

US army vehicle damaged in mine explosion in Niger

AFP, Niamey

A US army vehicle was damaged in a mine explosion in western Niger, but there were no fatalities, and the US military was investigating whether the incident was hostile, embassy and local security forces said yesterday.

The incident occurred in Ouallam in the Tillaberi region, not far from the border with Mali, where four US soldiers and five Niger soldiers were killed in an ambush in 2017, according to the sources.

"A US mine-resistant, ambush-protected all-terrain vehicle was damaged in Niger" on Saturday, the US embassy in Niamey said in a statement.

Ouallam is located about 100 kilometres (62 miles) from Niamey and is home to a major training camp of the Nigerien army where soldiers are trained to participate in the UN Mission in Mali, known as Minusma. "The incident occurred outside a weapons range, so it is possible that non-hostile factors were the cause of the damage," it said. "We're still looking to confirm that element."

The US mission in Niger has been heavily scrutinised in the wake of the 2017 attack.

In that October 4 ambush, US special forces soldiers and Nigerien troops were attacked by fighters affiliated with the Islamic State group and equipped with small arms, grenades and trucks mounted with guns.

The US Pentagon has remained tight-lipped about the circumstances surrounding the ambush and the nature of the mission in Niger.

The US operates an aerial drone base in Agadez that provides surveillance of Boko Haram fighters and others allied with Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) that operate along borders with Libya, Mali and Nigeria.

Niamey has also given the US permission to base armed drones on its soil.

On May 14, 2019, 28 Niger soldiers were killed near the village of Tongo Tongo when they were ambushed "by heavily armed terrorists," according to the Niger government.

Tsipras ex-coalition partner won't run in Greek election

AFP, Athens

The Independent Greeks party, previously in Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras' coalition government, said yesterday it will not run in an upcoming general election because of its poor showing in EU parliamentary polls.

"Independent Greeks and I decided today to announce our decision not to run for the general election that will take place next month," Panos Kammenos, former minister of defence, said.

"We heard the voice of the Greek people. It is my duty to continue serving the Greek people", he added.

Independent Greeks, a right-wing, anti-bailout party, formed in 2012, managed to score only 0.8 percent of the vote in the end-May EU elections.

In the 2015 Greek parliament elections, it garnered 10 seats on 3.69 percent of the vote.

The party, which played a key role in helping the left-wing Tsipras pass hated EU-mandated austerity measures in parliament, went into a slide after Kammenos pulled out of the government in January over a Macedonia name deal which he vehemently opposed.

Backed by Tsipras and his Macedonian counterpart Premier Zoran Zaev, the deal ended a long-running dispute between the two countries.

Kammenos' resignation triggered a confidence vote in parliament that Tsipras won comfortably with the help of some of the Independent Greeks lawmakers.

Tsipras's Syriza party however made a poor showing in the EU as well as local elections at the weekend.

Two held

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Then they tied her legs and hands before setting her ablaze, the police official said.

However, she was able to extinguish the flames by rolling on the ground and suffered minor injuries.

The victim's father filed a case accusing Shilpi and four unidentified people on Friday night.

Earlier on April 12, the girl was returning home from a local market around 1:00pm when four unidentified men forcibly took her to a bush and harassed her. They also took some photos of the incident and let her go, the case statement said.

Since then, the miscreants had been threatening the girl's family to upload those photos on social media unless they paid Tk 2 lakh to Shilpi.

The girl came under attack after her family refused to pay the money, the OC claimed.



Sudanese soldiers on a street in Khartoum yesterday. Sudanese police fired tear gas at protesters taking part in the first day of a civil disobedience campaign, called in the wake of a deadly crackdown on demonstrators. Protesters gathered tyres, tree trunks, and rocks to build new roadblocks in Khartoum's northern Bahari district but riot police swiftly moved in and fired tear gas at them.

