

Erdogan Threatens 'Imminent' Syria Operation, Sparks Russian Warning

Agencies

Ankara: Turkey has threatened to launch an "imminent" operation in Syria's Idlib Province if Damascus fails to withdraw behind Ankara's military positions, sparking a warning from Russia.

"Like our previous operations, we say our operation may happen suddenly one night," Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said, referring to three cross-border incursions his country has so far waged in northern Syria.

Speaking at a meeting of the ruling Justice and Development (AK) Party's parliamentary group in Ankara on Wednesday, Erdogan stressed that Turkey was determined to make Idlib a secure zone "no matter the cost."

He also noted that several rounds of talks between Ankara and Moscow on the situation in Idlib had failed to reach "desired results."

point. In other words, the Idlib offensive is only a matter of time."

"An operation in Idlib is imminent. We are counting down, we are making our final warnings," he added.

The Turkish president has previously said his country may use military force to drive back Syrian forces unless they pull back by the end of February.

Reacting to Erdogan's threat, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov issued a warning.

"If we are talking about an operation against the legitimate authorities of the Syrian republic and armed forces of the Syrian republic, this would of course be the worst scenario," he told reporters.

However, Peskov added that Moscow would not object if Ankara acted against "terrorist groups in Idlib" in accordance with existing agreements, saying, "Contacts with Turkey are continuing."

Idlib and small parts of the ad-



Eight Killed In Germany After Shooting In Shisha Bars

Press Trust Of India

Berlin: A huge manhunt was under way Thursday after at least eight people were killed and several injured in two shootings at shisha bars in Germany. The attacks targeted bars in Hanau, about 20 kilometres (12 miles) from Frankfurt, where armed police quickly fanned out and police helicopters roamed the sky looking for those responsible for the bloodshed.

The first attack occurred at the "Midnight" bar in the centre of the city around 10pm (2100 GMT), police and reports said. Three people were killed in front of the building, local media said, with witnesses reporting hearing a dozen shots. The attacker, or attackers, fled the scene by car, according to police. There was then a second shooting at Arena Bar.

A gunman reportedly rang the doorbell and shot people in the smoking area, killing five people including a woman, according to mass-circulation Bild, adding that the victims were of Kurdish origin. "The victims are people we have known for years," said the bar manager's son, quoted by DPA news agency. Two employees were among the victims, according to the man, who was not at the bar during the shooting. "It is a shock for everyone".

At least five people were also seriously wounded in the attacks, reports said.

An AFP journalist at the scene saw around thirty police cars leaving Hanau police station. Witnesses said police officers with machine guns were deployed in the city.

A silver Mercedes covered by what looked like a survival blanket could be seen behind a police cordon and surrounded by officers in front of "Arena Bar", with shattered glass on the floor.

"The police can now confirm that eight people were fatally wounded. The search for suspects is going at top speed. There is no clear information yet as to a motive," authorities said, adding that several had been injured.

The mayor of Hanau, Claus Kaminsky, told mass circulation Bild that it had been "a terrible night".

"You could not imagine a worse night. It will of course keep us busy for a long, long time and remain a sad memory." "I am deeply moved. Just the fact that eight people have lost their lives has shaken me up. But I ask all citizens not to speculate. The police must have the chance to clear up the situation and investigate - until then, we should wait with prudence, no matter how hard this may be." MP for the region, Katja Leikert said it was "a real horror scenario".

Trump 'Offered Pardon' To Assange If He Denied Russia Leak, His Lawyer Tells Court

Agencies

LONDON - US President Donald Trump promised to pardon WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange if he denied Russia leaked emails of his 2016 election rival's campaign, a London court was told on Wednesday.

Assange's lawyer Jennifer Robinson said in a document that Trump relayed the offer through former US Congressman Dana Rohrabacher, the UK's domestic Press Association news agency reported.

The White House quickly issued a denial that Trump had dangled a pardon in exchange for help in the Russia controversy,

which has cast a shadow over his first term in office.

"The president barely knows Dana Rohrabacher other than he's an ex-congressman. He's never spoken to him on this subject or almost any subject. It is a complete fabrication and a total lie," Trump press secretary Stephanie Grisham said in a statement.

"This is probably another never-ending hoax and total lie" by the Democratic Party, she said, a day after Trump controversially pardoned or issued other forms of clemency to 11 people including a former governor jailed for corruption, and other high-profile white-collar criminals.

The revelation came at a case

management hearing at Westminster Magistrates' Court before Monday's formal start of Washington's extradition request for him to face espionage charges.

If found guilty in the United States, he could be jailed for 175 years.

Assange faces 18 US counts

Assange's defence cited a statement from Robinson in which she said that Rohrabacher had been to see Assange and said "on instructions from the president, he was offering a pardon or some other way out, if Mr Assange... said Russia had nothing to do with the DNC leaks".

