

Turkey plans military action against Syrian Kurdish YPG if diplomacy fails

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ANKARA: Turkey is preparing for possible further military action against a US-backed Kurdish militia in northern Syria if talks on the issue with the US and Russia fail, two Turkish officials said.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said this week Ankara was determined to eliminate threats originating in northern Syria and that a Kurdish YPG militia attack that killed two Turkish police officers was "the final straw." Turkey said the police in Syria's Azaz region were hit in a guided missile attack on Sunday launched from Tel Rifaat by the YPG, which Ankara considers a terrorist group closely linked to militants fighting a decades-old insurgency in southeast Turkey.

"It is essential that the areas, notably the Tel Rifaat region from which attacks are constantly carried out against us, are cleansed," one senior official told Reuters.

Turkish forces have launched three incursions in the last five years, seizing hundreds of kilometers of border strip and pushing around 30 km into northern Syria.

Russian jets, Iran-backed fighters, Turkish-supported insurgents, jihadists, US troops and Syrian government forces also operate across the patchwork of territories in northern Syria, as well as the Kurdish YPG.

The US views the YPG as a key ally in the fight against Daesh in northeast Syria. Russia has forces in the area to support Syrian President Bashar Assad.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Turkey has carried out three incursions in Syria in recent years.
- Official says YPG militia must be pushed back at least 30 km.

The time and nature of any further Turkish military action was unclear. The official said the military and national intelligence agency were making preparations.

"The decision for this has been taken and the necessary coordination will be done with particular countries. This subject will be discussed with Russia and the United States," he added.

The officials said Erdogan would discuss the issue with US President Joe Biden at a G20 summit of the world's major economies in Rome at the end of October.

Another official said the YPG must be pushed back at least 30 km, noting Russia was completely in control of the areas from which recent attacks had come, along with some Iranian elements.

Erdogan will speak with Russian President Vladimir Putin after the talks with Biden, he said.

“If there is no outcome from diplomacy and the PYD does not leave these areas, an operation appears unavoidable,” he said, using the abbreviation for the YPG’s political wing and referring to Tel Rifaat and “several other locations.”

On Monday, shells believed to have been fired from a YPG-controlled area east of Tel Rifaat exploded in the Turkish town of Karkamis, across the border from Syria’s Jarablus, causing slight damage, Turkey said.

Azaz and Jarablus have been under the control of rebels backed by Turkey since Ankara’s first incursion into Syria in 2016 – an operation that aimed to drive Daesh militants and the YPG away from the border.

Since then Ankara has launched two other operations in Syria against the YPG, one targeting the northwest Afrin region and one further east.



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Turkey says it will do ‘what is necessary’ after Syria attacks
After attacks in Syria, what is Turkey’s military plan?

EU: Iran not ready to resume Vienna talks

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BRUSSELS: Iran is not ready to return to talks with world powers over its nuclear program yet and its new negotiating team wants to discuss the texts that will be put forward when it meets with the EU in Brussels in the next few weeks, a senior EU official said on Friday.

EU political director Enrique Mora, the chief coordinator for the talks, was in Tehran on Thursday to meet members of Iran's nuclear negotiating team, four months after discussions broke off between Iran and world powers.

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi has so far refused to resume indirect talks with the US in Vienna on both sides returning to compliance with the deal, under which Iran curbed its nuclear program in return for economic sanctions relief.

Diplomats from France, Britain and Germany, who are party to the accord along with China and Russia, said ahead of Mora's visit that it came at a critical time and things could not be deemed "business as usual" given escalating Iranian nuclear activities and the stalling of negotiations.

The US said time was running short. "They are not yet ready for engaging in Vienna," the official told reporters on condition of anonymity, adding that he believed Tehran was "absolutely decided to go back to Vienna and to end the negotiations."

The Islamic Republic has repeatedly said it will return to the negotiations "soon," but it has not given a clearer timeline.

Western diplomats had hoped the Vienna talks might resume before the end of October.

However, after Mora's visit, Iran's Foreign Ministry said it would hold talks in the coming days with the EU in Brussels.

