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Saudi gunman tweeted against US before shooting

FBI pressured

Kuwaitis urged to leave Iraq Bloc intact

GCC FMs end meeting



Part of the GCC foreign ministers meeting in Riyadh.

KUNA photo

BAGHDAD, Dec 9, (Agencies): Kuwait Embassy in Baghdad urged on Sunday its nationals in Iraq to leave the country as soon as possible because of the current incidents.

In a statement of which KUNA received a copy, Ambassador Salem Al-Zamanan appealed to the Kuwaitis in Iraq to be cautious and keep away from demonstrations and gatherings.

He also called on the nationals to follow up instructions of Iraq's authorities until they leave the country, according to the statement.

The ambassador also advised Kuwaitis who are planning to visit Iraq not to fly to the country due to the demonstrations occurring in some Iraqi cities.

On Oct 4, the Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry urged its nationals not to visit Iraq at this time, and asked those in Iraq to depart the country at the earliest opportunity.

Also:

BAGHDAD: Four Katyusha rockets hit a military base near Baghdad International Airport early on Monday, wounding at least six soldiers, Iraqi security officials said. It was the latest incident in a series of rocket attacks in recent weeks.

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RIYADH, Dec 9, (KUNA): GCC foreign ministers concluded there in camera 145th preparatory meeting Monday by forwarding recommendation to the GCC Supreme Council 40th session, slated for Tuesday.

Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah headed his country's delegation to the meeting, which was presided by UAE's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs D. Anwar Gargash, who in turn thanked the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for hosting this year's meetings, according to a press release by GCC General Secretariat.

The GCC is an expression of united ambitions; those of Gulf leaders and peoples, as well as aspirations of development, stability and prosperity for the region, noted Gargash.

On his part, GCC Secretary General Abdulatif Al-Zayani said the meeting addressed reports and recommendations of concerned and tasked committees in preparation to forward them to the Supreme Council session Tuesday.

Holding GCC's 40th summit is "clear evidence" of leaders' keenness on preserving the bloc's intactness, said Secretary General Abdulatif Al-Zayani on Monday.

His remarks, according to Saudi Press Agency (SPA), came after being received by King Salman of Abdulaziz here earlier Monday, prior to the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) 40th summit, slated for Tuesday under the chairmanship of Saudi Arabia.

The GCC has proved sturdiness and ability to overcome hardships and face challenges throughout time, as well as continue with collaborative achievements, Al-Zayani noted.

He also extolled the leadership of Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques; King Salman, as well as his efforts to always further strengthen the bonds among Gulf brethren.

On the 40th summit agenda, he said it is packed with political, economic,

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PENSACOLA, Florida, Dec 9, (Agencies): The Saudi gunman who killed three people at the Pensacola naval base had apparently gone on Twitter shortly before the shooting to blast US support of Israel and accuse America of being anti-Muslim, a US official said Sunday as the FBI confirmed it is operating on the assumption the attack was an act of terrorism.

Investigators are also trying to establish whether the killer, 2nd Lt Mohammed Alshamrani, 21, of the Royal Saudi Air Force, acted alone or was part of a larger plot.

Alshamrani, who was killed by a sheriff's deputy during the rampage at a classroom building Friday, was undergoing flight training at Pensacola, where members of foreign militaries routinely receive instruction.

"We are, as we do in most active-shooter investigations, work with the presumption that this was an act of terrorism," said Rachel J. Rojas, the special agent in charge of the FBI's office in Jacksonville.

Authorities believe the gunman made social media posts criticizing the US under a user handle similar to his name, but federal law enforcement officials are investigating whether he authored the words or just posted them, said the official, who was not authorized to discuss the matter publicly and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

Determine

Also, investigators believe the gunman visited New York City, including Rockefeller Center, days before the shooting and are working to determine the purpose of the trip, the official said.

All foreign students at the Pensacola base have been accounted for, no arrests have been made, and the community is under no immediate threat, Rojas said at a news conference. A Saudi commanding officer has ordered all students from the country to remain at one location at the base, authorities said.

