



# IS flees Manbij, abducts 2,000 as 'human shield'

AFP, Beirut

Islamic State group fighters seized around 2,000 civilians to use as "human shields" Friday as they fled their stronghold of Manbij in northern Syria, US-backed forces and a monitor said.

The abductions came as Russian and Syrian jets pounded rebel positions in second city Aleppo killing 15 civilians, an AFP correspondent and the Syrian Observatory for Human Right monitor said. The raids hit several neighbourhoods as residents filled the streets to buy fresh produce brought into rebel-held areas which had been under government siege, an AFP correspondent said.

Also yesterday, Turkey vowed to cooperate with Syrian ally Iran to try to resolve the conflict in which Ankara backs rebels battling the government of President Bashar al-Assad. At a joint news conference in Ankara, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu and his Iranian counterpart, Mohammad Javad Zarif, said the two neighbouring nations have agreed to "keep closer contact" on the issue of the "territorial integ-

city of Syria".

The Arab-Kurdish alliance known as the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) expelled most of the IS fighters from Manbij last week, but dozens continued to put up a tough resistance.

Yesterday, they withdrew from a district in northern Manbij heading for the IS-held town of Jarabulus along the border with Turkey, taking the captives with them.

Women and children were among those taken.

It said IS confiscated residents' cars, forced civilians into them and then headed for Jarabulus.

The jihadists, who have suffered a string of losses in Syria and Iraq, have often staged mass kidnappings in the two countries when they come under pressure to relinquish territory they hold.

Manbij was a key transit point along IS's supply route from the Turkish border to Raqa, the de facto capital of its self-styled Islamic "caliphate".

Syria's conflict erupted in March 2011 and has since killed more than 290,000 people and drawn in world powers on all sides of the war.

**WAR IN SYRIA**  
**IRAN, TURKEY AGREE TO COOPERATE OVER SYRIA**  
**FRESH AIR STRIKES HIT ALEPPO DESPITE TRUCE; 15 KILLED**

# IS's Khurasan chief killed in drone strike

AFP, Peshawar

The leader of Islamic State's branch in Afghanistan and Pakistan has been killed in a US drone strike, the Afghan ambassador to Pakistan said on Friday, though the American military said it could not confirm that.

If true, the death of Hafiz Saeed Khan would strike a blow to efforts by Middle East-based Islamic State - also known as ISIS and Daesh - to expand its control over territory and its jihadist brand into Afghanistan and Pakistan.

It would also mark the second US killing of a prominent militant in the region within months. In May, a US drone killed Afghan Taliban leader Mullah Akhtar Mansour in a strike in Pakistan.

Khan has been reported dead before. Last year, Afghan intelligence agents claimed he had been killed, but the report was never confirmed.

# Clinton releases tax returns

AGENCIES

Hillary Clinton yesterday released her tax return for last year and criticized her opponent Donald Trump for failing to honor this tradition among American politicians running for president.

Clinton and her husband Bill, the former president, reported \$10.6 million in income for 2015. They paid \$3.6 million in federal income tax, according to the document, which was posted on the Democratic presidential candidate's web page.

Over the course of their careers the Clintons have published all of their tax returns since 1977. Democrats repeatedly point to this as evidence of transparency on the part of the power couple.

The Clintons' main sources of income were Bill Clinton's paid speeches, to the tune of \$5.2 million, and a payment to Hillary Clinton from the publisher of her last book, Simon & Schuster, for three million dollars.

Hillary Clinton gave dozens of paid speeches in 2013, 2014 and 2015 but gave this up before launching her candidacy for

the White House in April 2015.

But the billionaire Trump has declined to release his, arguing that his tax returns for the past several years are being audited.

On Thursday, Trump, straying from his trademark bravado, acknowledged that his presidential campaign is facing challenges and could ultimately fall short — a rare expression of humility by the Republican presidential nominee.

The billionaire celebrity acknowledged that his lack of political correctness could cost him the election if Americans reject his blunt approach.

He also backtracked from his assertion that President Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton founded the Islamic State group, saying he was just being sarcastic.

As he often does, the Republican presidential nominee accused the news media of misconstruing something he said.

He also said he considered Clinton, his Democratic rival for the presidency, to be the co-founder of the Islamic State group.

Trump first made the accusation Wednesday at a rally in Florida, and repeated it in interviews Thursday.



# 'I feel scared'

Disillusioned, Kadiza tried to flee IS, but failed

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

"I don't have a good feeling. I feel scared." Those were Kadiza Sultana's words to her sister as she plotted her escape from IS in Syria.

But the 17-year-old never managed to leave the terrorist group's territory, being killed in a suspected Russian air strike in May.

Her family said she quickly became disillusioned with life as a jihadi bride in the so-called Islamic State and told them she wanted to get out.

They discussed plans to get a taxi and be smuggled out of IS' de-facto capital of Raqa and into Turkey but as the border closed and restrictions increased, Kadiza's hopes dwindled.

The family's lawyer, Tasnime Akunjee, said Kadiza became too frightened to attempt leaving IS after another young jihadi bride was murdered.