PHOTO: AFP

Israel has 'right' to annex some West Bank land

Says US envoy sparking backlash from Palestinians

AFP, Ramallah

Palestinian leaders say a US envoy's comments on Israel having the right to annex at least parts of the occupied West Bank show "extremists" are involved in White House policy on the issue.

In a statement late Saturday in response to US ambassador to Israel David Friedman's comments in a New York Times interview, a Palestinian government spokesman said some leading US policy on the issue were "extremists" lacking in "political maturity."

The Palestinian foreign ministry said it was looking into filing a complaint with the International Criminal Court on the issue.

Palestine Liberation Organisation secretary general Saeb Erekat on Twitter called Friedman an "extreme ambassador of the settlers."

"Their vision is about annexation of occupied territory, a war crime under international law," he said.

Erekat also renewed a Palestinian call for countries to boycott a June 25-26 conference in Bahrain to discuss economic aspects of a peace deal the

White House has been working on.

In the interview published Saturday, Friedman said some degree of annexation of the West Bank would be legitimate.

"Under certain circumstances, I think Israel has the right to retain some, but unlikely all, of the West Bank," he said.

Israel occupied the West Bank in the 1967 Six-Day War and its construction of settlements there is viewed as a major stumbling block to peace as they are built on land the Palestinians see as part of their future state.

Friedman has in the past been a supporter of Israeli settlements as has the family of Jared Kushner, US President Donald Trump's son-in-law and adviser leading efforts to put together the peace deal.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu pledged ahead of April elections to begin annexing West Bank settlements.

Bringing settlements under Israeli sovereignty on a large-scale could end any remaining hopes for a two-state solution to Israel's conflict with the Palestinians.

ACC official took Tk 40 lakh

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borrowed Tk 10 lakh from one of his in-laws and provided the rest from his savings.

"On May 30, he [Basir] went to my wife's shop at Police Plaza and said he had to submit a report accusing me, under the Anti-Corruption Commission's pressure," said Mizan, adding that he had a heated debate with Basir.

Under the Penal Code, bribing someone is a punishable offence.

Contacted, Basir said, "The allegation brought against me is baseless. I went to the shop to enquire into his wife's wealth."

A private television channel has aired a report showing footage of Basir's visit to the shop.

Meanwhile, the ACC has formed a three-member committee headed by

its secretary to investigate the matter, sources confirmed.

On April 25 last year, the anti-graft watchdog summoned DIG Mizan, as multiple media reports and other sources reported that he had amassed wealth illegally.

He was quizzed for about seven and a half hours over the allegation.

Other allegations had also surfaced

against him: he picked up a 25-year-old woman in July 2017 and forcibly married her, and picked up a female news presenter of a private television channel at gunpoint in December of the same year.

DIG Mizan allegedly issued threats to journalists of two different media outlets while talking to a TV presenter over the phone.

Fishermen block highway

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"We never go into the deep-sea. Our fishing area lies within 4km. The sea resources would never be damaged if we continue fishing within this 4km. But the government did not take this matter into consideration," he said.

Priyonth was echoed by other fishermen.

Porimal Das, senior vice-president of Uttar Chattala Upakuliyo Matsyajibi Jaladash Samabay Kallyan Federation, a platform of fishermen which organised the protest, said they rejected the government ration offered as compensation.

"We won't accept rice and lentil. The ban is illegal because the ground reality was not considered. All we

want is the ban must go."

Fishermen receive a one-time allocation of 40kg of rice and 5kg of lentil as compensation for the ban period.

According to fishing community leader Porimol Das, there are 375,000 fishermen along the 100km coastal belt from Mirsarai upazila to Patenga.

Soon after the removal of the barricade, a tripartite meeting was called at the deputy commissioner's (DC) office between representatives of Chattogram district administration, three local lawmakers, and fishermen.

Coming out of the meeting, fishermen's leader Porimol Das told

The Daily Star that local lawmakers promised them of raising the demand with prime minister as well as in parliament, which sits on June 11. "We will see how things play out for two to three days. If there is no progress, we will resume our protest."

