

Armed groups begin withdrawing from Iraq-Iran border

National Desk

Armed Kurdish groups in northern Iraq started pulling out from areas near the border with Iran on Tuesday as Baghdad faced the deadline to disarm the groups. It was part of a security agreement signed between the two countries to disarm the groups and remove their military camps, a report by Al Jazeera said from Suran, near the Iraq-Iran border. In March, Iran set a deadline of September 19 for the security agreement concluded with Iraq, under which the Iraqi government has promised to disarm terrorist and separatist groups based in the Kurdistan Region, vacate their military barracks, and transfer them to the camps established by the Baghdad government. Meanwhile, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian has shared positive news received from his Iraqi counterpart, Fuad Hussein, regarding the joint deal, as reported by AP. He made the remarks during a joint press confer-

ence with his Iraqi counterpart after their meeting on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly summit in New York on Tuesday. The Iraqi official also characterized the security pact as the best option to foster good neighborly relations.

Groups to be relocated to five camps

Also on Monday, he announced that Kurdish armed groups along the border with Iran have handed over their heavy weaponry as the deadline for their disarmament and relocation approached. Hussein said the armed groups and their families will be relocated to five camps, which have been set up in Iraq's Kurdistan Region. The top Iraqi diplomat reiterated his country's commitment to the security agreement with Iran, saying the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has taken the necessary measures in accordance with Baghdad's agreement with Tehran, Press TV reported. Stressing that Iraq pursues

peaceful approaches based on dialogue and respect for its neighbors, Hussein said Baghdad opposes any act of violence against its national sovereignty.

Iran's Defense Minister Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Ashtiani said on Sunday that Tehran will not extend the ultimatum given to Iraq to disarm Kurdish separatist groups along the border with Iran, warning Baghdad of an "eleventh-hour decision" on the matter.

Reports say Iraq's national security adviser, KRG minister of interior, and special representative of the United Nations' secretary general for Iraq have met in Erbil, the capital of the Kurdistan Region, and discussed the implementation of the security pact. Meanwhile, Iraqi media reported on Saturday the country's border guards have managed to gain full control over an area on the Kurdistan Region's border with Iran and drive out terrorist groups following fierce clashes. Iraq's Shafaq news agency



cited the country's border guard forces as saying in a statement late on Friday that they had seized border points in Erbil Province and raised Iraq's national flag in the area after clashes with "outlaws."

The security agreement between the two countries came after anti-Iranian terrorist groups residing in Iraqi Kurdistan Region increased their malign activities, especially in border areas.

Russian defense minister in Tehran



IRNA

PRESS TV - Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, at the head of a high-ranking military delegation, arrived in Tehran on Tuesday to hold talks with senior Iranian officials aimed at further bolstering bilateral relations and counter-terrorism cooperation. Shoigu's visit to Tehran on Tuesday afternoon came after an official invitation by Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Baqeri in June. The Russian defense minister was scheduled to meet with Baqeri, with media reports saying discussions would revolve around advancing defense diplomacy, expanding bilateral cooperation, and addressing shared threats, particularly international terrorism.

Azerbaijan launches military action in Karabakh as tensions escalate



AFP

Azerbaijan launched military action in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, a step that could presage a new war in the volatile area but which Baku said was necessary to restore constitutional order and drive out Armenian military formations. Karabakh is internationally recognised as Azerbai-

jani territory but part of it is run by breakaway ethnic Armenian authorities who say the area is their ancestral homeland. In a statement announcing its operation, Azerbaijan's defence ministry spoke of its intention to "disarm and secure the withdrawal of formations of Armenia's armed forces

from our territories, (and) neutralise their military infrastructure, Reuters reported". It said it was only targeting legitimate military targets using "high-precision weapons" and not civilians as part of what it called a drive to "restore the constitutional order of the Republic of Azerbaijan".

Civilians were free to leave by humanitarian corridors, it added, including one to Armenia, whose prime minister, Pashinyan, said the offer looked like another attempt by Baku to get ethnic Armenians to leave Karabakh as part of a campaign of what he called "ethnic cleansing",

an accusation Baku denies. The Karabakh separatist human rights ombudsman, Gegham Stepanyan, said that two civilians had been killed and 11 people injured as a result of strikes by Azerbaijan's military. Reuters could not immediately verify his assertion.