"They insisted that they don't want talks for talks, they want talking with practical results and with a final agreement on how to bring JCPOA (the nuclear deal) back to life," the official said.

Describing a meeting in Brussels as a "good idea," the official said it would allow both sides to go through the texts on the table from June and clarify questions that Iran's new negotiating team may have. "I think we are just clarifying even more the situation for a final destination, which is going to be resuming in Vienna. I expect that soon," he said.

France's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Anne-Claire Legendre said negotiations should resume immediately based on where they left off in June to reach a deal quickly.

"Iran must show a willingness through acts that it shares the same desire to come back to the negotiating table and conclude an agreement," she told reporters.

Western diplomats have said they are concerned Tehran's new negotiating team

– under a president known as an anti-Western hard-liner, unlike his pragmatist predecessor – may make new demands beyond the scope of what had already been agreed.

BACKGROUND

Iran has repeatedly said it will return to the negotiations ‘soon,’ but it has not given a clearer timeline. Western diplomats had hoped the Vienna talks might resume before October-end.

Separately, Iran sharply criticized the UN’s International Atomic Energy Agency for keeping its eyes trained on the Islamic republic while ignoring its arch-enemy Israel’s suspected nuclear program.

Israel is widely believed to be the Middle East’s sole nuclear arms possessor with up to 300 warheads, but it has long refused to confirm or deny it has such weapons and unlike Iran is not a signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

“Silence and negligence about Israel’s nuclear program sends a negative message to the NPT members,” Kazem Gharibabadi, Iran’s ambassador to the UN agency, tweeted.

Being an NPT signatory meant “accepting the robust verifications,” while being outside it meant being “free from any obligation and criticism, and even (getting) rewarded”, he wrote.

“What is the advantage of being both a NPT member and fully implementing the agency’s safeguards?”

Gharibabadi was reacting to an interview given by IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi to Energy Intelligence earlier this month.

Asked why the IAEA is so focused on Iran’s nuclear program but not Israel’s, he responded: “Our relation with Israel is based on the one that you have with a country which is not a party to the NPT.”

Iran has been a signatory to the NPT since 1970, the year it came into force, and has always denied it has any ambitions to acquire or manufacture an atomic bomb.

Israel, which has never signed up to the treaty, has repeatedly warned that it will do whatever it takes to prevent Iran obtaining nuclear weapons.

The NPT calls on nations “to achieve the cessation of the nuclear arms race and to undertake measures in the direction of nuclear disarmament.”



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Saudi FM: There should be 'quick suspension' by Iran of activities that violate nuclear deal US envoy says possible Iran won't return to nuclear deal

[UN urges ceasefire in Marib for 'safe passage'](#)

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1634331990406342500

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SANAA: The UN has called for a halt to fighting in a district of Yemen's oil-rich Marib province that pits government forces supported by the Arab coalition against Iran-backed Houthi rebels.

Marib, Shabwa and Al-Bayda provinces have all seen an escalation in fighting in recent weeks, resulting in "a devastating impact on civilians," according to David Gressly, the UN's humanitarian coordinator for Yemen.

The security situation has been particularly difficult in Marib's Abedia district, where the UN says the movement of aid and some 35,000 people has been "extremely restricted," including for 17,000 "extremely vulnerable" people who found refuge there from conflict in other areas of Yemen.

"I call on all parties involved in the fighting to agree now to a cessation

of hostilities for Abedia district to allow for the safe passage of civilians and aid workers, and for the evacuation of all of those wounded in the fighting,” Gressly said in a statement.

The fighting in Marib – where the Houthis are battling to seize the provincial capital Marib city, the government’s last stronghold in northern Yemen – displaced some 10,000 people in September alone, the highest monthly figure so far this year.

Abedia is about 100 km from Marib city, which had between 20,000 and 30,000 inhabitants before the war, but has seen its population swell to hundreds of thousands by Yemenis displaced from earlier front lines.

With about 139 refugee camps in Marib province, according to the government, hosting around 2.2 million people, many displaced civilians have become caught in the line of fire once again.

