

Israel downs Syria jet over Golan Heights

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel yesterday downed a Syrian warplane over the Golan Heights in the first such incident in three decades and warned it would respond "forcefully" if its security is threatened. It was the first time Israel had shot down a piloted Syrian plane since 1985 and drew a sharp response from Damascus. Israel said the Syrian fighter jet had crossed the UN-patrolled ceasefire line on the Golan which it regards as its international border.

Damascus said the downing of its fighter jet showed Israel's support for the rebels on the Golan, who include Al-Qaeda loyalists who held 45 UN peacekeepers hostage for two weeks before releasing them earlier this month.

It described it as a "flagrant violation" of a UN Security Council resolution passed earlier this year calling for international action against jihadist groups.

But Defence Minister Moshe Yaalon warned that Israel would not tolerate any threats to its security and would respond "forcefully".

Pictures taken by AFP showed smoke rising from the Syrian village of Jubata al-Khashab which had been bombed by the warplane just moments before it was shot down by a Patriot surface-to-air missile fired by Israel.

The burning wreckage, also caught on camera, plunged down on the Syrian side of the ceasefire line.

Israel seized 1,200 square kilometres of the strategic plateau from Syria during the Six-Day War of 1967, then annexed it in 1981 in a move never recognised by the international community.



IS, Qaeda are not faithful Muslims

Says Abbas; next Gaza talks on Oct

AFP, New York

Drawing parallels with the US fight for civil rights, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas vowed Monday to present a new timetable for peace talks with Israel when he addresses world leaders this week.

Abbas also aligned himself with the fight against the Islamic jihadists spreading terror in Iraq and Syria.

"I am speaking on behalf of 99 percent of the Muslim people around the world.

Here, today in the shadow of Ground Zero, I state to the world that the barbarians of ISIL, Daesh and Al-Qaeda are not faithful Muslims," Abbas said to applause.

"And to the families and the children of the victims of September 11, I say as a Palestinian Muslim I am sorry for your pain. These murderers do not represent Islam, we all stand against them to defeat their evil plans."

Meanwhile, Israeli and Palestinian negotiators began indirect talks in Cairo for a long-term Gaza truce, hours after Israeli soldiers killed two suspects in the June murder of three Jewish teenagers.

Israel says the two, Amer Abu Eisha and Marwan Qawasmeh, were behind the murder of the teenagers, which led to weeks of simmering violence and culminated in the war between Israel and Hamas militants in Gaza.

The team later agreed to meet on the last week of October for next talks..

Islamic State
At least 50 US airstrikes hit Islamic State militants across Syria on Monday night destroying and damaging several targets.

Khurasan Group
The attacks also targeted al-Qaeda affiliated terror group Khurasan – who were said to have been planning an "imminent attack" on a Western target.

USS Arleigh Burke (Red Sea)
This fast destroyer is the lead ship of US Navy's Red Sea deployment. Equipped with high-tech stealth technology, the ship played role both in Afghanistan and Iraq war.

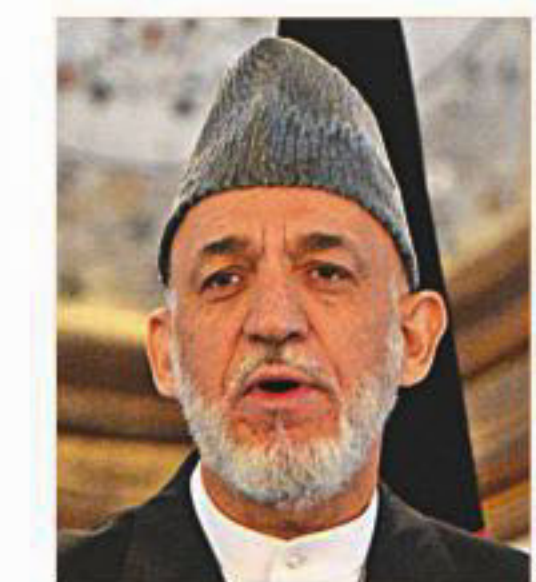
USS Philippine Sea
This guided missile launcher has been used in numerous conflicts in the 1990's and 2000's- playing a particular heavy role in Afghanistan.

