

Turkey offers Gaddafi way out amid deadly clashes

Tripoli pounding continues as new fronts open up in Libya war

AGENCIES

Heavy fighting between pro-Gaddafi troops and rebels broke out in a Libyan city just 160 kilometres east of Tripoli, potentially opening the coastal road to the capital, and in besieged Misrata as Turkey said it has offered Gaddafi guarantees to leave Libya.

World powers gave mixed signals on how the deadlocked civil war might play out, with Russia trying to mediate reconciliation. Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan said on Friday he had offered a "guarantee" to Gaddafi if he left Libya, but received no reply.

With diplomacy stalling, rebels said fighting was erupting on new fronts.

Ahmed Bani, a military spokesman in Benghazi, told Reuters clashes had broken out in Zlitan on Thursday and resumed on Friday with Gaddafi forces killing 22 rebels.

Zlitan is one of three towns that are under government control between the rebel-held

Misrata and the capital and were it to fall could act as a stepping stone to allow the anti-Gaddafi uprising to spread from Misrata to Gaddafi's stronghold in Tripoli.

"Large numbers of troops are surrounding Zlitan from all directions and are threatening its residents with having their women raped by mercenaries if they do not surrender," Bani said, adding the rebels controlled parts of the city.

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said his government had offered exit "guarantees" to the embattled Libyan leader, whom rebels have been trying to oust since February following a bloody crackdown on pro-reform protests.

Gaddafi "has no other option than to leave Libya -- with a guarantee to be given to him," Erdogan said on NTV television.

His comments came after a day of deadly fighting near the port city of Misrata, the rebels' most significant enclave in western Libya killing 20 people.

But they had beaten back an attack by loyalist

troops, leaving "dead and wounded among the Gaddafi forces," he said.

Gaddafi's daughter filed a second war crimes complaint against Nato and France in Paris on Friday.

Friday's complaint accused French Defence Minister Gerard Longuet and President Nicolas Sarkozy of "war crimes" and "assassination," her lawyer said.

Gates, the Pentagon chief, expressed deep concern over Nato alliance. "Frankly, many of those allies sitting on the sidelines do so not because they do not want to participate, but simply because they cannot," Gates said.

The announcement came as the US Defence Security Cooperation Agency said the United States plans to export \$46.1 billion in weapons this year, nearly doubling its 2010 figures.

Meanwhile three boats carrying nearly 700 migrants from North Africa arrived on the southern Italian island of Lampedusa overnight, officials said yesterday.



People march on the street during an anti nuclear demonstration in Tokyo yesterday marking 3 months of the nuclear disaster caused by the massive tsunami triggered by a 9.1 earthquake. Thousands joined the anti-nuclear rallies and demonstrations in Tokyo and elsewhere as radiation continued to leak from the crippled plant.

PHOTO: AFP

Hillary warns Africa of 'new colonialism'

AP, Lusaka

US Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton yesterday warned Africa of a creeping "new colonialism" from foreign investors and governments interested only in extracting the continent's natural resources to enrich themselves and not the African people.

Hillary said that African leaders must ensure that foreign projects are sustainable and benefit all their citizens, not only elites. A day earlier, she cautioned that China's massive investments and business interests in Africa need to be closely watched so that the African people are not taken advantage of.

"It is easy, and we saw that during colonial times, it is easy to come in, take out natural resources, pay off leaders and leave," Clinton said. "And when you leave, you don't leave much behind for the people who are there. We don't want to see a new colonialism in Africa."



Clinton said the United States didn't want foreign governments and investors to fail in Africa, but they should also give back to the local communities.

"We want them to do well, but also we want them to do good," she said.

"We don't want them to undermine good governance, we don't want them

to basically deal with just the top elites, and frankly too often pay for their concessions or their opportunities to invest."

Clinton said that American development aid and infrastructure projects come with good governance conditions and that the Obama administration is interested in Africa and the African people. Their success, she said, is in the long-term interest of both the African people and the US.

She spoke in a pan-African television interview in the Zambian capital. Clinton is the first secretary of state to visit Zambia since Henry Kissinger came in 1976.

