

France strikes IS targets in Iraq 'every day'

Says defence minister

AFP, Paris

France is carrying out strikes "every day" against Islamic State jihadists in Iraq, the government said yesterday, as the country reeled from the carnage in Nice.

"There were French strikes last night in Tal Afar, not far from Mosul," Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian told France Info radio.

"We don't announce it every day but since we are in the coalition we are striking every day," he said, referring to the US-led alliance engaged in an aerial campaign against IS.

IS claimed responsibility for last week's massacre in the Riviera city of Nice, where a man driving a truck ploughed into a crowd gathered for Bastille Day fireworks, killing 84 people.

Investigators say Mohamed Lahouaiej Bouhlel, the 31-year-old Tunisian driver, had shown "recent interest" in IS propaganda but they have no evidence he had any ties to the group.

Defence ministers from countries engaged in the anti-IS coalition will meet in Washington today.

Le Drian said he expected they would "push the offensive underway in Iraq and Syria to the limit" by concentrating their strikes on the IS strongholds of Mosul in Iraq and Raqqa in Syria.

"We must keep up the pressure... to definitively eradicate (IS)," he said, while acknowledging it would "take some more time".

"Striking in Mosul, striking in Iraq, is a way of ensuring our security in France and, more widely, in Europe," he added.

Meanwhile, French President Francois Hollande urged Europe to beef up security as he arrived in Portugal yesterday for talks on the European Union's future.

"It is up to Europeans to ensure their security," Hollande said, describing it as "the number one priority."

"(...) The terrorists want to divide us, to set us against each other."



Police officers stand by a regional train in Wuerzburg, southern Germany after a 17-year-old Afghan refugee attacked and injured four passengers with an axe and a knife late Monday. The assailant was killed by police as he tried to flee. Story on page 16

PHOTO: AFP

A tragedy for refugee crisis

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

German police have shot and killed an Afghan teenager who attacked passengers on a train with an axe and a knife, in an incident which is likely to worsen the divide in public opinion in the country over the refugee crisis.

Witnesses described a train carriage that was left "like a battlefield" covered in blood after the unnamed 17-year-old injured four people, believed to be members of the same family originating from Hong Kong.

Bavaria's most senior security official, state interior minister Joachim Herrmann, told ARD TV the attacker was understood to have travelled to Germany as an unaccompanied refugee minor.

GERMANY AXE ATTACK

Marcel Dirsus, a political analyst at Kiel University, told the BBC's Radio 4 that the incident was "bound to exacerbate anger over the country's open door refugee policy."

He said: "This is a tragedy, but it is really a tragedy beyond the people who are directly affected, because this is a very contentious issue in Germany, the way we are dealing with refugees."

"And in a society that is already polarised over the issue, this is bound to exacerbate anger and division."

Germany last year registered over a million migrants entering the country, including more than 150,000 Afghans, but it was not immediately clear whether the suspect was among them or someone who had arrived in the country earlier.

Herrmann said initial information was that the suspect had lived in the Wuerzburg area for some time, initially at a refugee facility in the town of Ochsenfurt and more recently with a foster family.

He said authorities were still investigating the motive of the attack and were looking into reports that the suspect had yelled out "an exclamation" during the rampage.

He was responding to reports that some witnesses had heard the suspect shout "Allahu Akbar" ("God Is Great") during the attack. The regional train was on its way from the Bavarian town of Treuchtlingen to Wuerzburg, which is about 60 miles north-west of Nuremberg.

Eyewitness Thomas Velten, who went to see what had happened after the train stopped, told the Post the attack was "like a battlefield" with a large amount of blood.

Local media reported that the suspect had been trying to flee the train when he was killed.

Meanwhile, the Islamic State group yesterday released a video purportedly showing the Afghan refugee who slashed people on a German train saying he would carry out the attack and threatening "infidel" countries.

The video released by IS's affiliated Amaq news agency, subtitled in Arabic, shows teenager "Mohammed Riyadh" -- knife in hand -- announcing in Pashto he would carry out an "operation" in Germany, and presenting himself as a "soldier of the caliphate".

'We're going to win!'

Trump tells fractious Republican National Convention as anti-Trump delegates cause chaos on its opening day

AFP, Cleveland

Donald Trump tried to put the Republican National Convention back on track following a rank-and-file revolt Monday, telling party delegates "we're going to win" the White House.

Making a surprise cameo appearance at the gathering in Cleveland to introduce his wife Melania, the bombastic tycoon showed confidence that belied the day's spasm of public division.

"We're going to win so big" said Trump. "Ladies and gentlemen, it is my great honor to present the next First Lady of the United States."

Trump, who broke with tradition by appearing at the convention before his nomination, was addressing an audience that hours earlier erupted into jeers and yelling as anti-Trump Republicans insisted their voice be heard.

Many are furious that the party of Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt will be led by a man who described Mexicans as rapists and advocated barring Muslims from entering the country.