USS George H.W. Bush-Persian Gulf
Commissioned in 2011, this current conflict in Syria and Iraq is her first deployment.

F-22 Raptor aircraft
It flies faster than Mach-2, has a range of nearly 3,200 kilometers and can be equipped with an array of advance anti-aircraft missiles. It has been used for the first time on Monday.

The Anti-IS Coalition
To attack Islamic State, the US used 47 Tomahawk Land Attack Missiles launched from the USS Arleigh Burke and USS Philippine Sea. Also involved in the attack were Air Force B-1 bombers, F-15E attack planes, F-16 and F-22 fighters, Navy F/A 18 fighters. Bahrain, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and UAE supported the attack.

USA, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Jordan, UAE



'Be very careful with US and the West'

Karzai says goodbye with a final gibe

AFP, Kabul

Outgoing Afghan President Hamid Karzai yesterday used his farewell speech to take a parting shot at the United States, accusing Washington of waging a war against Taliban insurgents for its own ends.

Karzai rose to power with American support in 2001 after the ousting of the Taliban regime, but he has often criticised the US military campaign that has struggled to defeat the Islamist insurgency that engulfed the country.

He will step down next week after a 13-year reign that has seen only limited improvements in infrastructure, health, education and women's rights despite billions of dollars of aid.

"This is not our war, it is a foreigners' war -- it is based on their goals," Karzai told government officials as he bid them goodbye at the presidential palace in Kabul.

"America didn't want peace... America should be honest with Afghanistan. What they say and what they do should be the same."

Karzai has a long record of anti-American rhetoric, and has previously accused the US of colluding with the Taliban - sparking outrage from the US, which has suffered 2,350 military deaths in Afghanistan since 2001.

"My advice to the next government is to be very careful with America and the West. We can be friends with them, but we want equal benefits," he said.

US strikes al-Qaeda veterans in Syria

Pentagon says raids aimed at thwarting 'imminent attack'

AFP, Washington

US air strikes have killed a group of al-Qaeda veterans, members of the Khurasan group in Syria, who were suspected of plotting an imminent attack on Western targets, the Pentagon said yesterday.

At least 50 al-Qaeda militants and eight civilians, including children, were killed in the attacks, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

"We believe that the individuals that were plotting and planning ... it have been eliminated," spokesman Rear Admiral John Kirby told ABC television, referring to the alleged plan to hit US interests.

The strikes against the Khurasan group early yesterday were separate from a wave of bombing raids led by the United States and backed by several Arab countries that targeted the Islamic State group in eastern Syria.

The US military used fighter jets as well as remotely piloted aircraft and Tomahawk missiles to conduct 14 strikes against IS, also known as ISIL. A total of 47 Tomahawk missiles were fired by US ships in the Red Sea and the northern part of the Gulf.

The raids targeted the group's training camps, an explosives and munitions production site, a communication building and a command and control center.



Muhsin al-Fadhli

US intelligence agencies publicly cited the Khurasan group as a serious threat only in recent weeks, describing the militants as seasoned al-Qaeda veterans who had set up a sanctuary in Syria to plot, construct explosives and recruit Westerners to conduct attacks.

James Clapper, the US Director of national intelligence, said: "In terms of threat to the homeland, Khurasan may pose as much of a danger as the Islamic State."

The man thought to lead the group, Muhsin al-Fadhli, was involved in the 11 September terror attacks and was one of Osama bin Laden's top commanders. Beyond that, little is known about the group.

US Strikes in Iraq kills Dozens
Meanwhile, air strikes in western Iraq, near the border with Syria, killed dozens of fighters from the IS jihadist group, military and medical sources said.

Turkey mulling 'military help'
Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday welcomed US-led air strikes against Islamic State (IS) jihadists in Syria, saying Ankara could provide military or logistical support for the campaign.