"There are a number of Saudi students who are close to the shooter and continue to cooperate in this investigation," Rojas said. "The Saudi government has pledged to fully cooperate with our investigation."

Florida Gov Ron DeSantis said the investigation was proceeding under "the presumption that this was an act of terrorism" and he called for better vetting of foreigners allowed into the US for training on American bases.

Speaking at a news conference Sunday afternoon, DeSantis also said the gunman had a social media trail and a "deep-seated hatred of the United States."

He said he thought such an attack could have been prevented with better vetting.

"You have to take precautions" to protect the nation, DeSantis said.

"To have this individual be able to take out three of our sailors, to me that's unacceptable," the governor added.

Earlier in the week of the shooting, Alshamrani hosted a dinner party where he and three others watched videos of mass shootings, another US official told the AP on Saturday.

Questioned

Alshamrani used a Glock 9 mm weapon that had been purchased legally in Florida, Rojas said. DeSantis questioned whether foreigners should continue to be allowed under federal law to buy guns in the US and called it a "federal loophole."

Republican DeSantis said he supports that the Second Amendment but that it "does not apply to Saudi Arabians."

Family members and others identified the three dead as Joshua Kaleb Watson, a 23-year-old graduate of the US Naval Academy; Airman Mohammed Sameh Haitham, 19, of St Petersburg, Florida, who joined the Navy after graduating from high school last year; and Airman Apprentice Cameron Scott Walters, 21, of Richmond Hill, Georgia.

The official who spoke Saturday said one of the three students who attended the dinner party hosted by the attacker recorded video outside the classroom building while the shooting was taking place. Two other Saudi students watched from a car, the official said.

In a statement, the FBI confirmed Sunday that it had obtained base surveillance videos as well as cellphone footage taken by a bystander outside the building, and had also interviewed that person.

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Football diplomacy with Doha, Riyadh

Opinion

By Ahmed Al-Jarallah
Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

WHEN Doha became the capital of joy, as far as the house of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is concerned, and when Bahrain's national football team were crowned champions of the 24th Arabian Gulf Cup for the first time in its history, such a special occasion represents a new beginning in the relations among the GCC countries based on what was seen from majority of the football fans and youth who attended the matches.

They came carrying the GCC vision and aspirations of what the future of GCC should be like, and interpreted them in the Qatari capital Doha, which became an oasis for everyone to meet for the sake of this dream.

In the past few years, there have been discord between Bahrain and Qatar. This discord - a "Khaleeji" discord - led to division at some point due to political disparage. However, when it came to the youth, they had a different idea compared to the opinion of their governments.

The fruits of many peace initiatives starting to appear successful during sporting activities. We have a historical lesson in this regard. The relations between China and the United States of America opened up after a table tennis "ping-pong" match, leading to establishment of this type of policy by that title.

There is no doubt that the presence of the Qatari Amir in most of the matches, and the joy expressed when he handed the cup to the captain of Bahrain's national football team, is a great indication that times have changed. This, along with the fact that the GCC summit is being held in Riyadh today and the news that preceded all the GCC nationals about Qatar's participation in it at the highest level, means that the days of discord have ended, and all of the GCC states will return to one tone.

We have to admit that the GCC states in the coming phase will be involved in several historic engagements such as the 20th G20 Summit hosted by the Saudi capital and its significant implications, the international "Expo" exhibition to be held in Dubai after some months, and the World Cup 2022 in Qatar.

The aforementioned three events have to occur when the GCC political language is one, expressing the aspirations of its people.

There are young leaders within the GCC community who sincerely express the aspirations of a large percentage of the youth.

In Qatar where the vibrant and active Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani brought together the GCC youth in Doha on the basis of peace and love.

In the United Arab Emirates where Sheikh Mohammad bin Zayed and Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashid have been serving the country and its people in order for the country to reach the ranks of

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Protesters chant slogans during ongoing protests against the Lebanese political class, as riot police block a road leading to the parliament building in Beirut, Lebanon on Dec 8. A possible candidate for prime minister of Lebanon said Sunday he is withdrawing from consideration for the post, prolonging the country's political crisis. (AP)

Fake cyber accounts prop Interior

By Saeed Mahmoud Saleh
Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 9: Parliament's Committee for Budgets and Final Accounts headed by Adnan Abdulsamad held discussions concerning the budget of Ministry of Social Affairs as well as the observations raised by the State Audit Bureau and the Bureau of Financial Controllers for the 2018/2019 fiscal year.

