

US warns Russia not to interfere with Syrian 'chemical attack' site

Author:

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Tue, 2018-11-27 19:28

WASHINGTON: The Pentagon warned Russia on Tuesday against interfering with the site of an alleged chemical weapons attack in Syria's regime-held city of Aleppo.

Syrian President Bashar Assad's regime has accused armed groups of carrying out a "toxic gas" attack Saturday that left dozens of people struggling to breathe and prompted government ally Russia to launch retaliatory air strikes against "terrorist groups."

Damascus has formally asked for the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to investigate the alleged attack.

The Pentagon said Assad may try to interfere with the site of the incident and build a narrative to justify attacking the rebel-held stronghold of Idlib, which is currently protected under a 10-week-old truce deal in northern Syria.

"It is essential to ensure that the Syrian regime does not seize on false pretexts to undermine this cease-fire and launch an offensive in Idlib," Pentagon spokesman Commander Sean Robertson said in a statement.

"We caution Russia against tampering with another suspected chemical weapons attack site and urge Russia to secure the safety of the OPCW inspectors so these allegations can be investigated in a fair and transparent manner."

Both the Syrian regime and Russia have blamed "terrorist groups" – a term Damascus uses to mean both rebels and extremists – for Saturday's attack. Though it is the regime that has been blamed for most deadly chemical weapon attacks in Syria's seven-year war, official media have recently accused fighters in Idlib of planning a chemical attack.

In April, the US, France and Britain launched joint missile strikes on Syrian targets in response to an alleged chemical weapons attack in the town of Douma that left scores of people dead.

The Syrian regime blocked international inspectors from accessing the site for several days after the alleged chemical attack.

"We urge immediate inspection of the alleged site by international investigators, with freedom to interview all involved and unhindered ability to collect evidence," Robertson said.



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Hundreds of bodies exhumed from mass grave in Syria's Raqqa
Chemical arms watchdog to 'review security' for Syria gas probe

[Saudi Arabia's crown prince arrives in Tunisia, received by President Beji Caid Essebsi](#)

Tue, 2018-11-27 20:15

TUNIS: Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman arrived in Tunisia on Tuesday, and was received by President Beji Caid Essebsi.

On arrival, Prince Mohammed said the Tunisian people have a special place in the hearts of the Saudi people.

“It is impossible that I embark on a tour in North Africa without touching down in Tunisia,” the crown prince told Al Arabiya News Channel. He said both countries would work together on boosting ties in the interests of their people.

The visit is the fourth stop on the Crown Prince’s tour of Arab nations which has so far taken in Bahrain, the UAE and Egypt.

