

INSIDE THE RAID THAT KILLED BAGHDADI

President Donald Trump announced Sunday morning in a televised address at the White House that the “world’s number one terrorist leader” is dead.

IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi “blew himself up” when cornered by US forces who conducted a daring, two-hour nighttime raid on his compound in northern Syria, Trump said, providing a detailed account of the mission.

“Last night was a great night for the United States and for the world. A brutal killer, one who has caused so much hardship and death, has violently been eliminated,” he added.

It was the most significant announcement of the death of a terror leader since President Barack Obama revealed al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden had been killed by US Navy Seals in a dramatic late night address in May 2011.

HOW THE RAID UNFOLDED

The covert operation started around 5 pm on Saturday evening as eight helicopters carrying teams of elite US troops, including Delta Force operators, flew exactly one hour and ten minutes over “very, very dangerous territory” towards the compound, according to Trump. Numerous other US aircraft and ships were also involved in the mission. After arriving at the compound, US troops breached a wall to avoid a booby trapped entrance and that’s when “all hell broke loose,” the President added.

Ultimately Baghdadi, who was also wearing a suicide vest, took refuge in a “dead end” tunnel with three children.

“He reached the end of the tunnel, as our dogs chased him down. He ignited his vest, killing himself and the three children. His body was mutilated by the blast. The tunnel had caved in on it in addition,” Trump said.

DNA tests that positively confirmed Baghdadi’s identity began “about 15 minutes after he was killed” and US teams on the ground “brought body parts back,” sources told CNN.

Mazloun Abdi, the commander in chief of the Kurdish forces in Syria, said in a tweet the intelligence operations that led to the US military raid in Syria that killed Baghdadi began five months ago.

TRUMP GIVES THE GREEN LIGHT

Drama unfolded behind the scenes in the hours leading up to the raid as US military and intelligence officials scrambled to prepare before President, Pence, Esper, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Mark Milley and other military officials gathered in the Situation Room around 5 pm Saturday, moments before the helicopters lifted off. From there, Trump said he watched the raid unfold in real time, a moment that was documented in an image released by the White House on Sunday showing Trump surrounded by top military officials.

The only hint that something may have occurred came in the form of a cryptic tweet from Trump at 9:23 pm on Saturday when most of Washington was focused on the baseball World Series taking place a few miles from the White House, saying: “Something big has just happened.”

Trump said Sunday that the some foreign nations, including Russia and Turkey, were notified ahead of time that the US was launching an operation but were not told the details of the mission itself or who the target was.

“Russia treated us great. They opened up. We had a fly over certain Russia areas, Russia-held areas. Russia was great. Iraq was excellent. We really had great cooperation,” the President told reporters Sunday.

“Turkey -- we dealt with them. They knew we were going in. We flew over some territory. They were terrific. No problem,” he added.

SOURCE: CNN ONLINE

The covert operation started around 5:00 pm on Saturday evening

Kurdish forces in Syria said the intelligence operations that led to the raid began 5 months ago



Universities students hold the Iraqi flag as they take part in a protest over corruption, lack of jobs, and poor services, in Kerbala, Iraq yesterday. *Inset, Demonstrators run from a tear-gas thrown by police during the anti-government protest in Baghdad.*

PHOTO: REUTERS



IS jihadist danger still lurks

Experts say militant group has ambitions to regenerate again after Baghdadi’s death

AP, Washington

Eliminating the Islamic State’s elusive leader gives President Donald Trump a new argument for leaving Syria, but the US military campaign against the extremists is far from finished.

The killing of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi by US forces leaves the Islamic State without an obvious leader, a major setback for an organization that in March was forced by American troops and Kurdish forces out of the last portion of its self-declared “caliphate,” which once spanned a swath of Iraq and Syria.

But the militant group, which arose from the remnants of al-Qaida in Iraq after that group’s defeat by US-led forces in 2008, has ambitions to regenerate yet again. And it remains a dangerous threat in Iraq, Afghanistan and beyond.

“The bottom line is: This puts the enemy on its heels, but the ideology — and this sounds so clichéd — it is not dead,” said Chris Costa, a former senior director for counterterrorism for the National Security Council in the Trump administration.

Key to the Islamic States is its “kill where you are” ethos, encouraging a far-flung network of followers, including those in the United States, to commit violence however and wherever they can. That jihadist message is likely to live on, even with the death of al-Baghdadi.

