

NEWS IN BRIEF

Ukraine plane
downing
culprits
sentenced
to prison

MIZAN

Political Desk

Iran's judiciary has announced prison sentences for 10 unnamed people responsible for the downing of a Ukraine International Airlines commercial flight in January 2020.

The prime suspect in the case, identified only as the commander of the Tor-M1 surface-to-air missile defense system that shot down the plane with two missiles, received a 10-year discretionary sentence for not heeding orders and three years for being "accessory to semi-intentional murder", according to Mizan, the official judiciary news site.

The culprit will serve a maximum of 10 years in prison, minus time served, and must pay compensation to the families of the 176 victims of the flight, it said. Additionally, two personnel who were operating the missile system each received one-year sentences, while other officials in Tehran's air defense controls and the aerospace division of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) were given sentences ranging from one to three years.

IRGC chief:
Armed Forces
confront
hostile threats

TASNIM – Hailing the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps and the Iranian Army as strong arms of the Islamic Republic, the IRGC commander said the Armed Forces are working hand in hand to combat threats and thwart hostile strategies.

In a message released on Monday, IRGC Commander Major General Hossein Salami offered his congratulations on the National Army Day, due to be celebrated on April 18. Praising the IRGC and the Army as the powerful arms of the Iranian nation that are at the forefront of safeguarding the national, revolutionary and religious values, the general said the military forces will continue to frustrate the sworn enemies of Iran. Highlighting the strategy of constant efforts to boost Iran's military power, the commander stated that the Armed Forces would not neglect the enemy's threats and plots even for a moment.

Diplomat: Iran-KSA embassies to reopen by May 9

Sultan of Oman to visit Tehran



WARSAW INSTITUTE

Political Desk

Alireza Enayati, director-general for Persian Gulf Affairs of the Iranian Foreign Ministry, said that according to the agreement reached in Beijing on March 10, Iran and Saudi Arabia must reopen their embassies by May 9; however, both sides are actively engaged to accel-

erate the process.

In an interview with IRNA on Monday, Enayati said, "The issue [of reopening the embassies] took place within a month, the foreign ministers of the two countries met in Beijing [on April 6], and from that date, the official declaration of the resumption of diplomatic relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and

Saudi Arabia began. After that the technical delegations met each other."

He added that the Saudi delegation visited the embassy in Tehran and left for Mashhad on Friday to visit their diplomatic mission there.

"We have been told they will return to Riyadh and, subsequently, another delegation from Saudi Arabia will discuss how to reopen the embassy and consulate general of Saudi Arabia," the diplomat said.

Enayati further stated that on the Iranian side, the same process has taken place. Last Wednesday, two delegations from the Islamic Republic of Iran left for Saudi Arabia.

"The head of our delegation, Mr. Zarnegar, met with the deputy foreign minister of Saudi Arabia for ceremonial affairs, which was a very good and constructive meeting, and excellent executive agreements were made in that meeting. Accordingly, we have started our activity in

Saudi Arabia at the embassy and consulate general to prepare for the reopening," he clarified.

According to the diplomat, Iran is doing its utmost to reopen the diplomatic missions in Saudi Arabia before the hajj pilgrimage to facilitate the process for Iranian pilgrims.

"Iran and Saudi Arabian foreign ministers will meet again, and we hope this meeting happens in the near future," Enayati highlighted.

Elsewhere in the interview, the diplomat stressed that Tehran and Riyadh have not introduced their ambassadors yet, as the matter requires technical and executive procedures.

The cooperation between Iran and Saudi Arabia is a realization of a concept called a "united Persian Gulf," and the fact that the eight Persian Gulf countries can play an effective and constructive role in the region in a united, identical form, the diplomat stated, expressing

hope that with peace being achieved in Yemen, nine countries will be able to play an effective role together in the Persian Gulf region as one of the most important geopolitical regions of the world.

