international refugee protection."

Over 3.6 million Syrian refugees are in Turkey – half a million of them in Istanbul. Recently, Turkey has intensified its crackdown on "unregistered" refugees, increasing police spot-checks of Syrians' registration documents.

"Turkey should protect the basic rights of all Syrians, regardless of registration status, and register those denied registration since late 2017," HRW's report said, citing an international law that prohibits the return of anyone to "a place where they would face a real risk of persecution, torture, or other ill-treatment, or a threat to life."



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## [Drone seized in Pakistan suspected to be Iranian](#)

Author:

Fri, 2019-07-26 22:49

KARACHI: A Pakistani official confirmed on Friday that a foreign drone was seized from the country's Chaghi district bordering Iran and Afghanistan, fuelling speculation among analysts that it likely belongs to Tehran.

"A drone was found ... in the Tuzgi Wadh area of the Chaghi district," said the region's deputy commissioner, Fateh Khan Khajjak.

A Balochistan government official said on Tuesday that the area where the



drone was found was just a few miles away from the Reko Diq gold and copper mine.

He rejected reports that the drone had landed due to technical issues, adding that it had been handed over to the Frontier Corps.

"The drone grounded with the help of a parachute and was in a functional condition. Had the troops not switched it off on time, it would've flown away," the official told Arab News on condition of anonymity. He further divulged that the area where the drone was found was a 30-minute drive from Helmand province, Afghanistan.

Chaghi is known for Chaghi-I, five simultaneous underground nuclear tests conducted by Pakistan on May 28, 1998.

Asked who the drone belonged to, the official said: "It's hard to say as the drone has no monogram or country flag." He added that an investigation had been launched to identify the country of origin.

Meanwhile, analysts claimed it was likely Iranian.

"It appears to be an Iranian Mohajer drone, although the tail slightly differs from images released by the press in Tehran," said Erik Lin-Greenberg, a drone expert and assistant professor at the American University's School of International Service in Washington, DC.

He said it was difficult to determine why the drone had landed in Pakistan, adding: "States typically want to keep their military technology from falling into the hands of rivals who could reverse engineer systems and glean valuable technical and operational information. The drone may have malfunctioned and made an unanticipated landing."

Greenberg added that it was difficult to assess what Tehran's intentions were in this case, or even if the drone was intended to be operated inside Pakistan. "The Iranian drone that Pakistan shot down in 2017 was reported to be monitoring the border region for illegal activity," he said.

Khalid Muhammad, an Islamabad-based security analyst, said: "It's the second intrusion of an Iranian drone into Pakistan's airspace, and this has happened within a span of a week or 10 days."

"Whether we wait for confirmation or not, this will emerge as an Iranian drone," he added.

"This is the first time a drone has been recovered in functional condition. The last Iranian drone was shot down in Balochistan," he said, adding: "We must believe that Iran is monitoring something within Pakistan. We haven't had this frequency of drones coming across our border in the past, so we must believe that they're conducting surveillance."

This is not the first time Tehran has sent drones into Pakistan's airspace in Balochistan, Greenberg said.

“In 2017, for instance, Pakistan reportedly shot down an Iranian drone in the region. That particular incident didn’t escalate to conflict, and this incident also seems unlikely to escalate. My research suggests that attacks on drones fall at a less escalatory threshold than attacks on inhabited assets, making it easier for countries – in this case, Iran – to avoid retaliating when their drones are shot down. In other words, losing a machine is far different than losing a friendly pilot,” he said.

Greenberg added that drones offer a means of carrying out military operations with a reduced risk of losing pilots, lower operating costs than manned aircraft and longer surveillance capabilities.

“As a result, drones are ideally suited for dull, dangerous, and dirty missions that states might not otherwise launch using manned platforms. This is why we’re seeing a significant uptick in their use in conflict zones and contested areas around the world,” he said.

He also added that Iran’s military had long operated drones, and media reports suggest it has been expanding its fleet in recent years. “Iran not only operates its own indigenously produced drones, but has also exported them to other state and non-state actors,” said Greenberg.



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## Amid S-400 crisis, France deploys missile defense battery to Turkey

Author:

Fri, 2019-07-26 21:35

ANKARA: France will deploy a French–Italian Eurosam consortium’s SAMP/T missile defense battery along Turkey’s fragile southern border, Turkish military officials announced on Thursday, even as the deployment of the Russian S-400 defense systems’ hardware to Ankara continues.

In the meantime, Turkey sent commando forces to the Syria border on Thursday after warnings that it would launch a new cross-border operation if a deal was not reached with Washington about northern Syria.

Ankara has been conducting talks with Eurosam over the purchase of SAMP/T for a decade and it granted Eurosam an 18-month contract for studying the feasibility of the joint production.

Dr. Nilsu Goren, research fellow at the Center for International and Security Studies (CISSM) in Maryland, said the French decision to deploy a SAMP/T in Turkey is not surprising, and it seems to have been formulated as a NATO force generation response to the recent attacks on Turkish cities along the Syrian border.

“Other NATO air defense assets, including an Italian SAMP/T battery, have been deployed in Turkey throughout the conflict,” she told Arab News.

“According to Turkish officials, the S-400 air defense system will be ‘standalone,’ meaning that it would not be interoperable with any NATO assets, including the French SAMP/T,” Goren said.

To deter aerial threats arising from the region, Turkey will need to continue to work on creating a layered, network-based national air and missile defense system that is interoperable with its NATO assets, Goren said.

Serhat Guvenc, professor of international relations from Istanbul’s Kadir Has University, said the political meaning of French decision is far greater than its military aspect as this decision is an unprecedented move and is a huge political change on the part of France.