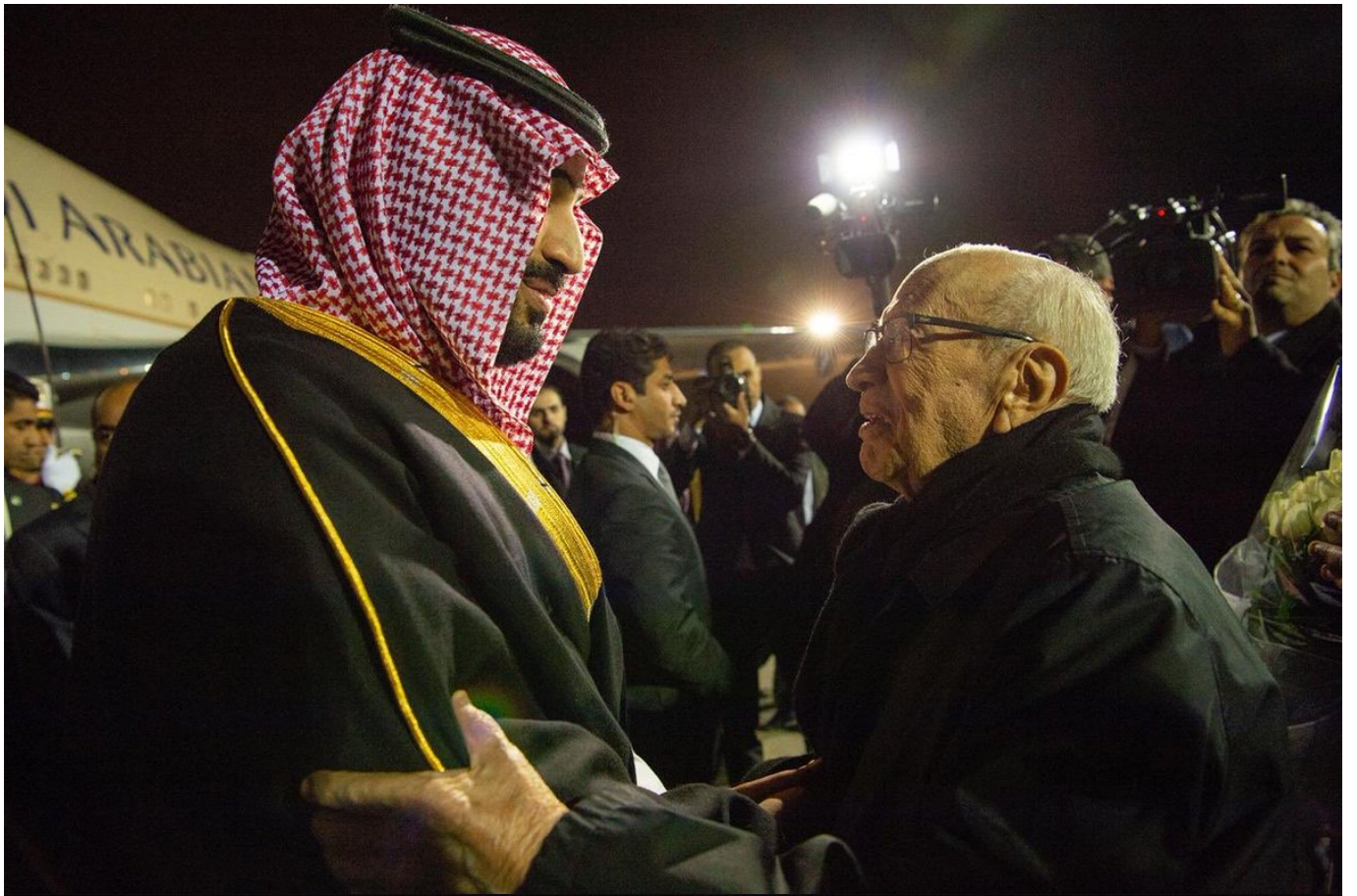
Prince Mohammed was greeted with a ceremonial reception and both the Saudi and Tunisian national anthems were played and a guard of honor expected.

The crown prince was accompanied by the Tunisian president, in an official motorcade, to Cartage presidential Palace.

The crown prince’s delegation includes Prince Turki bin Mohammed, Advisor at the Royal Court, Prince Abdulaziz bin Saud, Minister of Interior, and Minister of Foreign Affairs Adel Al-Jubeir.

The visit was expected to last several hours.







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Saudi Arabia Crown Prince concludes meeting with Egypt's El-Sisi, leaves Cairo
Saudi Arabia's crown prince arrives in Bahrain, holds talks with King Hamad

[UNICEF warns of 'dire' winter risks for 1 million children in Middle East and North Africa](#)

Author:

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1543333795575986700

Tue, 2018-11-27 15:20

AMMAN: The UN children's fund warned Tuesday that a funding gap and the start of winter could leave nearly one million children "out in the cold" in the Middle East and North Africa.

"Years of conflict, displacement and unemployment have reduced families' financial resources to almost nothing. Staying warm has simply become unaffordable," said Geert Cappelaere, UNICEF regional director for the Middle East and North Africa.

The UN agency said it was facing a \$33-million funding gap -- two thirds of its total allocation -- for assistance to children across the region this winter.

Cold and rainy weather would hit those living in extremely basic conditions, especially camps or crowded shelters with little protection.

"With cold and rainy weather sweeping across the Middle East and North Africa, nearly one million children affected by crises in the region risk being left out in the cold," Cappelaere said in a statement.

"With little nutritious food and health care, children have grown weak, becoming prone to hypothermia and dangerous respiratory diseases," he said. UNICEF said it aims this winter to reach 1.3 million children in Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Egypt, providing them with warm clothes, thermal blankets, clean water and other hygiene support.



