

Death toll rises in attack on Turkish diplomat in Iraq

Author:

Thu, 2019-07-18 22:41

IRBIL, IRAQ: The death toll from Wednesday's attack on Turkish consular employees in Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region has risen to three after one victim died of his wounds, his family told AFP.

The Turkish vice consul and one Iraqi citizen were shot dead by at least one attacker on Wednesday in a restaurant in the northern regional capital of Irbil, a police source told AFP.

The shooting also wounded another Iraqi, 26-year-old Bashdar Ramadan, who died overnight, his cousin told AFP on Thursday.

According to Turkish state media, the lone attacker was dressed in plainclothes and carried two guns when he stormed the restaurant in Irbil's Ainkawa district.

Checkpoints were quickly erected in and around the neighborhood, but the perpetrators are still on the run.

"The relevant authorities have launched a thorough investigation to find and prosecute the perpetrators of this criminal act," said the Kurdistan Regional Government in an online statement.

It warned against anyone trying to "harm the security and stability" of the autonomous region.

There was no claim of responsibility for the attack, which came as Turkey wages a ground and bombing offensive against bases of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in northern Iraq.

The PKK is classified as a "terrorist" group by Turkey, the US and the EU because of the three-decade insurgency it has waged against the Turkish state.

Earlier this month, the PKK announced senior leader Diyar Gharib Mohammed and two other fighters had been killed in a Turkish raid.

A spokesman for the PKK's armed branch denied the group was involved in Wednesday's shooting.

Ibrahim Kalin, spokesman for the Turkish president, vowed "the necessary response will be given to those who committed this treacherous attack."

In Baghdad, the UN mission to Iraq called for "maximum restraint" from all sides.

The US Embassy offered its condolences to the Turkish mission after the "heinous" attack, calling for "the defense and safety of foreign diplomats and diplomatic missions in Iraq."

US sanctions on 4 Iraqis

Meanwhile, the US imposed sanctions on two Iraqi militia leaders and two former Iraqi provincial governors it accused of human rights abuses and corruption, the US Treasury Department said on Thursday.

The sanctions target militia leaders Rayan Al-Kildani and Waad Qado, and former governors Nawfal Hammadi Al-Sultan and Ahmed Al-Jubouri, the Treasury said in a statement.

"We will continue to hold accountable persons associated with serious human rights abuse, including persecution of religious minorities, and corrupt officials who exploit their positions of public trust to line their pockets and hoard power at the expense of their citizens," Sigal Mandelker, Treasury under secretary for terrorism and financial intelligence, said.

The Treasury said many of the actions that prompted the sanctions occurred in "areas where persecuted religious communities are struggling to recover from the horrors inflicted on them" by Daesh, the militant group that controlled parts of Iraq for several years.

The Treasury said Kildani is the leader of the 50th Brigade militia and is shown cutting off the ear of a handcuffed detainee in a video circulating in Iraq last year.

It said Qado is the leader of the 30th Brigade militia which engaged in extortion, illegal arrests, and kidnappings.

Sultan and Jubouri were designated for being engaged in corruption, including the misappropriation of state assets, and other misdeeds, the Treasury said.

Iraq in March issued a warrant for the arrest of Sultan, the former governor of Nineveh province, on corruption charges after at least 90 people were killed in a ferry accident in the provincial capital Mosul.

As a result of the designation, any property the four persons hold in the US would be blocked and US persons are barred from business dealings with them.



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Turkish diplomat and two others killed in northern Iraq restaurant attack
Turkey begins second wave of operations against PKK in Iraq

[Trump says US warship destroys Iranian drone in Strait of Hormuz amid heightened tensions](#)

Thu, 2019-07-18 22:18

WASHINGTON: The US military shot down an Iranian drone on Thursday that came within 1,000 yards of one of its naval vessels in the Strait of Hormuz, President Donald Trump said.

“The (USS) Boxer took defensive action against an Iranian drone which had closed into a very, very near distance, approximately 1,000 yards,” Trump announced at the White House.

“The drone was immediately destroyed.”