Asked how Turkey would contribute to the operation, Erdogan said: "We will take whatever steps necessary to combat terrorism."

UK, Iran leaders in historic talks

AFP, London

British Prime Minister David Cameron is to hold talks with Iran's President Hassan Rohani over unrest in Iraq and Syria, officials said yesterday, the first meeting between the country's leaders since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

The talks at the UN General Assembly in New York come as Western powers seek to build support for the fight against the Islamic State (IS) jihadist group, which holds swathes of territory in Iraq and Syria and has beheaded two US journalists plus a British aid worker.

US Secretary of State John Kerry said on Friday that Iran had a role to play in tackling the group although Tehran has so far seemed reluctant to cooperate.

With the US seeking to build an international coalition, Cameron is still deciding whether Britain should join military operations against the IS group.

Iran is highly influential in both Iraq and Syria through the strong Shiite communities in both countries but it is unclear how open Tehran will be to Western advances.

Rouhani said Monday that people in the region were "defending themselves... against the terrorists" and that Iran would help them. He has also criticised the US for not sending in ground troops.



World urged to change course

AFP, United Nations

World leaders at a UN summit billed as the largest-ever gathering on climate change faced calls yesterday to take bold action to reverse global warming.

"Today, we must set the world on a new course," United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said at the opening of the summit at UN headquarters in New York. "I am asking you to lead."

The meeting is the first of its kind since the Copenhagen summit on climate change ended in disarray in 2009 and is seen as crucial to build momentum ahead of the Paris conference in late 2015.

Diplomats and climate activists hope the summit attended by 120 leaders will pave the way for a deal to be reached in Paris on reducing greenhouse gas emissions after 2020.

But no-shows from the leaders of China, the world's biggest polluter, and India, the number-three carbon emitter, cast a cloud over the event.

France pledged up to \$1 billion to the UN Green Climate Fund, which helps finance climate change reform in poorer countries, and the United States was expected to make pledges later in the day.

In her address, Brazil's President Dilma Rousseff said tackling climate change and development were not contradictory goals, saying "we have reduced poverty and we have

protected the environment."

Leonardo DiCaprio brought star power to the UN summit, urging leaders to stop treating global warming as if it were a fiction.

"As an actor, I pretend for a living. I play fictitious characters often solving fictitious problems," the actor told the summit.

The summit was being held after marches drew hundreds of thousands of demonstrators to the streets of cities worldwide on Sunday in a show of "people power" directed at leaders reluctant to tackle global warming.

The summit talks are separate from the negotiations held under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which will culminate with the Paris conference in December 2015.

The United Nations is seeking to limit global warming to two degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) over pre-industrial levels, but scientists say current emission trends could hike temperatures to more than twice that level by century's end.

One recent report warned that a surge in carbon dioxide levels had pushed greenhouse gases to record highs in the atmosphere, increasing at their fastest rate in 30 years in 2013.

The 1997 Kyoto Protocol, the first international agreement to reduce emissions, has commitment periods, the



A man dressed as a Polar Bear climbs a barricade as protesters take part in the "Flood Wall Street" demonstrations on Monday, preceding the United Nations' "Climate Summit 2014: Catalyzing Action" in New York.

last of which expired in 2012. But it has since been renewed. However the protocol was never ratified by the US.

Attempts to negotiate a new treaty ended in fiasco at the Copenhagen conference in 2009 and the pressure is on to avoid a repeat of that failure at the UN talks in Paris next year.

Tiger kills man at India zoo

AFP, New Delhi

A white tiger yesterday attacked and killed a youth who apparently jumped into its enclosure at a zoo in the Indian capital.

Witnesses said the tiger grabbed the young man by the neck as horrified onlookers at the National Zoological Park in New Delhi screamed and threw sticks and stones to try to save him.

One witness said he raced to the enclosure after hearing screams to see the victim locked in the tiger's jaws, "writhing badly in pain".