A meeting for détente in NYC



By Ebrahim Beheshti
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PERSPECTIVE

Mohammad Irani, the former Iranian ambassador to Kuwait, and Massoud Assadollahi, an expert on Middle East affairs, agree on the significance of the upcoming meeting of foreign ministers from the eight Persian Gulf countries in New York City. They view this gathering as a major step toward enhancing security and fostering regional cooperation. This inaugural meeting of foreign ministers includes representatives from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Oman, and Kuwait, all members of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council, as well as the foreign ministers of Iran and Iraq. The event is slated to take place in the coming days on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly. UN Secretary-General Anthony Guterres has initiated and will host the meeting, a move that has received Iran's positive response. This forthcoming meeting

follows a series of developments over the past year, particularly the rapprochement that occurred after Iran and Saudi Arabia normalized their diplomatic relations. Over the past four decades, the GCC member states have seen ups and downs in their relations with Iran, though Qatar and Oman have consistently maintained amicable ties with the Islamic Republic and have at times acted as mediators in disputes between Iran and other Arab nations in the region, as well as Western countries. With the recent restoration of relations between Tehran and Riyadh, Iran's ties with the UAE and Kuwait have also thawed. While Bahrain has yet to appoint an ambassador to Iran, it has also adopted a more conciliatory stance towards Tehran. Nevertheless, historical grievances, differing opinions on regional matters, and lingering misunderstandings still exist among these countries. Resolving these issues and fostering security and economic cooperation will likely require more time. However, what is crucial is that the nations of the region have collectively

recognized, based on past experiences that dialogue is the preferred method for settling disputes and differences. A prime example of this shift is the normalization of relations between Tehran and Riyadh. The looming meeting of Persian Gulf foreign ministers in New York signifies a significant and forward-moving step toward increased dialogue for resolving conflicts and addressing outstanding issues among these nations. Speaking to Iran Daily, Irani notes that while discussions about holding such a meeting have occurred in the past, differences of opinion, especially from Saudi Arabia, have previously led to vetoes. "However, the meeting's venue in New York City now presents an opportunity for these eight nations to take more decisive steps toward maintaining regional peace and fostering cooperation." According to Irani, the participating parties should focus on discussing areas of agreement, such as trade, economic relations, and the development of a collective security strategy. However, he acknowledges that security talks require special mech-

anisms, taking into account the unique considerations of certain countries. Meanwhile, Assadollahi, also speaking to Iran Daily, emphasizes that Iran has consistently advocated for maintaining security in the region collectively, without the involvement of external powers. He sees the inclusion of Tehran in this meeting as a positive sign that the region's countries are aligning their views. However, Assadollahi cautions against expecting immediate results from the New York meeting, pointing out that, apart from Saudi Arabia, other GCC member countries have historically harbored concerns about Iran and Iraq, particularly during Saddam Hussein's era. Moreover, he highlights the impact of tensions created by the US in the region, with the United States using regional instability as a pretext for its military presence. "Achieving substantial results will require the continuation of more meetings, ongoing dialogue, and the establishment of clear guidelines." The presence of extra-regional powers in the Middle East is a reality. The United States

has maintained a presence in West Asia for an extended period, and recently, China has shown a keen interest in developing relations with regional countries. However, their stances on joint meetings among regional nations differ. Assadollahi suggests that the United States is not enthusiastic about such meetings because it views efforts to strengthen regional peace as contrary to its interests and the justification for its military presence. "However, Washington does not publicly express this dissatisfaction." As an example, he highlights recent US measures, where, despite the normalization of relations between Tehran and Riyadh and a de-escalation process in the region, Washington has announced the deployment of additional military forces to ensure shipping security in the Persian Gulf. Assadollahi points to an analysis by an Arab expert, suggesting that the United States did not come to Riyadh's aid after Yemen's Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia's oil facilities but is now seeking to send troops to secure shipping routes as the region moves

toward peace. Conversely, China's position differs from that of the United States. China has cultivated relations with regional countries, particularly Iran and Saudi Arabia, to meet its energy needs and advance its development goals. It sees regional tensions as detrimental to its interests and the stability of energy supplies. In their discussions with Iran Daily, both experts highlight the potential of the New York meeting to serve as a solid foundation for future gatherings. However, there are questions regarding whether these nations are planning to work out a comprehensive regional agreement and whether there is a genuine desire among them to sign such a pact. Irani believes that the possibility of concluding a regional agreement at the current stage is unlikely. "Each country has its own expectations, coupled with existing differences of opinion and rifts among them. Therefore, it's unrealistic to anticipate the resolution of all these disputes through a single meeting in the short term."

Assadollahi echoes a similar stance, emphasizing that the development of cooperation does not imply an immediate agreement, such as a security pact, in the near future. He suggests that such an expectation represents the least likely outcome among a series of positive regional developments. According to Assadollahi, the more logical and traditional approach for Persian Gulf countries is to start by focusing on mutually agreed and readily achievable areas of cooperation. These could include improving relations among themselves, enhancing economic ties, promoting tourism, fostering cultural and scientific exchanges, and such. Both Irani and Assadollahi, like many other experts, view the upcoming meeting as promising. They stress that achieving significant regional progress hinges on the continuation of these meetings. This path has been smoothed, and its momentum should not halt in New York; rather, it should continue to pave the way for future collaboration and understanding among the regional nations.