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British radio presenter found dead in Lebanon

Author:

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Tue, 2018-11-27 13:38

BEIRUT: A well-known British radio presenter who had been living in Lebanon for years was found dead in his apartment in a mountain town near Beirut on Tuesday after being apparently murdered, Lebanese officials said.

Gavin Ford, who joined the Lebanese station Radio One in 1995, was found dead on Tuesday at his home in the town of Beit Meri, east of Beirut.

Local broadcaster LBC TV reported that Ford had been murdered by strangulation and blows to the head.

Radio One announced Ford's death on its Facebook page on Tuesday.

Ford's daily breakfast show turned him into one of the station's most popular broadcasters.

"We are heartbroken to announce the passing of our dear Gavin Ford, a member of our team for many joyful years," Radio One said.

I am shocked and deeply saddened by the death of Gavin Ford, one of Lebanon's most popular morning breakfast hosts. The thoughts of all at the Embassy are with his family, friends and colleagues at this terribly difficult time. pic.twitter.com/BRzbyPoYUV

– Chris Rampling (@crampling) [November 27, 2018](#)

Tributes poured in on social media for Ford, one of Lebanon's most-loved radio hosts for years.

Ford had been living in Lebanon for 22 years in a house in Beit Meri, close to the radio station where he worked. The town, 17 km from Beirut, is in a mountainous area with a Christian majority and is popular with visitors in summer.

As Radio One's management expressed its condolences to Ford's family, a British Embassy spokeswoman told Arab News that "the embassy is in contact with the Lebanese authorities. We are examining the reports related to the British citizen and our staff are providing help to his family."

Lebanon's National News Agency (NNA) said that a forensic doctor had examined Ford's body as part of a police investigation.

Britain's Ambassador to Lebanon, Chris Rampling, tweeted: "I am shocked and deeply saddened by the death of Gavin Ford, one of Lebanon's most popular morning breakfast hosts."

"The thoughts of all at the Embassy are with his family, friends and colleagues at this terribly difficult time," Rampling said.

In December, British Embassy worker Rebecca Dykes was found murdered on the side of a road near Beirut. The suspected killer, an Uber driver, was later detained and is expected to stand trial.



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Hariri office denies Lebanon turned down Russian aid Governor attends Lebanon Independence Day celebration in Riyadh

Briton Matthew Hedges returns to London after UAE spying pardon

Author:

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Tue, 2018-11-27 08:22

LONDON: British academic Matthew Hedges returned to London on Tuesday a day after the UAE pardoned his life sentence for spying.

Britain on Monday thanked the UAE after he was among more than 700 prisoners pardoned by UAE President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed for next month's National Day.

"After almost seven months of detention, including six months in solitary confinement, British PhD researcher Matthew Hedges has returned safely back to London," his family said in a statement.

He was welcomed back to Britain by his wife Daniela Tejada and other members of his family.

"I don't know where to begin with thanking people for securing my release," Hedges said in the statement.

"I have not seen or read much of what has been written over the past few days but Dani tells me the support has been incredible."

Welcome home Matt Hedges! The whole country is relieved and delighted to have you home. Thanks to [@PatrickMoodyFCO](#) and the FCO team in UAE for your tireless work behind the scenes to make today possible

– Jeremy Hunt (@Jeremy_Hunt) [November 27, 2018](#)

He thanked the British embassy in the United Arab Emirates, the Foreign Office and especially his wife for their efforts in securing his release. "She is so brave and strong. Seeing her and my family after this ordeal is the best thing that could have happened," Hedges said.

"I thank you all once again. This is very surreal."

The UAE showed footage at a news conference in the capital Abu Dhabi in which Hedges purportedly confessed to being an MI6 foreign intelligence agent. British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt expressed gratitude to the UAE, a strategic ally.