The Houthis began a big push to seize Marib in February and, after a lull, they renewed their campaign in September, prompting intense air bombardment from the coalition.

The coalition entered the war in 2015, after the Houthis captured the capital Sanaa the previous year.



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Yemeni troops recapture areas from Houthis in Marib’s Juba district
Arab coalition: Over 180 Houthis killed, 10 military vehicles destroyed in Abedia operations

Hospitality's next generation envisions a more ethical and sustainable hotel industry

Fri, 2021-10-15 22:56

DUBAI: What attracts guests to a hotel? Fine dining, Egyptian cotton sheets and 24-hour room service, certainly. But that model of hospitality may be changing – at least if a new generation of hoteliers, bar owners and restaurateurs has its way.

Rather than reviewing the contents of the minibar or revising the coffee shop menu, this new breed of hotel operator is intent on combating loneliness, sourcing from local farmers, fighting climate change and building a sense of community.

In 2014, Hotelschool the Hague, a training institute, created the Sustainable Hospitality Challenge to provide a platform for the next generation of hospitality professionals who want to reinvent what hotels and restaurants have to offer.

These students are seen as future drivers of taste by their willingness to challenge the industry's status quo. NEOM, the futuristic smart city in northwest Saudi Arabia, sponsored this year's competition.



Saudi Arabia's natural beauty is matched by the opulent interiors of Riyadh's premium hotels (Courtesy of The Ritz-Carlton, Riyadh/ Expedia.com)

"The NEOM giga-project, which we all call 'the city of the future,' aims to

incorporate smart-city technologies and innovation with a focus on sustainability,” Marloes Knippenberg, CEO of Kerten Hospitality and chair of the jury, told Arab News.

“It comes as no surprise that NEOM has sponsored the challenge this year, bringing all finalists to the event in the UAE.”

The event invited 30 universities from across the globe to submit ideas that would help the industry play its part in reaching the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals. Last month, six finalists presented their concepts to a jury of hospitality industry investors in Dubai.

Eve Mignot, a member of the winning team from Switzerland’s Ecole Hoteliere de Lausanne, said hospitality is at a crossroads. The sector has historically lagged behind other industries when it comes to embracing change, she said.

“It is time to reverse this stereotype and stigma and become leaders in sustainable innovations. With our concept, we anticipate the hospitality industry of 2050 to be a community builder, innovator and a responsible and ethical member of society.”



Marloes Knippenberg CEO Kerten Hospitality. (Supplied)