Sudan leaders to meet on border conflict

US warns Sudan on violence

AFP, Washington

The presidents of north and south Sudan are to meet in Addis Ababa today to discuss the crises in the border regions of Abyei and South Kordofan, China's envoy for African affairs said yesterday.

"There will be a meeting tomorrow between President (Omar al-) Bashir and his Vice President Salva Kiir in Addis Ababa to discuss the issues of Abyei and South Kordofan," Liu Guijin said after meeting Bashir in Khartoum yesterday.

SUNA state news agency said the talks would also be attended by Ethiopian PM Meles Zenawi and former South African president Thabo Mbeki, who heads an African Union team trying to resolve outstanding issues between north and south ahead of southern independence on July 9.

Heavy clashes between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and northern members of the former southern rebel army have raged all week across South Kordofan, the north's only oil producing state, with intense fighting in and around the state capital Kadugli.

The White House urged Sudan on Friday to "immediately" halt the escalation of "reprehensible" violence on southern army positions less than a month before the south's independence.

"The United States condemns reported acts of violence in Southern Kordofan that target individuals based on their ethnicity and political affiliation," White House spokesman Jay Carney said in calling for a ceasefire.

CLASHES IN YEMEN

21 al-Qaeda suspects, 10 troops killed

AFP, Sanaa

Ten Yemeni soldiers and 21 suspected al-Qaeda militants were killed in clashes in south Yemen yesterday, the defence ministry said on its news website.

Fierce clashes erupted in the city of Zinjibar, in Abyan province, between gunmen who have seized control of most of the city and besieged troops from the 25th mechanised brigade, a military official said on the 26Sep.net website.

"Eighteen terrorists were killed and dozens wounded when gunmen attacked the base of the brigade," the official said, adding that "nine soldiers fell martyrs."

Meanwhile, the official said three "al-Qaeda terrorists" were killed and 10 others wounded, while a soldier was killed and three wounded when gunmen ambushed a military convoy near Loder, also in Abyan.

Troops loyal to embattled President Ali Abdullah Saleh have launched an attack to regain control of Zinjibar. A military official said on Thursday that 10 al-Qaeda fighters and three soldiers were killed in clashes on the outskirts of the city.

Yemen is the home of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, an affiliate of slain Osama bin Laden's militant network.

NEWS IN brief

Al-Qaeda's E Africa chief killed in Mogadishu

AFP, Washington

The United States believes the presumed head of al-Qaeda in east Africa, Fazul Abdullah Muhammad, is very likely dead, a US official said yesterday.

"There's strong reason to believe that this senior al-Qaeda terrorist is dead," the official told AFP.

Fazul Abdullah, 38, is wanted for blowing up the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. He is thought to have planned the massive truck bombings in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam that killed 224 people in 1998 and

Yemen's Saleh health 'bad' a week after blast

AFP, Sanaa

Yemen's Ali Abdullah Saleh is in poor condition and suffering breathing problems in a Saudi hospital, an informed source said yesterday, a week after a bomb blast wounded the embattled president.

"The information we have says that President Saleh is still in bad condition, mainly as he suffers problems in the lungs and respiration," the source, a Yemeni in

Maoists kill 3 Indian troopers

AFP, Raipur

Suspected Maoist guerrillas shot dead three troopers yesterday in the central Indian state of Chhattisgarh, the third deadly attack on security forces in recent days.

A police spokesman in the state capital Raipur said a "large number" of rebels attacked a paramilitary patrol in Dantewada district, a remote region that is known as a major Maoist stronghold.

On Thursday, Maoist fighters, including some female combatants, killed 10 policemen in a landmine ambush in Dantewada, less than a day after five other officers were gunned down elsewhere in the impoverished state.

Thailand finds E coli in European cabbage

AFP, Bangkok

Thailand said yesterday that it had detected E coli in cabbage imported from Europe and was checking whether it was the lethal strain involved in a killer outbreak in northern Germany.

The country, which had a false alarm about a shipment of European avocados earlier in the week, has urged the public not to panic, noting that there are several types of E coli.

"We need three to five days to check on the bacteria's strain," said Sathaporn Wongcharoen, director general of the Medical Science Department of the Public Health Ministry.

