

# Sudan military says coup attempt thwarted, senior officers arrested

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CAIRO: Sudan's army chief was among several people arrested in a coup plot, the country's military said Wednesday, shortly after reports emerged of at least a dozen high-ranking army officers and Islamists being taken into custody in the conspiracy.

This was the second coup plot reported this month in Sudan, where talks between the military and the country's pro-democracy movement have dragged out over the final and crucial part of a power-sharing deal for the nation's transitional period.

Earlier in July, the military council that took over the country after ousting longtime autocrat Omar Al-Bashir in April, said it arrested at least 16 active and retired military officers over an attempted coup.

Late Wednesday, a brief statement from the military said the county's chief-of-staff, Gen. Hashem Abdel-Muttalib Babakr, was among those arrested over the alleged plot. The statement said the plot aimed to sabotage the power-sharing deal between the military council and the protest movement.

Babakr was appointed chief-of-staff just days after Al-Bashir's ouster following months of street protests against the president's 30-year rule. Since April, Babakr had appeared loyal to Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan, the head of the ruling military council, and only last week visited Egypt with a top-level Sudanese delegation.

Earlier Wednesday, two military officials told The Associated Press that others among those newly arrested were officers working for Sudan's military and the national intelligence and security services.

The arrests all took place this week and several Islamists, including a former minister, loyal to Al-Bashir were also arrested over the same plot, the officials said. They refused to reveal further details and spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to talk to the media. Sudan's ruling generals and pro-democracy factions have yet to sign the second, final part of the power-sharing deal. They signed a political declaration that outlines the deal last week, after agreeing on a joint sovereign council that will rule for a little over three years while elections are organized.

Both sides say a diplomatic push by the US and its Arab allies was key to ending the weeks-long standoff between the military and the protesters that raised fears of all-out civil war.

The second, more contentious part of the power-sharing deal – the so-called constitutional agreement – is meant to specify the division of powers during the transitional period.

But that part has now stalled.

Leaders of the pro-democracy movement, known as the Forces for Declaration of

Freedom and Change, have been meeting in Ethiopia with leaders of the Revolutionary Front, an alliance of Sudanese rebel groups who are also part of the movement. The Revolutionary Front had rejected the power-sharing deal, arguing it fails to meet their demands for peace.

For decades, Sudan has been convulsed by rebellions in the provinces by ethnic and religious minorities who felt marginalized or oppressed by the Khartoum government, which is dominated by northern Sudanese Arab Muslims. The Revolutionary Front includes rebel groups from Darfur as well as Blue Nile and South Kordofan provinces.



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# Turkey has not agreed with US on Syria safe zone: foreign minister

Author:

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ANKARA: New US proposals for a safe zone in north Syria do not satisfy Turkey, Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said on Wednesday, adding that an agreement on the issue needs to be reached as soon as possible because Ankara has no patience left.

Turkey has been infuriated by US support for the Kurdish YPG militia, which Ankara considers a terrorist organization. The NATO allies have agreed to create a safe zone in northern Syria following the withdrawal of US forces from the area, which Turkey wants to be cleared of YPG militants.

The YPG, which spearheads the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces, has been the main US ally on the ground in Syria during Washington's fight against Islamic State.

The US special envoy for Syria James Jeffrey was in Ankara this week for talks on the details of the safe zone.

At a news conference in Ankara on Wednesday, Cavusoglu said that the two allies had failed to agree on how deep the safe zone would be, who would control it and whether the YPG would be completely removed from the area. "We got the impression that they want to enter a stalling process here as in Manbij," Cavusoglu said, referring to a roadmap agreed last year to clear a northern Syrian town of YPG fighters. "We need to reach an agreement regarding the safe zone as soon as possible because we have no patience left." Cavusoglu also said that US military officials met with a YPG leader on Monday – the same day as Jeffrey's talks at the foreign ministry – indicating Washington was not sincere.

He said on Monday that if the safe zone in northern Syria is not established, and if threats continue against Turkey, Ankara would launch a military operation east of the Euphrates river, a move that Ankara has threatened in the past.

Ankara is also working with Russia and Iran, allies of the Syrian government, to establish a constitutional committee – a long-awaited step in a stalled effort to resolve the country's civil war.

