



EURASIA SECURITY WATCH

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Related Categories: Afghanistan; Africa; Middle East

TURKEY GREEN LIGHTS AZERI PIPELINE

Turkey inaugurated a \$10 billion project to pipe Azeri gas to Western markets, forging ahead with a plan that could help Europe reduce its dependence on Russian energy. The Trans-Anatolian gas pipeline (TANAP) aims to carry gas by mid-2018 from Caspian Sea fields developed by a BP-led consortium. The 1,850 km (1,150 mile) pipeline will stretch from Turkey's border with Georgia to Greece and is integral to Turkey's ambition to cut its own dependence on Russian gas. "We plan to establish Turkey as the energy distribution hub of the region," the Turkish president stated. Russia abandoned its \$40 billion South Stream project through which it aimed to deliver gas to Europe while bypassing Ukraine. "TANAP has a special importance because of its route and its goal and is not an alternative project to others and there is not an alternative to it," the president said. (Reuters March 17, 2015)

SAUDI AIRSTRIKES IN YEMEN AHEAD OF GROUND OP

At any moment, Saudi troops could march into Yemen as a Saudi-led coalition of nine countries continued airstrikes against Shiite Houthi rebels this week targeting Houthi military posts and weapons depots. Yemen's Defense Ministry said a Saudi airstrike hit a refugee camp killing at least 40 internally displaced people and injuring 250. But if the coalition takes the fight to the ground in Yemen, the consequences could be severe. Saudi Arabia and Egypt have discussed the possibility of putting boots on the ground and Saudi leaders have said that if troops are dispatched, they won't leave until they have degraded the Houthis ability to fight. (CNN March 30, 2015)

ASSAD SAYS ISIS STILL EXPANDING

Syrian President Bashar Assad said the U.S.-led airstrikes in Syria have not been effective in the fight against the Islamic State group. In fact, he said "the terrorist group has been gaining strength and expanding its reach." Assad blamed the spread of ISIS and its ideology in part on Saudi Arabia, which he said is a "medieval system that's based on Wahhabi dark ideology," an ideology shared by ISIS. He also called Turkish President Erdogan a "Muslim Brotherhood fanatic" and "megalomaniac," and accused Erdogan of supporting the export of terrorism to Syria. (*International Business Times* March 29, 2015)

SYRIAN REBELS CAPTURE KEY TOWN

Syrian rebels captured the northern city of Idlib this month in what amounts to the most significant defeat in two years for forces loyal to President Bashar al-Assad. The rebel force, led by the al-Qaeda affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra, ousted government forces almost entirely. The rebel victory came amid a number of recent indications that the Assad regime is struggling to maintain the military advantage. Idlib became only the second of Syria's self-proclaimed caliphates, after the group ejected other rebel forces. The Islamic State or ISIS does not have a presence in Idlib while al-Nusra has emerged as the dominant force in rebel-controlled areas of the province. (*The Washington Post* March 28, 2015)

EGYPT LISTS BROTHERHOOD FIGURES AS TERRORISTS

Leading figures in the banned Muslim Brotherhood group are being prosecuted as "terrorists" based on the new "terrorist entities" law in Egypt. In February, President Sisi issued a decree approving a new law which defines a terrorist entity as any group "practicing or intending to advocate by any means to disturb public order or endanger the safety of the community and its interests or risk its security or harm national unity." The Muslim Brotherhood responded by describing it as an attempt to list a "number of January Revolution symbols from the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood as terrorists." (*Daily News Egypt* March 30, 2015)