Samra Kesinovic, a 17-year-old Austrian, became a poster girl for the terrorist group after joining them in 2014 but was reportedly beaten to death when she was caught trying to escape last year.

Kadiza, a Bangladeshi-origin UK citizen, was just 16 when she travelled to Syria in 2015 with two friends from Bethnal Green Academy in London, Shamima Begum and Amira Abase.

They were believed to have been married off to IS fighters almost immediately, but Kadiza's husband — an American national of Somali origin — was killed.

A former IS fighter who grew up in London told The Independent he met several foreign recruits who were desperate to escape as all-out assault on Raqa. "Many have tried (to flee) but they are either dead or in jail waiting for executions", he said.



(From left, clockwise) Injured people receive first aid after two bombs exploded in the Thai seaside resorts of Hua Hin and Trang on Thursday; an investigation official collects evidence from the crime scene in Hua Hin yesterday. A string of bomb attacks hit popular tourist towns across Thailand, leaving four dead and many wounded. Story on page 1.



# NEWSIN brief

## Russia deploys S-400 missiles to Crimea

REUTERS, Moscow

Russia has deployed its advanced S-400 air defence missile system to annexed Crimea, Russian news agencies reported yesterday. The announcement comes two days after President Vladimir Putin promised to take counter-measures after what he said were clashes between Russian forces and Ukrainian saboteurs in northern Crimea. Ukraine denies the clashes took place. Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine in 2014.

## Migrant arrival in Italy rises 12 pct in July

REUTERS, Brussels

More than 25,000 migrants arrived in Italy in July, 12 percent more than in the same period last year, EU border agency Frontex said yesterday. Most of the migrants who made the trip across the Mediterranean from North Africa were Nigerians and Eritreans, Frontex said. The number of migrants arriving in the January to July period was stable compared to last year at 95,000.

## SRK detained at US airport, again

AFP, New Delhi

Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan took to Twitter yesterday to express his annoyance at being detained by US airport immigration authorities for the third time, saying the experience "really really sucks". The last time Khan, 50, was detained by immigration officials in New York in 2012, it sparked uproar among his Indian fans who accused the US of racial profiling, and led Washington to apologise.

## Cannes bans burqini



AGENCIES

Anti-racism organisations and human rights groups yesterday vowed to overturn a "deeply worrying" ban on the wearing of burqinis — full-body swimsuits — on the beaches of Cannes. Cannes' mayor David Lisnard signed off on the ruling that "access to beaches and for swimming is banned to anyone who does not have (bathing apparel) which respects good customs and secularism," which is a founding principle of the French republic. France has had a full burqa and Niqab ban since 2004.

# Happy Birthday Fidel Castro!

AGENCIES

After surviving more than 600 assassination attempts, defying 10 US presidents and shaping half a century of history, Fidel Castro turns 90 today.

The years have left their mark on the father of the Cuban Revolution, who transferred power to his younger brother Raul 10 years ago.

The magnetic giant of the 20th century long black beard has turned a wispy gray. He has given up his iconic Cohiba cigars. He rarely appears in public.

But Fidel lives on.

No one could have predicted his place in history when he launched his revolutionary career with a botched attack on Cuba's Moncada military barracks in 1953.

The 26-year-old lawyer was captured and jailed for the failed raid, which ended with dozens of rebels killed or executed by dictator Fulgencio Batista's forces.

Fast forward six years, and Castro was triumphantly rolling into Havana, having returned from exile to lead a guerrilla army that once numbered just 12 men to defeat Batista and his military of 80,000.

The unlikely victory brought the "red menace" of Communism to the United States' doorstep at the height of the Cold War.

Alarmed, the US Central Intelligence Agency and Cuban exiles tried to assassinate Castro 634 times, his ex-intelligence chief, Fabian Escalante, has estimated.

Castro once told Spanish journalist Ignacio Ramonet he nearly always carried his Browning pistol just in case. But he denied reports he wore a bullet-proof vest.

"I have a moral vest. It's strong. It has always protected me," he told journalists in 1979,



baring his chest to prove the point.

His bitterness over that botched CIA plot played a part in pushing the world to the brink of nuclear war during the Cuban Missile Crisis the following year, when the Soviet Union agreed to his request to send ballistic missiles to Cuba. And he had ruled the communist nation with iron fist for decades, forcing thousands to seek exile.

But Castro had a penchant for trying to pull

off the seemingly impossible.

Despite a biting sanction regime imposed by the US and West, In 1961, he all but eradicated illiteracy with an ambitious rural education campaign.

When the exodus of Cuban exiles left the country with just 3,000 doctors, he vowed to make the island a "medical superpower." Today it has 88,000 doctors and one of the most respected health systems in the world.

Castro is a hero to revolutionary movements and independence struggles worldwide.

He sent 386,000 troops to fight in spots where the Cold War turned hot: Angola, Ethiopia, the Congo, Algeria and Syria. And he backed leftist guerrillas across Latin America.

The military results were mixed. But the symbolism was powerful.

"He's the most important personality of the 20th century in the Western hemisphere," said Ivan Marquez, second-in-command of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).