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Pence announces sanctions on Iranian-linked leaders in Iraq

[US Navy searching for missing sailor in Arabian Sea](#)

Thu, 2019-07-18 20:16

DUBAI: The US navy and other ships are conducting search and rescue operations for a missing US sailor in the Arabian Sea, the Bahrain-based US Fifth Fleet said.

“The Sailor has been listed as Duty Status Whereabouts Unknown (DUSTWUN) after a reported man overboard incident onboard Abraham Lincoln while

operating in the Arabian Sea, July 17," a Fifth Fleet statement said, without giving the sailor's name.

A Spanish and a Pakistani navy ship are assisting two US navy ships in the search operation.

Tensions in the Gulf region are currently high, with fears that foes the United States and Iran could stumble into war.

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

Tehran has also accused Britain of piracy and warned of repercussions after Royal Marines seized an Iranian tanker off Gibraltar on July 4 on suspicion it was shipping oil to Iran's ally Syria, in breach of EU sanctions.



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Video released on Iran's state TV shows seized fuel tanker matches MT RiahUK says seized Iranian oil tanker could be released

Pence announces sanctions on Iranian-linked leaders in Iraq

Thu, 2019-07-18 18:19

WASHINGTON: Vice President Mike Pence said Thursday that the United States is imposing sanctions on the leaders of two Iranian-linked militia groups in Iraq.

"Let me be clear, the United States will not stand idly while Iranian-backed militias spread terror," Pence told a high-level meeting on religious freedom, without naming the individuals targeted.

A US Treasury statement said the sanctions were being imposed on the four Iraqi militia leaders due to suspicion of human rights abuses and corruption.

Further sanctions were imposed on five people and seven entities in connection to Iran's nuclear program and non-proliferation matters, the Treasury Department said on its website on Thursday.

They are the first punitive steps by Washington since Tehran announced earlier this month it would increase its levels of enriched uranium that can be used for bomb fuel.

Tehran announced on July 1 that it had amassed more low-enriched uranium than permitted under its 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, marking its first major step beyond the terms of the pact since the United States withdrew more than a year ago.

"Treasury is taking action to shut down an Iranian nuclear procurement network that leverages Chinese- and Belgium-based front companies to acquire critical nuclear materials and benefit the regime's malign ambitions," Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said in a statement.

"Iran cannot claim benign intent on the world stage while it purchases and stockpiled products for centrifuges," he added.



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Pence says US action has cut off Iran's ability to support terrorism
Argentina orders freezing of Hezbollah assets on anniversary of deadly bombing

[Turkey blocked from US F-35 program after Russian missile purchase](#)

Wed, 2019-07-17 21:32

WASHINGTON: The United States said on Wednesday that it was removing Turkey from the F-35 fighter jet program, a move that had been long threatened and expected after Ankara began accepting delivery of an advanced Russian missile defense system last week.

The first parts of the S-400 air defense system were flown to the Murted military air base northwest of Ankara on Friday, sealing Turkey's deal with Russia, which Washington had struggled for months to prevent.

"The US and other F-35 partners are aligned in this decision to suspend

Turkey from the program and initiate the process to formally remove Turkey from the program,” said Ellen Lord, the under secretary of defense for acquisition and sustainment.

“The United States is spending between \$500 and \$600 million in non-recurring engineering in order to shift the supply chain,” she said.

Used by NATO and other US allies, the F-35 stealth fighter jet is the world’s most advanced jet fighter. Washington is concerned that deploying the S-400 with the F-35 would allow Russia to gain too much inside information of the stealth system.

“The F-35 cannot coexist with a Russian intelligence collection platform that will be used to learn about its advanced capabilities,” the White House said in a statement earlier on Wednesday.

Washington has long said the acquisition may lead to Turkey’s expulsion from the F-35 program.

The Pentagon had already laid out a plan to remove Turkey from the program, including halting any new training for Turkish pilots on the advanced aircraft.

“The situation with Turkey is a government-to-government matter and we’ll comply with any guidance issued by the United States Government,” said a spokesperson for Lockheed Martin Corp. , the prime contractor on the jet.



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