"We deserve to be heard, this is the people's convention!" said Diana Shores, a delegate from Virginia, while pro-Trump delegates tried to drown

out the rebels with shouts of "Shame! Shame!"

Trump fans insist delegates should heed the will of the grassroots of the party and make him the Republican nominee without equivocation.

The billionaire won a thumping victory in a series of statewide party elections, garnering more than 13 million votes -- the most of any Republican nominee ever.



Anti-Trump protesters march through the streets in Cleveland, near the Republican convention site. PHOTO: AFP

This was meant to be Trump's moment -- the point at which he put the lid on Republican divisions and marched the party toward November's election and the White House.

Ahead of the convention he had tried to assuage conservative critics and bring the party together by naming Indiana Governor Mike Pence as his running mate.

But it was Trump's Slovenian-born wife Melania who stepped up as his chief advocate on the convention's opening day.

She took the stage with all the allure of a former model and in a strong accent made the case for Americans to entrust Trump with the presidency.

"Donald is, and always has been, an amazing leader," said the 46-year-old. "Now, he will go to work for you."

Turkey jails generals

PM warns against 'feeling of revenge' after coup

AGENCIES

Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim yesterday warned against exacting revenge on supporters of the failed coup, as Ankara arrested top generals in a relentless crackdown that has sparked global alarm.

Erdogan has denounced the coup bid, which left more than 300 dead on all sides, as a treacherous bid to oust him from power devised from the US compound of his arch-enemy, exiled Islamic preacher Fethullah Gulen.

But with the authorities detaining over 7,500 people so far in a massive legal crackdown and sacking almost 9,000 people, Turkey's EU and Nato allies have urged Ankara to keep the rule of law in place.

Erdogan's suggestion that the death penalty could be reinstated has sent shudders through Europe and sparked warnings such a move would be the nail in the coffin of its already embattled bid to join the EU, reports AFP.

An Ankara court late Monday placed

under arrest 26 former generals suspected of planning Friday's attempted power grab, including former air force chief General Akin Ozturk, whom some Turkish media have painted as the mastermind of the plot.

Ankara has piled the pressure on Washington to extradite Gulen to face trial at home but US Secretary of State John Kerry said Monday he wanted to see evidence and not allegations.

Yildirim said yesterday that Turkey had sent four dossiers to the United States over Gulen's alleged links to the overthrow plot.

Turkey's broadcasting cancelled licences of all radio and television stations determined to have links with a religious movement whose followers are accused of staging a failed coup, reports Reuters.

Education Ministry suspended 15,200 personnel in connection with a failed military coup, private broadcaster NTV reported.

watchdog yesterday

DEVELOPMENTS

Ankara sends dossiers to US over Gulen

Licences of radio, TV stations linked to Gulen scrapped

Education Ministry suspends 15,200 personnel

NEWSIN brief

UK will not invoke Article 50 this yr

REUTERS, London

Britain will not begin its formal divorce from the European Union by invoking Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty this year, a government lawyer told the High Court yesterday.

Lawyer Jason Coppel indicated however that the government's current position could change. "The current position is that notification will not occur before the end of 2016," Coppel said.

Taiwan bus inferno kills 26 tourists

AFP, Taipei

A fire ripped through a bus carrying tourists from China in Taiwan yesterday, killing all 26 on board in the worst road accident to hit mainland visitors since a holiday boom to the island. The disaster, which occurred as the tourists were heading to the airport for their flight home, was the latest in a series that have called into question Taiwan's safety record.

Maoist ambush in India kills 10 police

AFP, New Delhi

Suspected Maoist rebels have killed 10 paramilitary commandos in eastern India after ambushing their convoy and exploding a series of bombs, police said yesterday, in the deadliest such attack since 2014. Rebels detonated the homemade bombs on Monday afternoon as more than 100 police were conducting an anti-Maoist operation in dense forests in Bihar state, a senior officer said.

Turnbull sworn in as Australia's PM

AFP, Canberra

Malcolm Turnbull was sworn in for another term as Australia's prime minister yesterday after a narrow election victory with budget repair and a public vote on same sex marriage among his top priorities. The multi-millionaire's Liberal/National coalition clung to power in July 2 polls, with the party holding 76 seats, and potentially one more with counting still underway, in the 150-seat House of Representatives.

North Korea test-fires three ballistic missiles

AFP, Seoul

North Korea test-fired three ballistic missiles yesterday, in further defiance of the international community and in apparent reaction to the planned deployment of a US defence system in the South. The launches drew swift condemnation from the US and Japan, who vowed a coordinated response to Pyongyang's repeated violations of UN sanctions that bar it from weapons tests.

US-led strikes kill 56 people

AFP, Beirut

Children were among at least 56 civilians killed in strikes by a US-led coalition early yesterday near a Syrian village held by the Islamic State group, a monitor said.

The victims were apparently mistaken for jihadists and bombed while fleeing fighting in Al-Tukhar in Aleppo province, according to the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

"There are at least 56 dead, including 11 children, and dozens more wounded, including some in critical condition," said Observatory director Rami Abdel Rahman.