Castro's revolution "ignited... the desire to struggle, to take to the mountains, to grab a rifle and try to change things," Marquez told AFP.

As Castro gave his speech proclaiming the triumph of the revolution in 1959, a white dove landed on his shoulder. The man had officially become the myth.

Happy birthday, Fidel Castro.

# INDEPENDENCE DAY TERROR PLOT

## Pakistan alerts India over Taliban attacks

PTI, Lahore

Pakistan's top counter-terrorism agency has issued two alerts, warning about possible terror attacks by two Taliban suicide bombers at the Wagah and Ganda Singh borders with India around the Independence Day.

The National Counter-Terrorism Authority has asked the Punjab Director General of Pakistan Rangers, the home department and the Punjab (Pakistan) police chief to take high preventive measures to protect the public as well as security personnel.

"Tehreek-i-Taliban's Fazalullah group is planning to target parade at Wagah Border in Lahore and Ganda Singh Border in Kasur on August 13, 14 or 15," the security alert says.

The alert also says two suicide bombers+ have been sent to hit these targets. "Extreme vigilance and heightened security measures are suggested to avoid any untoward incident," it says.

The Punjab (Pakistan) home department has also issued a separate alert saying "at least 16 suicide attackers have entered the province" who are planning to target public gatherings in connection with the Independence Day.

Following the alerts, the Punjab police launched a crackdown in the border areas and arrested a number of suspects.

"Police have taken more than 50 suspects into custody during a crackdown and security has been beefed up in the city as well as in the border areas," Lahore police spokesman Niyab Haider said.

# TURKEY'S BID TO EXTRADITE GULEN

## US gives 'positive signals'

AGENCIES

Ankara seeks 32 fugitive diplomats in post-coup inquiry

Turkey said yesterday it has received "positive signals" from the United States over its requests to extradite Pennsylvania-based preacher Fethullah Gulen whom Ankara accuses of ordering last month's attempted coup.

"We have started to receive some positive signals on the calls we have made" for Gulen's extradition, Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu told reporters in Ankara, saying further documents relating to the case for his deportation were being drawn up to send to Washington.

Gulen is accused of ordering the July 15 coup during which a group within the military tried to remove President Recep Tayyip Erdogan from power. He strongly denies the claim.

Since then, Turkey has sent several documents to the United States which Ankara claims proves that Gulen was involved.



Fethullah Gulen

"Everyone in the world knows who is behind this coup attempt," Cavusoglu said. Last week, an arrest warrant was issued in Turkey for Gulen.

The minister said Secretary of State John Kerry and Vice President Joe Biden expressed their intention to come to Turkey but would not confirm previous comments made by Ankara that Kerry would visit on August 24, reports AFP.

Cavusoglu also said yesterday Turkey is seeking the extradition of 32 diplomats who went on the run after they were recalled by Ankara as part of investigations into last month's failed coup attempt.

Speaking at a news conference in Ankara with his Iranian counterpart, he said a total of 208 Turkish diplomats had been recalled as part of the coup investigation, but 32 of them had fled to other countries, reports Reuters.

## Putin sacks powerful chief of staff

AFP, Moscow

Russian President Vladimir Putin yesterday unexpectedly dismissed his close ally and powerful chief of staff Sergei Ivanov, in the highest-level change inside the Kremlin in several years.

Ivanov -- who served with Putin in the Soviet-era KGB spy agency -- was replaced by his deputy Anton Vaino.

The Kremlin said in a statement that Putin had "decreed to relieve Ivanov of his duties" and handed him a job as a special representative for conservation, environmental and transportation issues.

Ivanov will remain a member of Russia's powerful security council.

## Ghani 'unfit for presidency'

AGENCIES

Says Afghanistan's chief executive

Afghanistan's chief executive has castigated his ally Ashraf Ghani as "unfit for the presidency", in a public outburst highlighting bitter internal divisions that threaten their US-brokered power sharing agreement.

Abdullah Abdullah's comments come ahead of a September deadline for the government to honour the fragile agreement signed after the fraud-tainted presidential election in 2014, which both leaders claimed to have won.

By then the government is expected to enact sweeping election reforms and amend the constitution to create the position of prime minister for Abdullah. Observers say that deadline is unlikely to be met, effectively tipping Afghanistan into a political crisis.

"Electoral reforms were one of the promises made when the National Unity Government was formed. Why weren't these reforms brought?" Abdullah told a small gathering in Kabul on Thursday.

"Mr President, over a period of three months you do not have time to see your chief executive face-to-face for even an hour or two? What do you spend your time on?"

"There are arguments in every government but if someone does not have patience for discussion, then he is unfit for the presidency."

The acrimony comes as Taliban insurgents are threatening to overrun Lashkar Gah, capital of the strategic poppy-growing southern province of Helmand.

Abdullah, a former anti-Soviet fighter, also accused Ghani of monopolising power and not consulting him over key government appointments.

"The National Unity Government will work collectively, and very soon serious and effective discussions will take place (regarding Abdullah's comments)," the palace said, without offering details.

Abdullah said he would meet Ghani today to try to iron out some of their differences.



Abdullah Abdullah