Sultan of Oman to visit Tehran

Elsewhere in the interview, the diplomat added that the Sultan of Oman will visit Tehran soon, saying, "This trip is definitely on the agenda. We are in contact with the authorities of the Sultanate of Oman to determine the exact time of this trip, which is in response to President Raisi's trip to Oman. This trip will definitely improve relations between Iran and Oman, as many memoranda of understanding were signed during President Raisi's visit, and the fields of cooperation were noted. We hope that this trip can be effective in emphasizing and implementing those fields of cooperation."

U.S. perspective on Iran-Saudi Arabia agreement

First of all, the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between Tehran and Riyadh is against U.S. efforts to isolate Iran, particularly since, after this rapprochement, other Arab governments such as Bahrain and Egypt are also looking for normalization of relations with Tehran.

Secondly, the mediator between Iran and Saudi Arabia was China; this means that Beijing's role in West Asia and the whole world is becoming more serious.

As a result, although the U.S. agrees with the principle of de-escalation between Tehran and Riyadh, Iran's removal from its alleged isolation and China's role becoming more prominent is not pleasing to the U.S. In fact, some of the de-escalations in the region are not to the benefit of the United States. For example, the normalization of Arab countries' relations with the Syrian government – which will accelerate after the Tehran-Riyadh agreement – is not pleasing to Washington; and if peace in Yemen leads to delegating more power to the Houthis, it will not be met with U.S. consent.

Generally, de-escalation and strengthening peace and stability in the region – if it leads to Iran gaining more power – will cause concern for the U.S. Therefore, the United States' position is directly related to Iran's position after de-escalation.

The U.S. hopes that the agreement between Riyadh and Tehran would lead to Saudi Arabia having the upper hand in regional relations, while Iran would be restrained.

Only time will tell if developments will go according to the United States' wishes or not.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Iran underscores good neighborliness policy regarding Azerbaijan: FM spox

Political Desk

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani underscored that Tehran insists on treating the Republic of Azerbaijan with the "good neighborliness" policy. Kanaani made the remarks addressing a press conference on Monday.

Referring to the issue of tensions between Iran and Azerbaijan, the spokesman warned that the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan have enemies.

The Israeli regime is one of the enemies of the bilateral relations between the two countries and two nations, he added.

The Islamic Republic of Iran underlines the establishment of good neighborliness, friendly relations, and mutual respect, while focusing on common interests, said Kanaani.

Understanding the fact that some people benefit from creating differences between two countries, Iran has tried to overcome the recent tensions through diplomatic initiatives and used political and diplomatic approaches to manage relations, he said.

Elsewhere in his press conference, the diplomat referred to recent developments between Iran and Saudi Arabia, saying that the Islamic Republic of Iran enjoys many capacities and has always been an influential country in regional and international developments due to its undeniable role in regional equations. Regarding the invitation of top diplomats of Iran and Saudi Arabia, Kanaani said Iranian and Saudi foreign ministers had earlier extended invitations to each other.

The invitation from Saudi King



AHMAD MOEINI JAM/IRNA

Salman to Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi has also been received, and the Iranian president has invited the Saudi king as well, the spokesman highlighted. We do not tie our relations with the world to the JCPOA, he stressed.

He noted that Iran will not limit its foreign relations to a specific region or a specific bloc.

In another part of his press conference, the spokesman rejected the concept of a unipolar world, saying that the United States is still a power, but no longer a superpower.

Pakistan navy cmdr. calls for increased cooperation with Iran

International Desk

The Chief of Naval Staff of Pakistan Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi held talks with Seyed Mohammad Ali Hosseini, the Iranian ambassador to Pakistan on Monday in Islamabad on the relations between the two countries, including the cooperation between the naval forces.

Expressing his satisfaction with the level of bilateral interactions with Iran, especially in the field of maritime security, the commander of the Pakistan Navy emphasized the need to further deepen bilateral cooperation.

In the meeting, some officials of the headquarters of the Pakistan Navy, as well as Colonel Mustafa Ghanbarpour, the military attaché of Iran in Pakistan, were attend-



MEHR

ing. While reviewing the latest developments in maritime security in the region, the two sides emphasized increasing bilateral cooperation in that field.

The Iranian ambassador, for his part, said, "There are many potentials for the development of relations between the two countries, especially in the field of maritime security and the exchange of visits by both sides' delegations, which should be implemented."