Its flagship affiliate expanding into Pakistan, Tajikistan, Iran, India, Bangladesh, Indonesia

Experts caution that they expect the group’s ideology to endure beyond Baghdadi



That means US forces, perhaps in reduced numbers, will continue hunting and attacking key Islamic State targets, even as Trump says he’s committed to a 2016 campaign pledge to bring them home and end “endless wars” started under his predecessors. Trump earlier this month went from declaring a near-complete

withdrawal of US forces from Syria to deciding that some — perhaps several hundred — must stay to keep eastern Syria’s oil fields from falling back into the hands of the Islamic State. Trump also agreed to keep about 150 US troops at a base in southern Syria.

In announcing Sunday that al-

Republican on the House Homeland Security Committee, said five years of US and coalition effort inside Syria have not eliminated the Islamic State threat.

According to defense officials in Iraq and Afghanistan who study Islamic State and have watched its movements, the group is growing in power and numbers outside of Syria.

Its flagship affiliate is known as ISIS-Khorasan in Afghanistan, and it is expanding into other countries, including Pakistan, Tajikistan, Iran, India, Bangladesh and Indonesia. Many of those affiliates have liaisons in the terror group’s hub in eastern Afghanistan.

The death of al-Baghdadi leaves the group without an equally brand-name successor and deprives would-be jihadists of a figurehead leader to rally behind.

Counterterrorism experts say that leadership void is a significant loss for a terror group that had lost the vast stretches of the physical caliphate in Syria and Iraq it had once controlled. But they also caution that they expect the group’s ideology to endure beyond al-Baghdadi.

Cannot give a guarantee on anyone’s life

Pak PM says on Nawaz’s health

DAWN ONLINE

Prime Minister Imran Khan yesterday said he could not give a guarantee about anyone’s life, referring to the Islamabad High Court proceedings last week in which the bench had asked government representatives to “take responsibility” for incarcerated former premier Nawaz Sharif’s health.

Prime Minister Imran, while addressing the foundation stone laying ceremony of the Baba Guru Nanak University at Nankana Sahib, said: “Today I read a news that the court has asked the federal and provincial governments whether they can guarantee Nawaz Sharif’s life by tomorrow.

“I cannot even guarantee my life by tomorrow, so how can I give a guarantee for someone else’s life?”

On Saturday, the IHC granted Nawaz Sharif post-arrest interim bail



until today in the Al Azizia reference. Nawaz is currently under treatment at Lahore Services Hospital for his low platelet count.

During the proceedings, the federal government had refused to take responsibility for Nawaz’s physical well-being.

IHC Chief Justice Athar Minallah had observed that if the provincial and federal governments had performed their duties, the matter would have not come before the court.

When the interior secretary had informed the IHC that the federal government would not take any responsibility of the former premier’s health, the court expressed displeasure and remarked “don’t play politics with [the] court” as the law defines certain responsibility of the state.



Lebanese army soldiers pull demonstrators in an attempt to open a road blocked by them during ongoing anti-government protests in the port city of Sidon, Lebanon, yesterday. Demonstrators set up barricades across key roads to protest corruption and press their demands for a radical overhaul of their country’s sectarian political system.

PHOTO: REUTERS

INSURGENCY IN RAKHINE

Myanmar army frees 14 hostages from rebels

REUTERS, Yangon

Myanmar’s army said it had rescued 14 people seized by insurgents in restive Rakhine state after Arakan Army rebels reported many dead in military attacks on boats carrying soldiers and police said it had taken prisoners.

The escalation in bloodshed is one of the biggest in the western state since fighting intensified early this year between the army and the rebels demanding greater autonomy for Rakhine.

“Of those abducted by the Arakan Army, 14 people have now been rescued,” the military said in a statement late on Sunday. “The military is continuing a combined air and land operation to rescue the remaining people abducted as soon as possible.”

The ethnic armed group on Saturday took prisoner more than 50 people, most belonging to the security forces. It said troops opened fire on Sunday on three vessels where the group was being held in Rathedaung township, sinking two and damaging one.

“Many were killed as there was no cover from incoming fire,” the rebel group said in a statement.

There was no independent account of casualties.

Local member of parliament Khin Saw Wai told Reuters fighting in Rathedaung had been too intense to go there on Sunday and many people had fled for neighbouring villagers after jet fighters flew overhead.

Tens of thousands of people have been displaced across Rakhine state since clashes began in December, bringing fresh chaos to a region from which more than 730,000 Rohingya Muslims fled a military crackdown in 2017.

MODI FLIGHT DENIAL

India takes Pak to world body

PTI, New Delhi

India has taken up Pakistan’s denial of use of its airspace to Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s flight with the International Civil Aviation Organisation, government sources said yesterday.

Modi is travelling to Saudi Arabia later in the day on a bilateral visit. India has sought overflight clearance from Pakistan for the prime minister’s aircraft to go to Saudi Arabia.