The monitor -- which relies on a network of sources inside Syria for its information -- says it determines what planes carried out raids according to their type, location, flight patterns and the munitions involved.

Asked about the incident, the coalition had no immediate comment, but said it was looking into the reports. Al-Tukhar lies 14 kilometres north of the town of Manbij, a key IS stronghold that has been repeatedly targeted in raids by the US-led coalition.

On Monday, the Observatory said 21 civilians had been killed in coalition raids in the area, 15 of them in a northern district of Manbij and another six in Al-Tukhar.

Manbij sits on IS's main supply route between Syria and neighbouring Turkey and has been the target of a US-backed offensive by a Kurdish-Arab alliance of fighters since May 31.

In June, the Syrian Democratic Forces alliance broke into western districts of the town, but their advance has been slowed in the past month because of landmines planted by the jihadists and ongoing suicide attacks.

The US-led coalition said in a statement yesterday that SDF fighters had captured an IS "command centre and logistics hub" in western Manbij on Sunday.

It said the fighters had also seized "a significant amount of the city during the operation, which provided civilians the opportunity to escape."

SDF fighters control around a quarter of Manbij, according to the Observatory. Near Aleppo, meanwhile, government forces sought to tighten their siege of rebel-held districts of the battleground second city.

SYRIA CONFLICT



A man shows his tooth to an Indian policeman as he seeks permission to see a doctor after he was stopped during a curfew in Srinagar yesterday. Indian soldiers fired on a stone-throwing crowd defying a curfew in the Kashmir region, killing three people, as unrest sparked by the death of a separatist militant flared.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Pak man killed for 'honour' over affair

AFP, Multan

A man was tortured to death in Pakistan for an affair with a married woman, police said yesterday, a rare case of a male falling victim to a so-called "honour killing".

The murder came days after social media starlet Qandeel Baloch was strangled to death by her brother who said he was "not embarrassed" to have killed her, reigniting calls for action against the crime.

Hundreds of women are murdered by relatives in the conservative Muslim nation each year on the pretext of defending what is seen as family honour, but it is unusual for the victim to be a man.

The latest incident happened in the impoverished central district of Dera Ghazi Khan on Monday, police said. Allah Ditta, 24, was stabbed multiple times by a group of five men after they spotted him in the village of the woman he was allegedly having an affair with.

A local police official said Ditta began the relationship when he was working for the woman's brother-in-law, and that she ran away with him in May but returned home two weeks later after the village council intervened. Ditta's arms were cut off as were his lips and nose, the official said. District police chief Ata Muhammad Khan confirmed the incident.

'Express regret or face trial'

The Indian Supreme Court slams Rahul over his comment that RSS killed Gandhi

TNN, New Delhi

The Supreme Court yesterday asked Congress vice-president Rahul Gandhi to express regret for his comments holding the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) responsible for Mahatma Gandhi's assassination or be ready to face a defamation trial.

"Why did you make a sweeping statement against the RSS branding everyone associated with the organization in the same brush," the Supreme Court asked Rahul Gandhi while hearing a defamation case filed against him.

"You can't make wholesale denunciation of an organization," the SC bench observed. Rahul Gandhi's counsel tried to justify his remarks saying these are historical facts and even part of the government records.

The apex court said that Rahul needed to prove what was the public good in his

statement against the RSS and hence it was a matter of trial.

The SC said that if Rahul Gandhi wanted to defend himself and was not ready to express his regret, then it will be better that he faced trial.

A bench of Justices Dipak Misra and R F Nariman refused Rahul's request for two-week adjournment and posted the matter for hearing on July 27.

Rahul wanted two-week's time saying his counsel Kapil Sibal is not free before that.

The SC said this is no ground for adjournment and posted the matter for July 27, saying no further postponement of hearing would be allowed.

Rahul Gandhi had moved the Supreme Court in May 2015 for quashing the criminal case lodged against him for his comments against the RSS during a Thane rally in March 2014.



SEA ROW TALKS

Philippines rejects China conditions

AFP, Manila

Manila has rejected Beijing's demand that it "disregard" an international ruling that invalidated the Asian giant's claims to much of the South China Sea before negotiating on the issue, the Philippines' foreign secretary said yesterday.

China last week denounced a UN-backed tribunal's finding that there was no legal basis for its claims to most of the strategic, resource-rich waters, provoking stern warnings from leaders from Japan to the EU that it must respect the rule-based global order.

Following the decision, Beijing asked Manila, which brought the case, "to open ourselves for bilateral negotiations but outside of and in disregard of the arbitral ruling", foreign minister Perfecto Yasay told broadcaster ABS-CBN.

"This is something that I told him was not consistent with our constitution and our national interest," he said.

The Hague-based Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) ruled that Beijing had violated the Philippines' sovereign rights to exploit resources in waters up to 340 kilometres (230 miles) beyond its coast, called its exclusive economic zone.