

Israel, after base strike, says Syria acceptance of Turkish troops posed ‘threat’



A member of Syrian government forces, stands guard the Abu Duhur military air base area in Idlib province

AFP | Jerusalem, Undefined

Israel accused Syria of violating an agreement by accepting Turkish troops on a base in its northwest, which was bombed yesterday in an attack the United States criticised and blamed on Israel.

Israel has carried out hundreds of strikes on Syria since the fall of longtime ruler Bashar al-Assad in late 2024 but Tuesday's raid was well away from a self-described security zone Israel maintains in the south of the country.

The base was out of service since 2012 and protected by the Syrian defence ministry, a security source told AFP.

According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitor, the strikes came after a visit by a Turkish military delegation to the airfield in recent days as part of efforts to reactivate it.

Turkey was the first Muslim-majority nation to recognise Israel but Israel has tense relations with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, whose roots are in political Islam and who has vociferously denounced Israel, especially over its devastating offensive in Gaza.

US envoy for Syria Tom Barrack accused Israel of “an unnecessary escalation”, in a rare direct criticism by the United States of its close ally.

Syria condemns unjustified ‘Israeli airstrikes’ on air base

AFP | Damascus, Syria

Syria's foreign ministry condemned what it said was an unjustified Israeli attack on an air base in the country's northwest on Tuesday, while Israel has not commented on the incident.

Syria “condemns in the strongest terms the Israeli airstrikes targeting” the Abu

Duhur military air base in Idlib province “and considers them an unjustified act of aggression”, a foreign ministry statement said, urging the international community and the United Nations Security Council to “take a firm position against Israel's repeated violations of Syrian sovereignty”.

At least 23 dead as bus, truck crash in Brazil

AFP | Brasília, Brazil

A head-on collision between a bus carrying medical patients and a truck killed at least 23 people early Wednesday in southern Brazil, highway police said.

The crash occurred at 3:30

am local time (6:30 GMT) when the truck veered into the other vehicle's lane in the municipality of Ipiranga in Parana state, police said.

“At least 23 deaths have been confirmed. Most of the victims were on the bus,” authorities said in a press release.

Gold mine collapse kills at least 100 people in C.Africa

AFP | Bouar, Central African Republic

A landslide at an illegal gold mine has killed at least 100 people in the Central African Republic on the border with Cameroon, local sources told AFP yesterday.

Search operations are still under way after the accident at the Zambouye mining site, about 50 kilometres (31 miles) from the town of Baboua, on Tuesday afternoon.

Several local sources said that around 100 people had died and many others were injured in the latest of many such accidents in the miner-

al-rich nation.

“At this stage it's difficult for us to establish a formal toll,” Baboua elected official Laurent Ngon Baba told AFP early on Wednesday.

At least four of the victims were Cameroonian, the Cameroon Tribune reported.

Survivors were taken to hospital in Baboua, while the search continued on Wednesday. The landslide is believed to have been caused by “the collapse of several underground tunnels in which miners were operating”, the Baboua public prosecutor said in a statement, announcing a judicial inquiry had been opened.

ICC says US sanctions ‘flagrant attack’ on court independence

AFP | The Hague, Netherlands

The International Criminal Court on Wednesday lashed out at the United States after Washington slapped sanctions on ICC President Tomoko Akane, calling it a “flagrant attack” on the court's independence.

The US sanctioned Akane of Japan and trial lawyer Abdoulaye Seye of Senegal on Tuesday, as part of Washington's campaign against what it calls a “corrupt and fatally politicised” body.

The EU's top officials immediately threw their support behind Akane, saying they “stand firmly” with the ICC president and her top officials.

In twin statements on X, European Commission chief Ursu-

la von der Leyen and European Council head Antonio Costa the court “must be able to act independently and without external pressure.”

Germany echoed the stance, with its foreign ministry calling the court's independence “of central importance”; while the Netherlands, which hosts the court at The Hague, also voiced its disapproval.

Slamming the US move, Spain described the court as “the cornerstone of the international

criminal justice system”.

The court said in a statement: “These sanctions are a flagrant attack against the independence of an impartial judicial institution.” “Such measures targeting judges, prosecutors and staff.. undermine the rule of law,” it added.

