



Spotlight on Iran

July 7, 2022 – July 21, 2022

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Overview

- ▶ On July 19, the presidents of Iran, Russia and Turkey held a summit in Tehran as part of the Astana Talks process concerning the settlement of the war in Syria. In his meeting with the Turkish president, the Supreme Leader of Iran, Khamenei, cautioned against further Turkish military action in northern Syria.
- ▶ On July 10, Iranian President Raisi spoke on the phone with the Syrian President al-Assad and called for the implementation of agreements signed by both countries during the recent visit of the Syrian president to Tehran in May.
- ▶ On the eve of President Assad's visit to Aleppo city – for the first time since the outbreak of the Syrian uprising and war – the Iranian consul general to Aleppo conducted a visit to the headquarters of a Syrian pro-Iranian militia in eastern Aleppo. The meeting was attended by the commander of the militia, commanders of Lebanese Hezbollah, and commanders of other pro-Iranian militias from the region.
- ▶ Iran named Mojtaba Amini, previously the Head of the Iranian Interests Section in Cairo, as its next ambassador to Lebanon.
- ▶ Iraqi sources reported that the Commander of the Qods Force of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), Esmail Qa'ani, visited northern Iraq in early July, and met with representatives of the two major Kurdish parties to mediate between them and solve the disagreement between them concerning the nomination of the next Iraqi president.

Iranian Involvement in Syria

- ▶ On July 19, the Iranian, Russian, and Turkish presidents held another summit as part of the Astana Talks process intended to settle the war in Syria. In the meeting of the three president, Iran's President Raisi declared that Syria's sovereignty is a "red line" as far as Tehran is

concerned. He insisted that the illegal presence of the United States in Syria is the reason for instability in the country, and stressed Iran's continued support for a political solution in Syria, alongside persisting in the war on terrorism. Raisi also condemned the economic sanctions placed on Syria (Fars, July 19). In parallel to the tripartite summit, the Syrian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Faysal Mekdad, arrived for a visit to Tehran.

► In his meeting with the President of Turkey on the day of the summit, the Supreme Leader of Iran, Ali Khamenei, warned Recep Tayyip Erdoğan against any further Turkish military action in Syria. Khamenei stressed the importance of the territorial integrity of Syria and argued that a military operation in northern Syria will harm Turkey, Syria and the region. He remarked that terrorism must be fought, but military action in Syria will only benefit the terrorists. Khamenei expressed Iran's willingness to cooperate with Turkey to fight terrorist groups in Syria, and added that the Syrian issue needs to be resolved through talks between Iran, Turkey, Syria and Russia (Fars, July 19).

► On July 10, the President of Iran, Ebrahim Raisi, spoke on the phone with the President of Syria, Bashar al-Assad, and greeted him on the occasion of Eid al-Adha. Raisi called for the implementation of agreements signed by the two countries during the recent visit of President Assad to Tehran in May. He stressed Iran's unyielding support to the "resistance axis," and particularly, Syria, and declared that Iran supports securing peace and stability in the country and opposes any foreign intervention in Syria. President Assad claimed in his remarks that the enemies of Iran and Syria are growing weaker day by day in their campaign against the "resistance axis," and that the two countries stand shoulder-to-shoulder in this fight (ISNA, July 10).

► On July 8, the Iranian Ambassador to Syria, Mehdi Sobhani, met with the Syrian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bashar al-Jafari. In the meeting, the two discussed bilateral relations, regional and international developments.



The meeting between the Iranian ambassador to Damascus with the deputy Syrian minister of foreign affairs. Source: ISNA, July 8

► The Syrian pro-opposition outlet Ayn al-Furat reported (July 9) that a new training camp for pro-Iranian militias in Syria was established about two kilometers (1.2 miles) from the town of al-Abbadeh in eastern Ghouta, near the Damascus International Airport. According to this report, erecting the camp took two months, and it includes a large yard used for training in light weaponry, observation posts, operations room, and a room to store weaponry and ammunition. The report also alleged that IRGC commanders visited the camp on July 7th to inaugurate it and ensure it is ready to become operational.

► On the night between July 7th and 8th, the Iranian Consul to Aleppo, Seyyed Nayab Nouri, arrived for a visit in the headquarters of the pro-Iranian militia Liwaa' al-Baqr in eastern Aleppo. The meeting, held on the eve of the visit of President Assad to Aleppo on the occasion of Eid al-Adha, was attended by the Commander of the militia, Khaled al-Marei; the Shia cleric Ayatollah Eid al-Saheb al-Mousawi; commanders belonging to Lebanese Hezbollah; and commanders of pro-Iranian militias from the region. During the visit, the senior Shia cleric spoke in praise of Iran and the “resistance axis,” and the Iranian consul gifted al-Marei a sword of Ali (Zulfiqar) as a gift (Syria TV, July 10).