German officials have said they are now confident that sprouts grown in the north of the country are the source of the strain of bacteria that has killed at least 33 and left some 3,000 ill.

Thousands of Syrians flood into Turkey

US toughens stance, helicopter gunships deployed

AFP, Antakya

Around 4,300 Syrians have fled a brutal crackdown against pro-democracy protesters and are staying in camps in southern Turkey, the Anatolia news agency reported yesterday.

Hundreds have fled in the last 24 hours, the agency said, citing local sources.

Most came from Jisr al-Shugur, a city in northwestern Syria roughly 40 kilometres from the Turkish border that is the latest flashpoint in the anti-regime uprising to come under assault by Syrian security forces.

Meanwhile, Washington called for a halt to a nearly three-month crackdown on democracy protests, as regime forces backed by helicopter gunships killed at least 25 demonstrators.

"The United States strongly condemns the Syrian government's outrageous use of violence across Syria today and particularly in the northwestern region," said White House spokesman Jay Carney.

"There must be an immediate end to the brutality and violence."

The statement contained a clear sign of growing US impatience over Syria after top officials had repeatedly called for President

Bashar al-Assad to embrace reform or step aside -- but stopped short of demanding his departure.

On Friday, Syrian television said the army was forced to intervene because "armed groups" had allegedly committed atrocities in the city.

Dozens more Syrians were waiting in no man's land to enter Turkey, the all-news television station NTV reported.

After crossing the border, the refugees are escorted by Turkish police either to tent hospitals or to one of three makeshift tent villages in Yayladagi, in Turkey's Hatay province.

Some 60 people have been hospitalised so far, the news agency said.

The authorities have set up a field hospital in Yayladagi to provide emergency care, with about 40 beds in four tents. A mobile laboratory with equipment including X-ray machines is on its way, Anatolia reported.

The Turkish Red Crescent has started building more camps to the northeast of Yayladagi, in Altinozu and Boynuyogun, capable of holding 4,000 and 5,000 people respectively, in anticipation of more refugees to come as the conflict in Syria continues.

Somali pirates free Kuwaiti oil tanker

REUTERS, Mogadishu

Somali pirates say they freed a UAE-flagged, Kuwaiti-owned oil tanker after a \$12-million ransom was paid.

The 105,846 dead weight tonne MV Zirku was captured on March 28 on its way to Singapore from Sudan with a crew of 29.

"We have freed the oil tanker after we received \$12 million ransom," a pirate who gave his name as Rashid told Reuters late on Friday.

Andrew Mwangura, a Kenya-based former maritime official and now maritime editor of the Somalia Report confirmed the release, saying the crew were safe.

Somali pirates are making millions of dollars in ransoms from seizing ships in the Indian Ocean and Gulf of Aden, despite the efforts of foreign navies to clamp down on such attacks.

Violence kills nine in Iraqi capital

60 wounded

AFP, Baghdad

Violence north of Baghdad yesterday killed nine people, including five members of a Sunni Arab family slain early in the morning, Iraqi security and medical officials said.

In yesterday's deadliest attack, a primary school teacher and his family were gunned down inside their home in the village Al-Jalam, near the town of Al-Dour in Salaheddin province.

"Two gunmen stormed the house of Yunis Hassan Salman after midnight and they killed him, his wife, their two sons and their daughter before running away," an Iraqi army first lieutenant said on condition of anonymity.

Mainly Sunni Arab Salaheddin province was a key battleground in the insurgency that followed the US-led invasion of 2003 that overthrew Saddam Hussein's regime.

In the main northern city of Mosul, four people were killed and 55 others wounded in two apparently coordinated explosions near the provincial governor's official residence.

The attacks come with just months to go before all US soldiers must withdraw from the country, with American officials pressing their counterparts in Baghdad to decide whether or not they want an extended US military presence.



PHOTO: AFP

Britain's Queen Elizabeth II leaves Buckingham Palace in a carriage ahead of the Queen's official Birthday parade, 'Trooping the Colour', at Horse Guards Parade in London yesterday. Since 1748 the ceremony is being used to mark the official birthday of the Sovereign, although the Queen's actual birthday is on 21 April. More than 600 guardsmen and cavalry make up the parade.

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