Washington's latest move follows sanctions it imposed on several ICC officials, seen as largely in response to the court's investigations involving Israel, a US ally. Japan also ob-

jected to the sanctions, saying the country has “consistently supported the ICC... in its efforts to prosecute and punish the most serious crimes of concern to the international community and to uphold the rule of law.”

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio earlier said, without providing examples, that the sanctioned “individuals have directly engaged in efforts by the ICC to investigate, arrest, detain, or prosecute officials whose government has not consented to ICC jurisdiction”.

Established in 2002, the ICC prosecutes individuals accused of the gravest atrocities and acts as a last resort when countries do not have adequate legal systems to ensure accountability.



The ICC is the world's first permanent international court created to prosecute individuals for the most serious crimes – including genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Kim Yo Jong says ‘unaware’ of Kim-Trump communication

● Trump said on Sunday that he had told the Pentagon to curtail the annual Ulchi Freedom Shield exercises

● Kim Yo Jong nevertheless said her brother still had “good memories and feelings” about Trump

● Nuclear-armed North Korea has long voiced outrage at the exercises, considering them

AFP | Seoul, South Korea

The powerful sister of Kim Jong Un said Wednesday she was “unaware” of reported communication between her brother and Donald Trump, after the US president hinted at contact with the North Korean leader, but said ties between the two remained “excellent”.

Kim Yo Jong's statement came hours after Washington and Seoul announced their annual exercises would end about a week earlier than planned following an order from Trump to scale them back.

Trump said on Sunday that he had told the Pentagon to curtail the annual Ulchi Freedom Shield exercises -- a day before they started -- citing his “good relationship” with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

Asked on Monday whether Kim had responded to his requests for a conversation, Trump said: “Yeah, he has.”

But Kim's sister, Kim Yo Jong, said Wednesday she was unaware of any such contact between her brother and Trump.

“Regarding the recent news

Trump says will meet North Korea's Kim later this year

Washington, United States

US President Donald Trump said yesterday he would meet North Korean leader Kim Jong Un this year, in what would be their first encounter

of Trump's second term.

“Yeah, I will be,” Trump told reporters during a tour of a new helipad he is building at the White House, when asked if he planned to meet Kim later in 2026.



North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un and US President Donald Trump cross south of the Military Demarcation Line (file)

Trump says North Korea has 57 nuclear weapons

AFP | Washington, United States

US President Donald Trump said yesterday that North Korea has 57 nuclear weapons, in a rare and unusually precise assessment of Kim Jong Un's

atomic arsenal.

“He has 57 very powerful nuclear weapons. Should have never allowed it to happen,” Trump told reporters at the White House. “But he's got them. I get along with him very well.”

from Washington about communication between the leaders of North Korea and the United States, I am completely unaware of it,” she said in a statement.

“It is likely the only matter concerning our top leadership's

foreign policy that I am unaware of.”

Kim Yo Jong nevertheless said her brother still had “good memories and feelings” about Trump and that the relationship between the two leaders remains

“excellent”.

Earlier Wednesday, Seoul's military said the drills would wrap up on Friday, not on August 27 as originally planned.

“We have decided to adjust the UFS exercise period to run from the 17th to the 21st,” South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement.

The decision was made “at the suggestion of the US side”, it added.

The Pentagon said the “substantially reduced” drills would “preserve essential readiness and... (cause) no degradation to US training objectives”.

The exercises are designed to prepare for a possible attack by North Korea.

They were understood to consist of two phases: the first, focused on defending against potential North Korean threats, was due to run until Friday; and the second, focused on a counteroffensive, from August 24 to 27.

The second phase is now understood to have been scrapped.

Kim Yo Jong, however, dismissed the reduction, saying: “we do not consider it worth commenting on and find it completely uninteresting.”

She said reducing the scale or duration of the exercise did not change their “provocative and aggressive” character.

Nuclear-armed North Korea has long voiced outrage at the exercises, considering them dress rehearsals for an invasion.

Wednesday's early morning commentary by the state-run Korean Central News Agency said they pose “the most immediate and open threat” to North Korea and “regional security”.

That commentary did not mention Trump's order or his desire to resume talks with Kim, with whom he has hinted at being in contact.