Asked about the details of a recent phone call with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, Cavusoglu said the establishment of the constitutional committee could be announced in the coming days.



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## [Israel fires missiles into south Syria](#)

Author:

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Wed, 2019-07-24 02:10

BEIRUT: An Israeli missile attack targeted Syrian military positions held by the government and its allies early on Wednesday, Syria's state news agency said.

The missiles were fired into the south of the country close to the Golan Heights, an area occupied and annexed by Israel.

"The Israeli enemy launched an aggression after midnight against the Tall Al-Hara area," the SANA news agency said Wednesday, adding that there were reports of damage to property.

The attacks were earlier described as "probably Israeli" by the Britain-based

Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, who said they targeted Tall Al-Hara in Daraa province, south of Damascus, and two areas in the neighboring province of Quneitrathe.

"The regime's anti-aircraft defense has been activated to counter the attack," director of the Observatory Rami Abdel Rahmane said.

"Some missiles have been shot down, others have hit their target."

The Observatory reported "loss of life" without giving further details.

Israel has carried out hundreds of air strikes in Syria since the beginning of the conflict in 2011, targeting forces loyal to President Bashar Assad and the regime's allies Iran and Hezbollah.

The Syrian conflict has killed more than 370,000 people and drawn in world powers since it started with the brutal repression of anti-government protests.

Israeli strikes have previously targeted Tall Al-Hara where Hezbollah has installed a radar system and the Syrian regime has erected anti-aircraft batteries, according to the Observatory.

At the end of June, six civilians and nine pro-government fighters were killed in Israeli strikes near Damascus and in the central province of Homs, it added.

Israel says it is determined to prevent its arch-foe Iran from entrenching itself militarily in Syria, where Tehran backs Assad's regime.

The Jewish state insists that it has the right to continue to target positions held by Iran and its Lebanese ally Hezbollah out of self-defense. The strikes came after Hezbollah's leader said earlier this month that the group's rockets could reach key Israeli sites along the Mediterranean coast, including Tel Aviv.

Hassan Nasrallah also said that Iran was "able to bombard Israel with ferocity and force" but "will not start a war."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu countered that his country would deliver a "crushing military blow" on the both Hezbollah and Lebanon if it were to attack.



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## [No Iranian drone has been downed: Iran defense minister](#)

Author:

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Wed, 2019-07-24 09:43

GENEVA: No Iranian drone has been brought down, the ISNA news agency quoted Iran's Defense Minister Amir Hatami on Wednesday as saying, after the US military said it taken action against two Iranian drones in the past week. The United States said last Thursday that a Navy ship had "destroyed" an

Iranian drone in the Strait of Hormuz after the aircraft threatened the vessel, but Iran said it had no information about losing a drone. On Tuesday the US military said one of its ships had taken defensive action against a second Iranian drone in the Strait of Hormuz last week, but did not see the drone go into the water.

“We showed the body of the (US) drone that we brought down,” Hatami said, according to ISNA. “If anyone claims they brought down our drone, show it. No drone from the Islamic Republic of Iran has been brought down.”



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# Iranian drone last week: US general

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WASHINGTON: A US Navy ship may have brought down a second Iranian drone in the Strait of Hormuz last week, the head of US Central Command said on Tuesday.

The US said on Thursday that a Navy ship had “destroyed” an Iranian drone in the Strait of Hormuz after the aircraft threatened the vessel, but Iran said it had no information about losing a drone.

“We are confident we brought down one drone, we may have brought down a second,” General Kenneth McKenzie told CBS News in an interview.

A US official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, told Reuters that the warship Boxer may have brought down a second drone last week, though they were still working to confirm it.

“We brought down one for sure. ... There might have been a second,” said the official.

Tensions in the Gulf region are high, with fears that the US and Iran could stumble into war.

The United States has blamed Iran for a series of attacks since mid-May on shipping around the Strait of Hormuz, the world’s most important oil artery. Tehran rejects the allegations.

Iran in June shot down a US military surveillance drone in the Gulf with a surface-to-air missile. Iran says the drone was in its airspace, but Washington says it was in international skies.

President Donald Trump said at the time the United States had come close to launching a military strike on Iran in retaliation for the downing of the US drone.

The increased use of drones by Iran and its allies for surveillance and attacks across the Middle East is raising alarms in Washington.



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