Md Didar, lawmaker of Sitakunda (Chattogram-4), who attended the meeting, said the Marine Fisheries Ordinance 1983 (Amended in 2015) includes the provision of ban, and it could not be amended immediately.

"We assured them that we would raise the issue in parliament, and if necessary, we will take it to the prime minister to get a solution."

PUBLIC SUFFERINGS Although it was a two-hour barricade,

people suffered for a longer period because the traffic congestion did not ease immediately.

Saiful Ahmed, a truck driver who was supposed to reach Narayanganj by noon, told The Daily Star that he got stuck at the spot around 11:00am.

"Though the blockade was withdrawn at 12:00pm, the vehicles slowed down due to the long tailback. I don't know how long it will take to reach my destination."

Dhaka-bound passenger Sabiha Tarin said she was supposed to join a ceremony in the evening but she was not sure she could make it. "The traffic situation improved significantly after two bridges were built recently. I didn't think this may happen."

Cops allowed ex-Sonagazi OC

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was then sent to Rangpur Range by a special courier.

Moazzem was attached to the office of Rangpur range DIG after he was suspended on May 8 on charges of violating departmental discipline, tarnishing the image of police and behaving inappropriately. He joined Rangpur Police Line in mid-May.

Explaining the delay, an official of Rangpur Range police claimed the warrant order was not sent in a proper way.

Contacted yesterday, the Feni SP said he had informed the media of receiving the warrant soon after getting it, adding, it sometimes took time to reach via mail.

He also said he would not show any negligence in executing the warrant.

Khurshid Alam Khan, a Supreme Court lawyer and Editor of Dhaka Law Reports, said the police could have arrested former OC Moazzem without the arrest warrant order as he was accused in a cognizable offence.

If the police had arrested him, the image of the police department

would have been brightened, he said, adding that Moazzem had committed professional misconduct by leaving his office on a false pretext.

Voicing concern over the matter, Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) in a statement yesterday said the incident put a question mark over the police authority's desire to ensure a fair trial in the case.

Meanwhile, Home Minister Assaduzzaman Khan yesterday said the former OC would have to face the music as per the offence he committed.

Whoever is involved with crimes -- be the person an OC, a home ministry official or a public representative -- will have to face punishment, the minister told reporters at his Secretariat office.

If the former OC has gone into hiding, it will take some time to find him but he must face the trial, Assaduzzaman said.

A tribunal in Dhaka on May 27 issued an arrest warrant for the former Sonagazi OC on charges of recording a statement of a Feni madrasa student

Nusrat Jahan Rafi on a mobile camera without her consent and circulating the clip on social media.

On May 29, Moazzem filed a petition with the High Court seeking anticipatory bail in the case filed on charges of filming and circulating the clip.

Nusrat, a student of Sonagazi Islamia Senior Fazil Madrasa in Feni's Sonagazi upazila was set on fire on April 6 allegedly for refusing to withdraw a sexual harassment case filed against the madrasa's principal Siraj Ud Doula.

She died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital on April 10.

TIB VOICES CONCERN The TIB in a statement yesterday said it was normal to raise questions about police role in Moazzem going traceless.

"The arrest warrant issued against Moazzem Hossain on May 27 took more than a week to reach Rangpur Range. Now the Rangpur range is saying it wasn't done according to rules. Now it's being said he has escaped..." said TIB Executive

Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman.

He said leaving out Moazzem from the PBI charge-sheet was also a questionable act. "It's only natural to question whether or not Moazzem has been given scope to flee," he added.

Demanding judicial investigation into the local police department's role in the Nusrat murder, he said if transparency and accountability of the police force was not ensured, the rule of law would collapse.

DIP soon

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that holidaymakers celebrated Eid-ul-Fitr with festivity this year, except a few sporadic incidents, as the government has ensured foolproof security across the country.

"Coast Guard, Police, Rapid Action Battalion and intelligence agencies were active during the Eid celebrations. They worked hard to ensure security at tourist spots along with the help of common people," he said.