The revelation came at a case

Afghan Runner-Up Bars Electoral Officials From Leaving Country

Agencies

Kabul: Afghan leader Abdullah Abdullah has issued a decree barring all election commission workers from leaving the country a day after he was declared the runner-up in the presidential elections.

The Independent Election Commission (IEC) announced on Tuesday that incumbent President Ashraf Ghani won the election but Abdullah contested the much-delayed results.

Abdullah, who still serves as the country's chief executive, also announced the establishment of his own government on Tuesday precipitating a political crisis at a time when the US and Taliban armed group are on the verge of striking a peace deal.

According to Abdullah's campaign team, the order was issued after reports of election commission workers trying to flee the country, with what they claim was assistance from the presidential palace.

Leadership election commissions applied 4 visa in almost all

embassies, but were denied visa. Arg gave them diplomatic passport so that they can escape to Turkey as it won't require visa using them. By a decree of @DrAbdullahCE they can't leave. They need to answer 4 their treason

Despite declaring the formation of an "inclusive government", Abdullah's decree came from the Office of the Chief Executive, the post he was given as part of an agreement reached with Ghani in 2014 following allegations of widespread fraud and corruption in those polls.

The order has raised fresh concerns ahead of a planned reduction in violence between the Taliban, and the US and Afghan forces, which is slated to take effect next week, and would be the first step towards bringing Afghan and Taliban officials together to discuss potential peace for the first time since 2001.

The Taliban has been waging an armed rebellion since it was deposed from power in a US-led invasion following the September 11, 2001 attacks in the US.

How China's new coronavirus spread

Agencies

Beijing: The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared a global health emergency over a new coronavirus - known as COVID-19 - that has killed at least 2,118 people in mainland China, with cases confirmed in the Asia-Pacific region, Europe, North America, the Middle East and Africa.

Below is a timeline.

On December 31 last year, China alerted WHO to several cases of unusual pneumonia in Wuhan, a port city of 11 million people in the central Hubei province. The virus was unknown.

Several of those infected worked at the city's Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market, which was shut down on January 1.

As health experts worked to identify the virus amid growing alarm, the number of infections exceeded 40.

On January 5, Chinese officials ruled out the possibility that this was a recurrence of the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) virus - an illness that originated in China and killed more than 770 people worldwide in 2002-2003.

On January 7, officials announced they had identified a new virus, according to the WHO.

On January 11, China announced its first death from the virus, a 61-year-old man who had purchased goods from the seafood market. Treatment did not improve his symptoms after he was admitted to hospital and he died of heart failure on the evening of January 9.

Coronavirus

By January 24, the death toll in China stood at 26, with the government reporting more than 830 infections.

On January 30, the WHO declared coronavirus a global

emergency as the death toll in China jumped to 170, with 7,711 cases reported in the country, where the virus had spread to all 31 provinces.

India and the Philippines confirmed their first cases of the virus, with one infected patient in each country.

Coronavirus: 2019-NCoV vaccine
On January 31, the number of confirmed cases in China jumped to 9,809. Russia, Spain, Sweden and the UK confirmed their first cases of the virus.

On February 7, Li Wenliang, a doctor who was among the first to sound the alarm over the coronavirus, died, and Hong Kong introduced prison sentences for anyone breaching quarantine rules.

On February 8, a US citizen died in Wuhan.

China under pressure as coronavirus death toll exceeds SARS (3:22)

On February 9, the death toll in China surpassed that of the 2002-2003 SARS epidemic, with 811 deaths recorded and 37,198 infections.

On February 11, the WHO announced that the new coronavirus would be called "COVID-19".

COVID-19
The death toll in mainland China hit 1,113, with 44,653 infections recorded.

The death toll in mainland China hit 1,300, with nearly 60,000 infections recorded. Meanwhile, Japan confirmed its first death from the virus.

On February 20, South Korea reported its first death from the coronavirus.

Meanwhile, China reported the death toll had risen to 2,118 while the total number of cases reached 74,576. The daily reported infections dropped to the lowest in almost a month, a result of authorities only counting cases confirmed by genetic testing in Hubei.



"The talks will continue, but it is true that we are far from meeting our demands at the table," Erdogan said. "Turkey has made every preparation to carry out its own operational plans. I say that we can come at any

jacent area in Aleppo form the only large territory in the hands of terrorists after the Syrian military managed to undo militant gains across the country and bring back almost all of Syrian soil under government control.

'High Voter Turnout In Iran Elections Will Infuriate US'

Agencies

Tehran: Iran's President Hassan Rouhani says an inclusive and enthusiastic popular turnout in this Friday's parliamentary elections will enrage the United States, stressing the significant role of the legislative chamber in moving forward government efforts to thwart Washington's sanctions.