The meeting attended by the Iranian consul general to Aleppo at the headquarters of the Liwaa' al-Baqr militia. Source: Syria TV, July 10

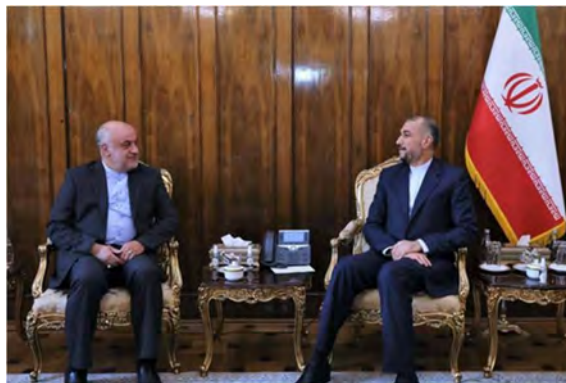
► Mazloum Abdi, the Commander of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a Kurdish-led militia, called on Iran and Russia to prevent Turkey from realizing its threats to invade areas under the control of his forces in northern Syria. In a press conference Abdi held on July 15th, the commander of the SDF accused the US-led International Coalition of adopting a “weak” position, which is insufficient to put an end to Ankara’s threats (ISNA, July 16). Senior Iranian officials have stressed recently Iran’s opposition to Turkish military action in northern Syria.

► On July 16, the Iranian Ambassador to Damascus, Mehdi Sobhani, met with the Syrian Minister of Culture, Lubanah Mshaweh, and discussed cultural cooperation between the two countries (ISNA, July 16).



The meeting between the Iranian ambassador to Damascus and the Syrian minister of culture. Source: ISNA, July 16

► Mojtaba Amini was appointed as Iran’s new ambassador to Lebanon. Prior to this, Amini served as the Head of the Iranian Interests Section in Cairo. He replaces in his new position Mohammad Jalal Firouznia, who served as the ambassador to Beirut since August 2018. On the eve of his departure to Beirut, Amini met with the Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hossein Amir Abdollahian, who stressed the need to expand cooperation between Iran and Lebanon, and the importance of Lebanon in the “resistance axis” facing off with Israel. Amini remarked that he intends to cooperate with the Lebanese government, and with all groups and political currents in the country (Fars, July 10).



The meeting between the Iranian minister of foreign affairs and the incoming Iranian ambassador to Beirut. Source: Fars, July 10

Iranian Involvement in Iraq

► The newspaper al-Araby al-Jadid reported (July 7) that the Commander of the IRGC's Qods Force, Esmail Qa'ani, arrived for a visit to northern Iraq and conducted meetings with representatives of the two major Kurdish parties: the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) in an effort to mediate between them and solve the disagreement concerning the nomination of the next Iraqi president. According to the report, Qa'ani met with PUK leaders in Sulaymaniyah and with KDP leaders in Erbil. The report also claimed that if the two parties fail to reach an agreement concerning the identity of the next president of the republic, Qa'ani will ask the members of the Coordination Framework (the bloc of pro-Iranian political currents and militias) to back the PUK's candidate for president of Iraq. A senior KDP official told al-Araby al-Jadid that the Iranian mediation efforts have failed, thus far. A senior official within the Coordination Framework, on the other hand, told the paper that the outcomes of the mediation efforts of the Qods Force commander will become apparent after the end of the Eid al-Adha break.

► On July 18, the Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hossein Amir Abdollahian, spoke on the phone with his Iraqi counterpart, Fuad Hussein, and discussed bilateral issues, and the Iraqi mediation efforts between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Abdollahian expressed his appreciation for Iraq's efforts to promote a regional dialogue and conveyed Iran's willingness to continue in its consultations with Baghdad to advance bilateral and regional matters (ISNA, July 18).

Iranian Involvement in Afghanistan

► On July 17, the Iranian Ambassador to Kabul, Bahador Aminian, met with the Foreign Minister of the Taliban government, Amir Khan Muttaqi. The two discussed, among other

issues, the matter of Afghan refugees in Iran, counter-narcotics operations, border disputes between the two nations, and bilateral trade ties. In the meeting, the Iranian ambassador stated that Afghanistan's security and stability benefit the entire region. The foreign minister of the Taliban declared that his country is interested in deepening ties with Iran, as part of its effort to become a regional trade hub (Fars, July 17).



The meeting between the Iranian ambassador to Kabul with the Taliban's foreign minister. Source: Fars, July 17