

Video: Kurdish Militias Start New Dangerous Game in Northern Syria

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An armed group named the Islamic Revenge Movement (IRM), hostile towards both Turkish forces and the Syrian Army announced its existence in northern Syria. In a video message released on March 20, the IRM claimed that in 2019 its members conducted 118 attacks killing 13 Turkish officers, 187 Turkish-backed militants and 24 pro-government fighters. The IRM also vowed to continue its fight against the “tyrant state” of Turkey and the “Assad regime” in 2020. The claims of the IRM are very questionable, as the group provided no evidence with which to confirm them.

Furthermore, pro-Kurdish sources were first to release the IRM video arguing that the group consisted of former al-Qaeda members. They also released the name of the supposed group leader: “Abu Osama al-Shami.” Syrian opposition and pro-al-Qaeda sources called the group fake. According to them, the video is just a coverup for actions by the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) and the Kurdish People’s Protection Units (YPG). Both groups prefer to distance themselves from acts of direct aggression against the Syrian military and the Turkish Army in northern Syria. In the public sphere, the YPG plays a victim oppressed by the bloody Assad regime and Erdogan the Invader. In reality, it already has a special brand created to distance the group from attacks on Turkish troops and proxies in Afrin – the Afrin Liberation Forces. The Turkish-rooted PKK pretends that it has no bases and fighters in the region despite the fact that a large part of YPG commanders and members is linked with the PKK.

https://southfront.org/wp-content/uploads/video/IMR_27_03_2020.mp4

Iran reportedly increased its military presence in southern Damascus. According to pro-opposition sources, the Shiite-majority area of Set Zaynab was turned into a stronghold of pro-Iranian forces. Syrian government sources deny these reports.

On the evening of March 26, Israel shot down an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) of Hezbollah, which allegedly violated “Israeli airspace”. The photo released by the Israeli military allows to identify the UAV as a modified variant of the commercially-available Skywalker X8. Armed groups across the entire Middle East modify such drones for combat purposes installing on them submunitions as well as use such UAVs for reconnaissance.

In Iraq, the United States withdrew its forces from the al-Qayyarah Air Base and handed it over to the Iraqi military. A spokesman for the US-led coalition, Col. Myles B. Caggins III, said hundreds of coalition troops will “temporarily” evacuate the base as a protective measure to prevent the spread of coronavirus. About 800 troops of the U.S.-led coalition were deployed at the airbase, which hosted approximately \$1,7 million dollars worth of coalition

equipment. The al-Qayyarah Air Base became the 2nd important military facility abandoned by US forces in March. The withdrawal of US troops from the previous one – al-Qaim – took place last week. These developments are being carried out under the pretext of the COVID-19 outbreak and the defeat of ISIS, but local sources link them with the increasing number of attacks on US forces across the country that the Pentagon cannot contain successfully without a large-scale military escalation.

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