“Since the 1990s, various NATO countries such as Germany, Holland, Italy, Spain and the US have been deploying and operating aerial defense missiles to Turkey’s southern border, but this is the first time that France has done it,” he told Arab News, saying that this decision also contradicts the widespread belief that Turkey and France compete with each other on the Eastern Mediterranean.



For Guvenc, this decision can be taken as a symbol of France's commitment to Turkey's security and its show of solidarity with Turkey.

"France, which may not be considered as a traditional ally for Turkey in NATO, is willing to show that Turkey is not alone and therefore this move is meant to address the country's concrete security problems and its fear of abandonment in the Alliance, which was presented as Ankara's pretext for purchasing S-400 from Moscow," Guvenc said.

Once S-400 missile system will be activated – not expected to be before April 2020 – French batteries will not be compatible with them.

Experts note that these batteries are mostly deployed for a duration of 6 months to one year, and this term is extended each time.

Therefore, in the event of S-400 activation, the term of Eurosam's batteries may not be extended for the second time because of the lack of interoperability.

Eurosam's SAMP/T is a new generation mobile, anti-aircraft defense weapon for protecting sensitive areas against lone missiles.

With a range exceeding 100 km, it aims to meet medium and long-range air defense requirements against conflicts unfolding along its borders with Syria and Iraq.



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## [Russian S-400 missile](#)

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## [Under siege, Somalia moves to reform its army, pay troops](#)

Author:

Fri, 2019-07-26 21:02

NAIROBI: Deployed in one of the world's most dangerous conflicts, Somali soldiers risking their lives daily against Al-Shabab insurgents were growing weary of being paid months late and shortchanged by their superiors.

"We never received the complete amount," a captain told AFP on condition of anonymity, grumbling about "middlemen" who syphon off troops' meagre wages – some as low as \$100 a month – and plunder budgets meant for weapons, rations and uniforms.

Then in March, his pay arrived on time, in full and straight to his bank account, in what officials say is the first step in a radical shake-up of its graft-ridden armed forces.

The government, under pressure from foreign backers, has started paying troops directly, bypassing army commanders previously tasked with disbursing their pay but diverting the money instead.

Under the new system, payments are linked to a biometric database containing soldiers' fingerprints, personal details and bank accounts, replacing patchy records kept on Excel spreadsheets.

Officials say about 10,000 "ghost soldiers" were expunged from the records – roughly one in three troops according to government estimates, though analysts questioned these figures.

These fictitious troops either did not exist at all or had long ago deserted. By taking control of salary payments, Mogadishu is seeking to cut out powerful commanders who for decades ran the Somali National Army (SNA) "as private fiefdoms," Fiona Blyth from the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia wrote in an April report.

The shake-up was fiercely resisted in some quarters of the army, with several soldiers deserting their barracks in March in protest.

But the government is pressing ahead. In July it also began registering fighters from an allied militia into its security forces, and identifying older or injured soldiers for retirement.

Mogadishu says the reforms are a milestone in decade-long efforts to rebuild the army into a force capable of taking over when the roughly 20,000 African Union AMISOM peacekeepers leave.

"We are not there yet. A lot of things need to be done first... but ultimately I think it will be a game changer," a government adviser told AFP.

African soldiers were deployed in 2007 to provide muscle until Somalia's army



could stand on its own. AMISOM's withdrawal is slated for 2021.

Somalia's donors have long complained that there is little to show for the hundreds of millions poured into rebuilding the SNA.

In 2017, after a decade of international money and support, an internal review concluded the army was a "fragile force with extremely weak command and control and military capabilities."

Many units lacked weapons, basic medical supplies and even uniforms.

That same year, the United States suspended aid for the SNA over fraud concerns.

But recent efforts to boost accountability and professionalism in the military have struck a chord with traditional allies.

The United States announced this month it was resuming limited, non-lethal assistance to an army unit in Lower Shabelle, where SNA and AMISOM troops liberated key towns from Al-Shabab in April and May.

"The US notes several Somali-led steps toward security sector reform over the last year, notably the biometric registration," a State Department official told AFP.

Mohamed Ali Hagaa, a cabinet minister and top defense official, told AFP this "clearly demonstrates increased confidence in the security sector."

Analysts say the reforms, though important, gloss over a sobering reality: the SNA is nowhere near ready to secure a nation mired in civil war, clan violence and jihadists still controlling swathes of countryside.

"It's really an army in name only," said Matt Bryden, director of Nairobi-based think tank Sahan.

"Just because an individual has been biometrically registered and is on some payroll list, doesn't mean that they are actually a trained soldier in a formed unit."

The SNA faces a formidable foe in Al-Shabab, which this month alone bombed the Mogadishu mayor's office, blew up a checkpoint near Somalia's international airport and stormed a hotel with gunmen, collectively killing 49 people.

In January, heavily-armed jihadists overran a military camp on the outskirts of Kismayo, killing at least eight soldiers in one of their frequent ambushes of SNA locations.

Efforts by Somalia's international partners to ready the SNA for war have been criticized as being uncoordinated and piecemeal.

Some are trained by the British, others by the EU or the Turkish. Until 2018, the United Arab Emirates drilled its own troops in Somalia while the US, which focuses on drone strikes and Somalia's special forces, mentors another unit.

Encouraging these myriad stakeholders – all with their own strategic ambitions in the Horn of Africa nation – to work together has been difficult, say analysts.

Until this happens, the SNA would be "highly uneven in their effectiveness," said Paul D. Williams, associate professor at the Elliott School of International Affairs at George Washington University.

"Ideally, greater coherence would come from fewer partners directly training and mentoring the SNA. But no single country has proved willing to offer the entire package," he said.



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