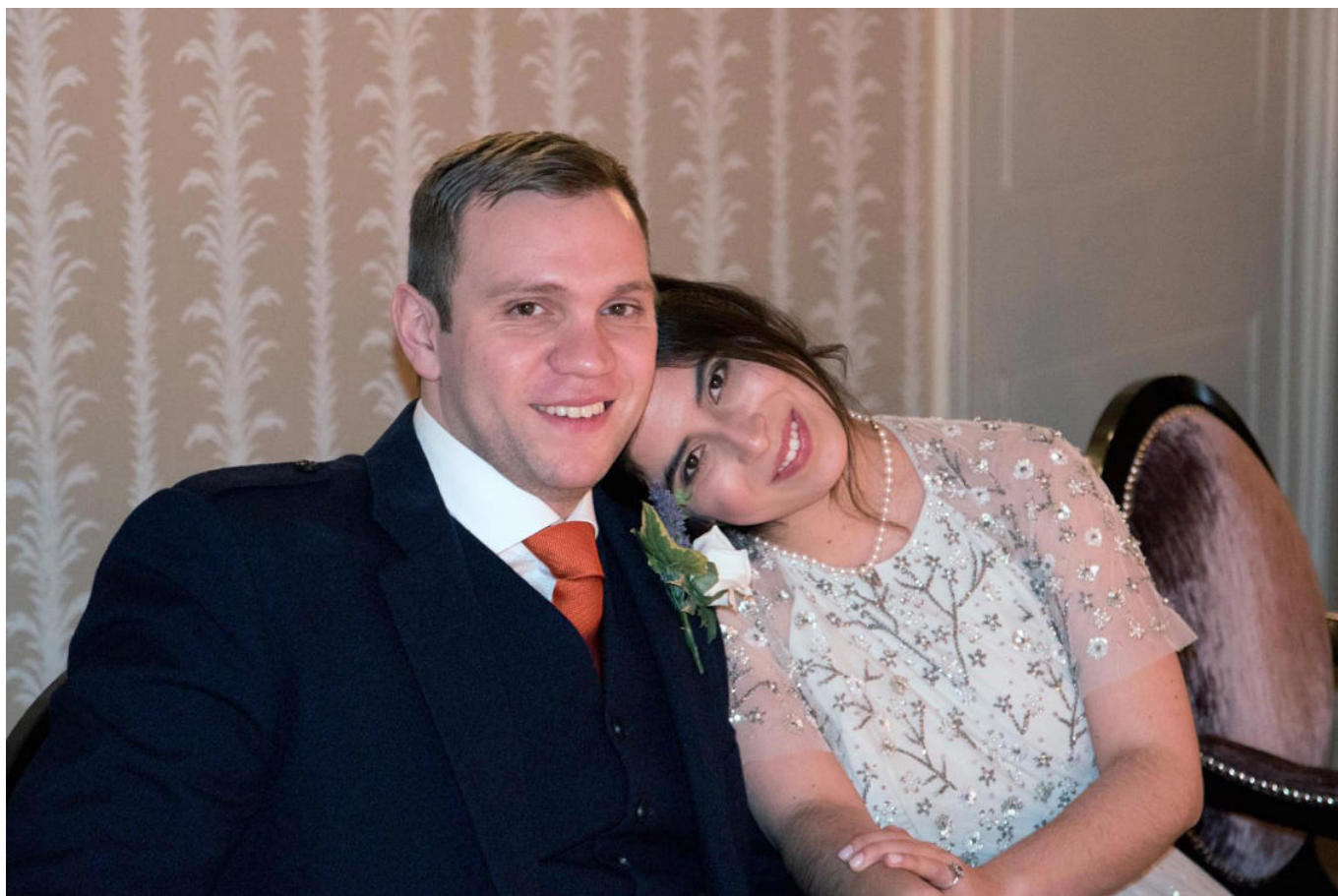
"I am so happy to have my Matt home," Tejada said on Tuesday. "We are overjoyed and exhausted!"

Hedges, a 31-year-old researcher at Durham University, was detained while researching the UAE's foreign and internal security policies after the Arab Spring revolutions of 2011.

He was arrested on May 5 at Dubai airport.

He was sentenced to life in jail by a court in Abu Dhabi last week after he

was convicted of spying for a foreign country.
UAE state minister for foreign affairs Anwar Gargash said the pardon allowed the two countries to refocus on developing relations.



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UAE pardons Briton Matthew Hedges after spying life sentence UAE reviewing clemency request in Briton spy case