Sources said India regrets Pakistan’s decision to yet again deny overflight clearance for the VIP special flight which is otherwise granted routinely by any normal country.

India has taken up the issue of denial of overflight clearance with the relevant international civil aviation body, they said.

“Overflight clearances are sought, and granted by other countries as per prescribed ICAO guidelines,” said a source.

India will continue to seek such overflight clearances, sources said.

Citing alleged human rights violations in Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan on Sunday denied India’s request to allow Modi’s aircraft to move in its airspace for his visit to Saudi Arabia.

In a statement on Sunday, Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi said Pakistan has decided to not allow Prime Minister Modi to use the country’s airspace, state-run Radio Pakistan reported.

India allows EU MPs into J&K

The team to meet govt officials, residents today to assess situation

AGENCIES

A group of European Union lawmakers will visit Indian Kashmir today, the first foreign delegation since the special status of the Muslim-majority territory was revoked, Indian officials said.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government withdrew Kashmir’s autonomy in August, a move accompanied by a crackdown on dissent by security forces there, to head off protests. It has since said the situation is returning to normality.

Hundreds of people have been freed from detention and phone lines restored, although the internet remains suspended for fear it could be used to organise street demonstrations that have turned violent in the past in the region.

Pakistan, which like India lays claim to the region, has condemned the change of status of the territory and warned it could drive more Muslims to extremism across the world. The dispute over Kashmir has bedevilled relations between the two nuclear-armed nations and sparked two of their three wars.

The EU delegation of 27 lawmakers drawn from 11 countries will meet with government officials and residents to assess the situation in Kashmir, Indian officials said.

The Europeans will be the first foreign group visiting Kashmir since August. This month, US members of Congress expressed concern over a lack of access for diplomats and foreign media.

Yesterday, the EU lawmakers met Modi who said the visit would give them a clear view of the development priorities of the region, his office said.

Modi, making the biggest political move in Jammu and Kashmir since an armed revolt erupted in 1989, has said that special rights for Kashmir, such as a ban on outsiders buying property, had hindered its development.

Within the region, which includes the Hindu-dominated Jammu region and the Buddhist enclave of Ladakh, the turmoil that was confined to the disputed Kashmir Valley had held back the development of other parts of the state.

New Delhi fights pollution after Diwali party

AFP, New Delhi

After India’s biggest firework party of the year, Delhi awoke to a pollution hangover yesterday with the capital forced to breathe hazardous levels of toxic particles.

A thick smog engulfed landmarks such as the capital’s Red Fort and India Gate while drivers had visibility cut by the haze that built up after the Diwali holiday weekend.

With the pollution threat growing over the past decade, the Supreme Court banned most fireworks for the Hindu festival of lights. However, few revellers followed the order.

Firecrackers and rockets lit up the night sky and left clouds of smoke, adding to emissions from cars and trucks and stubble fires by farmers around Delhi that have made it the world’s most polluted capital.

Tens of thousands of people set off firecrackers into the early hours of yesterday, pushing the government air quality index beyond the top recordable level of 999.

China’s Communist Party elite open key conclave

China’s Communist Party elite kicked off a key meeting in Beijing yesterday, as the country’s leadership faces pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong, a protracted trade war, and a slowing economy. The Fourth Plenum of the Party’s Central Committee is a closed-door meeting of high-ranking officials where the country’s roadmap and future direction is discussed. According to official news agency Xinhua, President Xi Jinping yesterday delivered a work report on behalf of the Central Committee’s Political Bureau, and “explained a draft document” of Central Committee decisions on “some major issues.”

Chile president lifts state of emergency

Chilean President Sebastian Pinera yesterday ended a state of emergency that lasted more than a week amid mass protests, but demonstrations continued nonetheless. The decision to lift the decree at midnight, just two days after more than a million people took to the country’s streets demanding economic and political change, comes after the equally unpopular week-long nighttime curfews ended on Saturday. Authorities imposed both the state of emergency and curfews last weekend after Chile was rocked by its worst civil unrest in decades. What originated as a student protest against a modest hike in metro fares quickly got out of control as demonstrations turned deadly.

Emergency declared as California fire rages



Thousands of firefighters battled into the early hours yesterday, losing ground to the huge blaze burning through the famed Sonoma wine region in northern California. California’s governor declared a statewide emergency on Sunday as the wind-driven Kincade Fire spread to more than 34,000 acres (14,000 hectares), forcing residents to flee. In Los Angeles, meanwhile the local fire department issued mandatory evacuation orders after a “very dynamic” brush fire broke out west of a major highway, US 405, near The Getty museum. Refugees from the Kincadee blaze recalled hasty departures as they waited it out in the safety of a community center in Petaluma, California.

SOURCE: AFP