"He kept suffering for the next 10-15 minutes, but nobody helped him," Himanshu, who only gave one name, told the CNN-IBN news channel.

The head of the zoo told AFP that a guard posted at the enclosure raised the alarm, but the victim was dead before anything could be done.

Witnesses had said the railings around the tiger enclosure were low and speculated that the victim may have fallen in.



A statement from the zoo said the victim was about 20 years old, contradicting earlier reports that he was a teenager. One official said he also appeared to have been "under the influence of alcohol".

The zoo has three white tigers, although only one of them is let out into the enclosure daily for visitors to see, a zoo official said.

White tigers are found in southern and eastern Asia, particularly India, and owe their appearance to a recessive gene. They are regarded as an endangered species.

India is home to 1,706 Royal Bengal tigers and fewer than 100 white tigers, according to the last census in 2011. All the white tigers are in captivity.

Ebola could infect 1.4m by January

AFP, Washington

The number of Ebola infections in Liberia and Sierra Leone could skyrocket to 1.4 million by January 2015, according to a worst-case scenario released by US health authorities yesterday.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimated that Ebola cases in these two West African nations could range from between 550,000 and 1.4 million cases by January 20, 2015.

The UN health agency earlier Tuesday said that new cases would increase from hundreds each week to thousands without "drastic improvements in control measures," with infections more than tripling to 20,000 by November.

Ukraine rebels plan votes despite truce

AFP, Donetsk

Pro-Russian rebels defiantly yesterday announced they will stage their own elections in just six weeks, raising the stakes in a standoff with Kiev despite both sides moving to end five months of deadly fighting.

The self-proclaimed Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics said they would hold simultaneous votes on November 2 to choose their leaders and "Supreme Soviets" or parliaments.

The surprise announcements are a slap in the face for Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko who only a week ago offered the separatist regions limited self-rule in a major concession to try to forge peace.

Just hours earlier, insurgent leaders said they were withdrawing their big guns from the frontline under a peace plan forged with Kiev aimed at ending a conflict that has killed around 3,000 people since April.

AFP journalists said they saw tanks moving back from an area near Donetsk -- the main rebel stronghold -- although fighting was reported around the city's airport in the morning. Ukraine had said Monday it was starting a pullback under the terms of the deal signed in Minsk on Saturday that calls for both sides to withdraw from the frontline and establish a 30-kilometre (20-mile) wide demilitarised zone.

Hopes for an end to violence that has devastated many towns across Ukraine's rustbelt had been kindled by an initial European-brokered truce signed by Moscow as well as Kiev and the rebels on September 5.

NEWSIN brief

Uighur scholar gets life for 'separatism'

AFP, Beijing

A prominent academic from China's mostly-Muslim Uighur minority was jailed for life yesterday for "separatism", with the European Union expressing outrage at the "completely unjustified" response to criticism of Beijing's policies in the restive Xinjiang region. The EU, United States and human rights groups had all been calling for the release of Ilham Tohti, a persistent but moderate government critic who campaigned for minority rights in the vast western region.

White House intruder had huge ammo stash

AFP, Washington

A homeless US army veteran who jumped a fence and ran into the White House with a knife had more than 800 rounds of ammunition in his car, a court heard Monday. Omar Gonzalez, 42, appeared in US District Court as Obama's spokesman said the president is "obviously concerned" by Friday's security breach. A native of Texas who twice served in Iraq, Gonzalez is charged with unlawfully entering a restricted building or grounds while carrying a deadly or dangerous weapon.

Laden's son-in-law sentenced to life

AFP, New York

Osama bin Laden's son-in-law and former al-Qaeda spokesman was jailed for life yesterday after a US judge warned he remained a deadly threat to American citizens. Kuwaiti national Sulaiman Abu Ghaith, 48, had been being convicted of plotting to kill Americans. In a September 12, 2001 video Abu Ghaith is seen sitting alongside bin Laden justifying the September 11 attacks and promising more bloodshed.