The committee discussed the effectiveness of the monitoring departments in the ministry, and discovered that the monitoring system has several shortcomings especially regarding the illegal provision of allowances to both employees and citizens.

It revealed that this issue was raised several times in previous budgets, and these violations have increased the dues owed to the government to reach KD 20 million.

The committee stressed the need to take relevant procedures in order to prevent the repetition of such violations in the future.

Meanwhile, it recommended expediting the establishment of the electronic link concerning the collection of donations by different bodies in order for the ministry to monitor this process automatically.

The committee discussed the observation raised by the State Audit Bureau concerning the delay in completion of construction projects in the ministry. According to the latter, the reasons include ministry's lack of awareness about the relevant laws and the contracting procedures, and

the slackness of the contracting bodies to provide the required documents.

The committee stressed the importance of removing all the obstacles facing the completion of construction projects included in the ministry's plan in a bid to avoid the accumulated surplus of the money allocated for that reason, which reached 45 percent.

It added that the completion of the construction projects will help reduce the cost borne by the ministry in paying the rents of some buildings.

Meanwhile, MP Al-Humaidhi Bader Al-Subai'e submitted a parliamentary question to minister of Interior concerning the State Security case known as "Eteij Al-Mesbah case"

The MP highlighted the decision issued by Public Prosecutor against the director general of Cybercrimes Department in Ministry of Interior after he admitted that he created fake accounts on social media to promote the performance of the ministry as well as to support or defame some politicians.

He elaborated a set of allegations directed at the accused, and asked minister of Interior to provide him with the resume of the director general of Cybercrimes Department including his entire career history.

MP Al-Subai'e also asked the minister for a list of details about all the employees of the Cybercrimes Department including their names, ranks and career history from Jan 1, 2017 until the date of the submission of this question.

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A protester plays an instrument on a street leading to Tahrir Square where ongoing anti-government protests are taking place in Baghdad, Iraq on Dec 8. At least 25 people, including protesters and police, were killed and 130 wounded on Friday when armed men in pickup trucks stormed Khilani Square, which is adjacent to Tahrir, and shot live ammunition at demonstrators. (AP)

NewsWatch

MOSCOW: Russian forces have entered Raqqa, the former de facto capital of the Islamic State caliphate, in one of the starkest examples yet of how Moscow has filled the vacuum created by President Donald Trump's decision to pull US forces from northern Syria.

Russian troops were shown in footage on the defence ministry's Zvezda TV channel shaking hands with Syrian children and unloading humanitarian aid bundles with the slogan "Russia is with you" from the back of trucks. (RTRS)

PARIS: The uncle of Syrian President Bashar Assad is going on trial in Paris, accused of illegally using Syrian state funds to build a French real estate empire.

Rifaat Assad, a former Syrian vice-president and brother to longtime leader Hafez Assad, has lived in Europe since his exile from Syria following a failed coup attempt in the 1980s.

Watchdog organizations filed a complaint in Paris in 2014 charging that the value of his French real estate holdings - some 90 million euros (\$99.5 million) - far exceeds his known income. (AP)

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Iran, Oman link on border security

TEHRAN, Dec 9, (Agencies): Iran's Border Guards Commander Brig-Gen Qassem Reza'e met Sunday with visiting Commander of Oman Coast Guard Ali Bin Saif Al-Moqbali to discuss border security and the combat against drug trafficking.

During the meeting, Brig-Gen Reza'e noted that threats to the borders of Iran and Oman have "fortunately declined" over the last few years.

He said Iran has 15 neighbors, including Oman, and the relations with Oman are at a good level, according to Iran's Islamic News Agency (IRNA).

Reza'e noted that on top of the challenges facing the Iranian border guards is the combat against drug trafficking and preventing smugglers from using Iran as a transit point to the Gulf region and beyond.