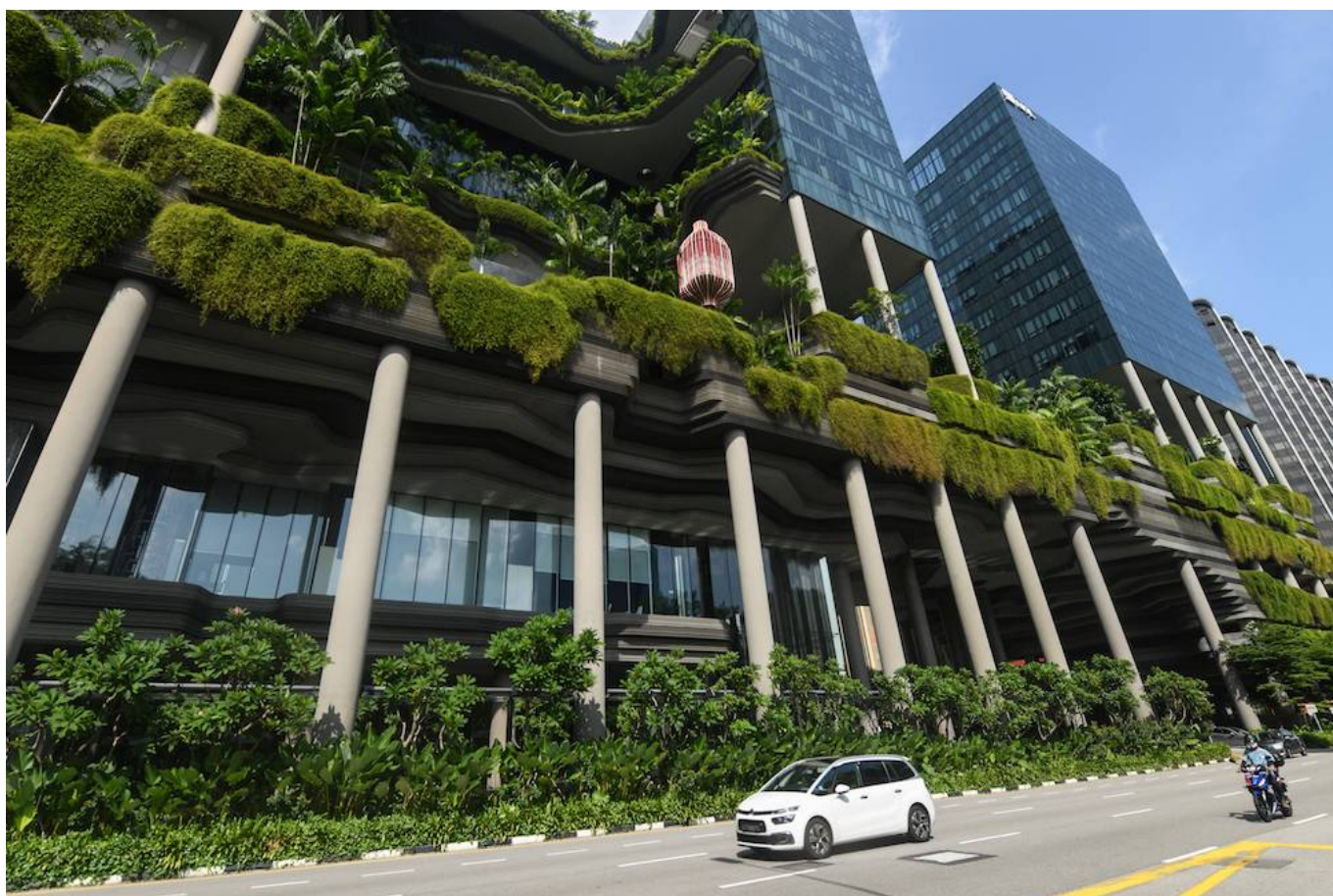
The winning team proposed a concept dubbed “Shared Economic Value through Co-living Cooperative Opportunities,” or SEVCCO, which aims to incorporate sustainability through communal living operated by hospitality companies, for

which they see immense potential in growing cities.

This will require a reimagining of lifestyles, business models and strategies. "There has never been a more pressing time to reinvent the industry," Mignot said.

The team hopes this concept of "neo-hospitality" will transform societies and become a driving force that inspires communities and other industries to engage in the transformation of the world by 2050.

Lukas Lauber, another team member, said that while oil has accelerated growth and development in the Middle East, secondary consumption of oil has had negative consequences in terms of climate change and its effects on the environment.



This photograph taken on July 23, 2021 shows a view of the Park Royal Collection Hotel at Pickering Street in Singapore. (AFP)

However, in recent years, many countries in the region have adopted diversification strategies to their national economies as well as introduced policies to reduce their dependence on oil reserves and promote renewable energy. This is where SEVCCO comes in.

"Countries in the Middle East are hoping to attract foreign investment. A large part of this strategy involves tourism and hospitality, as seen by the re-branding of Dubai as a tourism hub and Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 strategy whereby it seeks to develop cities and destinations," Lauber told Arab News.

As countries in the region develop, he said sustainable communities and

cities must be built to promote a more cyclical and regenerative society. "This is where we promote SEVCCO, the creation of co-living environments for tomorrow," said Stefano Abedum de Lima Hanzawa, a third team member.

"It is imperative that the Middle East incorporates sustainability and regenerative growth into their strategy for economic diversification and development."