Four shot dead

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22 while centre-left opposition party Congress picked up two of the total 42 seats in the state.

Modi's party won a huge 303 seats in the national parliament, increasing its previous tally of 282 seats in 2014.

FIGHT OVER FLAGS

The clashes in Sandeshkhali broke out over the hoisting of BJP flags and the putting up of posters, said the BJP's general secretary in the state, Sayantan Basu.

"They tried to throw away our party flags and posters and when we protested, our workers were shot from point blank range," Basu was quoted as saying by the Press Trust of India (PTI).

Local minister Jyotipriyo Mullick who belongs to the Trinamool party said one of their supporters was "hacked and shot dead by BJP workers".

State elections in West Bengal are scheduled to be held in 2021 with the BJP expected to give a tough fight again.

The state has witnessed some of the most violent feuds between rival parties.

Last month, a BJP supporter was shot dead in state capital Kolkata and a car belonging to a Trinamool member was pelted with rocks. In February, a Trinamool lawmaker was shot dead.

And last year, a BJP worker was killed and his body was hanged from a tree.

Modi has called the killings "shameful and anti-democratic".

Political killings are rife across India. While National Crime Bureau data said there were more than 100 political murders in 2016, experts say the figure was likely much higher.

Kerala, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar states are the worst for political murders, the government data shows.

Man held

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night.

"Oli had been harassing me for long. I complained to his parents several times but they never took any action," the 30-year-old victim told local journalists present at the police station.

Some medical tests were done on the victim at Narsingdi Sadar Hospital on Saturday, OC Fakhruddin said.

Three killed

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made light gun and 25,000 yaba pills from the spot.

The bodies were sent to Feni Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsies.

Meanwhile, a "wanted criminal" was killed in a "shootout" with police at Majhirkanda in Dhaka's Nawabganj, reports UNB.

The dead is Ripon, 35, of Madaripur's Rajoir upazila. He was wanted in 14 cases including that of murder and robbery, said police.

Mostafa Kamal, officer-in-charge of Nawabganj Police Station, claimed they conducted a raid in the area on information that a group of criminals were preparing for robbery.

Sensing the law enforcers' presence, the criminals opened fire, forcing them to retaliate, he said, adding Ripon's body was recovered after the skirmish.

The Daily Star, however, could not independently verify the law enforcers' claims.

Early Tintin

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stump carving a makeshift propeller for his plane after the original was damaged in a rough landing somewhere in the Soviet Union. His faithful dog Snowy (Milou in the original French) sits and watches, bandaged from tail to nose.

The beloved Tintin books have been translated into more than 70 languages, but in 1929, 22-year-old Herge was still telling the young journalist's story in the pages of Le Petit Vingtieme (The Little Twentieth), a kids' supplement to the Belgian daily Le Vingtieme Siecle (The Twentieth Century).

The serialized Tintin stories proved so popular that soon Le Petit Vingtieme published them in 16-page instalments instead of the original eight, and on February 13, 1930, Tintin made the cover.

It was only a few months later that the first book in what was to be a series of two dozen -- "Tintin in the Land of the Soviets" -- was published. More than 200 million Tintin books have now been sold worldwide.

Most of the old Tintin cover illustrations are on display at the Herge museum in the Belgian town of Louvain-la-Neuve, according to a text in the Heritage Auctions catalogue by Philippe Goddin, who has written several books about Tintin and Herge, including a seven-volume chronology.

The drawing sold Saturday, in India ink and gouache, was signed by Herge. A Heritage Auctions spokesman told AFP the illustration, which turned up in Brussels, was one of the "rare cover illustrations signed by Herge in private hands," as well as the oldest.

The author and artist -- who often set his Tintin tales in the most exotic of locales -- rarely left Belgium in his lifetime. He died in 1983.

Other Tintin works have also drawn big paydays at auction, with some surpassing \$1.5 million.