Iran can triumph over the US pressure campaign through perseverance and strength, Rouhani told a cabinet session in Tehran on Wednesday.

People forming long queues at polling stations is what will upset and enrage the US, the president said, adding that Washington will be delighted to see a low voter turnout.

Iran is to hold the elections on February 21 to appoint lawmakers to its 11th Majlis (Parliament) since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

More than 7,000 candidates are to vie in the polls for 290 seats, five of them representing religious minorities.

Rouhani called Majlis a significant apparatus as it would pass laws that could last for decades, thus affecting the country's future.

This year's elections bear added significance in light of the fact that Iran has come under intense sanctions and pressure by the world's arrogant powers, the presi-



dent stated, adding that a high voter turnout can reflect the popular stance towards these powers.

Rouhani called the sanctions "a terrorist American action" against the Iranian people, and added that the current American officials have been emboldened in their attempts to pressure Iran by the support of the Israeli regime and the region's reactionary states.

Rouhani gave assurances that the unfair sanctions can be broken as has been proven in the past.

A high electoral turnout, Rouhani noted, would mandate the parliament to join forces with the government and the judiciary in efforts to defeat the US bans and resolve domestic problems.

"We should all stand alongside one another... We should resolve the problems together," he added. "That day when the US despairs, its maximum pressure will have no effect. It will surrender, come to the negotiation table, and accept the word of truth."

After the incident, the owner

NEWSMAKERS

Indian cleaner arrested in Dubai for stealing watches worth \$2 million

A 26-year-old Indian man has been arrested for allegedly stealing 86 expensive watches worth over \$2 million from a shop in Dubai where he worked, according to a media report.

The man, who worked as a cleaner, has gone on a trial at the Dubai Court of First Instance after he was accused of stealing the valuables from a watch and jewellery shop the famous Gold Souq, the Khaleej Times reported.

A complaint about the stolen watches worth over Dh 8.3 million (USD 2 million) was filed on January 6 at the Naif police station, the report added.

"I own shops that sell watches and jewellery in the Gold Souq. On December 25 last year, I was in one of my shops when an Indian salesman brought to my attention that a watch, worth Dh 30,000, was found in the trash bin," an Iraqi



businessman, 51, recounted in front of the public prosecution investigator.

"I took the matter lightly, thinking it must have fallen accidentally there. However, that caught the attention of an employee who went to my partner's shop and alerted him."

After the incident, the owner

then checked the CCTV cameras which showed the cleaner taking the watch, putting it in a box and dropping it in the trash bin so he could steal it later, the report said.

"When we confronted the cleaner, he confessed he was about to steal the watch as he needed money. He denied, though, having stolen any items from the other

shops. But we did not believe him," the owner said.

"We contacted his brother who was then in India and who works as a manager at our shops. I told him to come back to Dubai."

When the owner and his partner asked the defendant again about the theft in the presence of his brother, he confessed he had stolen two watches worth Dh 250,000 and Dh 270,000, respectively.

He sold each of them to a Pakistani man for Dh 10,000. He claimed he was not yet paid for the second watch and that he used to meet that Pakistani man after work at a nearby cafe, the report added.

During the public prosecution investigation, the defendant admitted he stole the watches and then sold them to his two accomplices who knew they were stolen.

Two Pakistani men (cousins), aged 44 and 25, both fugitives, are on trial in absentia for possession of the stolen watches, it added.

Larry Tesler: Computer scientist behind 'cut-copy-paste' dies

A pioneering US computer scientist whose accomplishments included inventing the widely relied on "cut, copy and paste" command died at age 74.

The death of Lawrence "Larry" Tesler was announced on Twitter on Wednesday by Xerox, where he spent part of his career.

"The inventor of cut/copy & paste, find & replace, and more was former Xerox researcher Larry Tesler," the company said.

"Your workday is easier thanks to his revolutionary ideas. Larry passed away Monday, so please join us in celebrating him."

A graduate of Stanford University, Tesler specialised in human-computer interaction, employing his skills at Amazon, Apple, Yahoo, and the Xerox Palo Alto Research Center (PARC).

Creating the idea

The cut and paste command was



reportedly inspired by old-fashioned editing that involved actually cutting portions of printed text and affixing them elsewhere with adhesive.

"Tesler created the idea of 'cut, copy, & paste' and combined computer science training with a counterculture vision that computers should be for everyone," the Computer History Museum in Silicon Valley tweeted on Wednesday.

The command was made popu-

lar by Apple after being incorporated in software on the Lisa computer in 1983 and the original Macintosh that debuted the next year.

Tesler worked for Apple in 1980 after being recruited from Xerox by late co-founder Steve Jobs.

Tesler spent 17 years at Apple, rising to chief scientist. He went on to establish an education startup and did stints in user-experience technology at Amazon and Yahoo.