FASTFACTS

*** NEOM, the futuristic smart city in northwest Saudi Arabia, sponsored this year's Sustainable Hospitality Challenge competition.**

*** Some 30 universities were invited to submit ideas that would help the hospitality industry play its part in achieving the UN's SDGs.**

These concerns are made more pressing as the 2030 deadline for the UN Sustainable Development Goals draws nearer. By then, national economies must mobilize to prevent a 1.5 Celsius increase in global temperatures and implement strategies to shift away from fossil-fueled economies.

The team developed the SEVCCO concept to empower individuals and communities to come together and co-create a city of the future that complies with these goals.

"The concept of cognitive cities is gaining traction, as seen by the NEOM development in Saudi Arabia, and this acceleration and momentum will continue to grow," Hanzawa said.

"We believe cyclical and sustainable co-living has incredible potential to change the way we behave and live for a better tomorrow. We wish to tackle the most pressing issues such as urban loneliness – exacerbated by the pandemic."



Muslim pilgrims add food to their plates from the buffet of a restaurant at a luxury hotel overlooking the Kaaba, Islam's holiest shrine, and its encompassing Grand Mosque in Saudi Arabia's holy city of Makkah ahead of the annual Hajj pilgrimage. (AFP/File Photo)

Other ills listed by the competitors include unsustainable production and consumption of scarce resources, resource inefficiencies, housing shortages experienced by generations Y and Z, growing elderly care home demand, the difficulties of waste management and the challenges of reducing carbon footprints by 2030.

"SHC brings forth innovative ideas about sustainable, implementable projects. The corporate world launches and brings them to life only if and when they are presented to them," said Knippenberg. "The challenge (has) become a platform that reaches decision-makers today and is not just a school engagement."

This year, the initiative brought together the student community, the corporate world, and investors. As 70 percent of the Middle East's population are younger than 35, the competition is relevant to the region, the organizers said, as governments invest heavily in shifting toward knowledge-based economies.

"Especially in the Middle East, there is a great opportunity to implement 'out of the box' ideas," said Paul Griep, director of industry and alumni relations at Hotelschool The Hague and founder of the challenge.

"As the region grows exponentially, it is of utmost importance for the region to become the showroom of the world when it comes to implementing sustainable

solutions. Sustainability projects are the core of the multiple giga-projects in Saudi Arabia, (such as) NEOM.”



Picture from the stage from the award ceremony on stage at AHIC, in September 2021, with members of the jury and the winners. (Supplied)

Aside from EHL, the Hotel Institute Montreux in Switzerland, the Hotel Management School Maastricht Zuyd and the Hotelschool The Hague, Ryerson University from Canada, and CY Cergy Paris University in France took part, as did students from the Middle East.

The judges said the SEVCCO concept developed by EHL won out because it looked long term.

“Their concept was unique, well thought of and very 2050,” Knippenberg said. “Their idea seems like a natural evolution – community build, supporting the locality and the local supply chain and doing things with a truly sustainable mindset.”

Griep said that the younger generation coming into management is especially passionate about sustainability. “In fact, they no longer wish for it but actually require it,” he said.

“It has been proven that, thanks to this mindset, innovative solutions have already been developed. The challenge provides an opportunity for these students to work with industry partners, universities and companies alike, which help them make their concepts become real hospitality projects.”

Twitter: [@CelineMalek](#)



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Saudi Tourism Development Fund partners with prestigious hospitality institute Saudi energy minister, PIF head, NEOM CEO to lead Saudi Green Initiative forum

[19 arrested after Beirut clashes leave 7 dead](#)

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BEIRUT: The Lebanese Army on Friday set up checkpoints in the Tayouneh area and on roads leading to Beirut's northern and southern suburbs after gunfights left seven people dead on Thursday.

Investigations by specialized military units have not identified the direct cause of the clashes between armed members from Hezbollah and the Amal Movement on one side, and opposing gunmen that the two parties claimed were from the Lebanese Forces Party.

"The army command's statement about Thursday's events left things ambiguous until further investigations," a military source told Arab News. "But what we are sure of is that the sniper shots fired at Hezbollah and Amal targeted the head, chest, and abdomen areas as most injuries were among those."

The shootout lasted more than three hours and also left 32 people injured, including two soldiers.

What was supposed to be a peaceful demonstration on Thursday quickly turned into anarchy. Hezbollah and the Amal Movement had hit the streets demanding the removal of Judge Tarek Bitar from the investigation of the Beirut port blast before bullets and rocket-propelled grenades started flying.

On Friday, the military source said "13 persons were arrested, including concierges of the buildings that snipers used to shoot at the demonstrators in the streets from their rooftops. Members affiliated with the Lebanese Forces party, who were spotted on the battlefield, were also arrested. The army resorted to CCTV footage for evidence."

Later in the evening, state National News Agency said Lebanon had detained 19 people in relation to recent gunfire in Beirut.

A national day of mourning for the victims was declared on Friday as schools, banks, and government offices across Lebanon were shut down. Guns were fired in the air during funerals for the victims in Beirut's southern suburbs and Bekaa.

The full extent of damage caused to buildings, properties, and parked cars during the shootout was revealed on Friday. People who returned to their homes expressed deep anger at the events and asked, "Who will compensate us for the human and material losses?"

Signs of destruction were left by the B7 grenades while bullet holes were very clear on the buildings in the Tayouneh area. An uneasy calm reigned on Friday as shops were closed and very few people walked in the streets. All cars and motorcycles that passed through the area were searched by authorities.

In order to prevent more escalation, a military source said the airborne division was assisting the army in Ain Remaneh and Chiyah, "in case something happens, given that this area has become very sensitive."

Faisal bin Farhan, Saudi Arabia's foreign minister, said he is "certainly worried" about the political and economic situation in Lebanon as it requires action "now." He said the events over the past two days showed that Lebanon needs real, serious change and that the responsibility lies with the country's leaders.

The Saudi Foreign Ministry said in a statement that the Kingdom is following

events in Lebanon closely. The Kingdom hopes the situation will stabilize as soon as possible and that Saudi Arabia stands with the people of Lebanon, the statement said.

According to their sources, Hezbollah and the Amal Movement have requested to remove Bitar from the investigation into the Beirut port blast on Aug. 4, 2020, which killed more than 200 people and wounded thousands.

"The judiciary must find a formula that can restore the constitutional order and declare that the defendants, who are former ministers and deputies, should be prosecuted before the Court of Ministers and Presidents," An official source from Amal Movement told Arab News.

Lawmaker Jalal Abdullah said the case is very sensitive and requires accurate follow-up.

"Why did a demonstration, which was supposed to be peaceful, turn into an armed clash? The truth needs to come out," he said. "The demarcation lines carry a bloody history in the memories of the Lebanese, and we do not want to reminisce these memories regardless of what happened."

Abdullah told Arab News that "after what happened on Thursday, all kinds of immunity of the highest-ranking to the lowest-ranking security officials must be lifted to allow the truth to come out. Some are very concerned about this investigation and the role of Judge Bitar in his investigations. What is needed today is for everyone to abide by the process of the law."

Mohanad Hage Ali, director of communications and a fellow at the Malcolm H. Kerr Carnegie Middle East Center in Beirut, said the Tayouneh crime might be used politically to counter the port crime.

"I do not think that Hezbollah was not expecting blood by getting its supporters into this sensitive area," he said. "Hezbollah is very concerned about the investigations and the possibility of being accused by Judge Bitar. This is only a possibility. But what we know so far at face value, is that Hezbollah is defending its allies, the Amal Movement and Marada Movement, whose ministers are defendants in the port explosion case."

Ali expressed concern about Hezbollah's behavior and feared assassination attempts in the near future.

"Just like what happened after the assassination of (former premier) Rafic Hariri until the assassination of (author and activist) Luqman Slim," he said.

The EU condemned the use of violence and expressed its condolences to the families of the victims, calling for "utmost restraint to avoid further senseless loss of life."



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Lebanese hold funerals for 7 killed in Beirut gunbattlesSix killed in Beirut clashes as tensions soar over port blast investigation