

Newsbytes

The First Watch

February 14, 2018

No. 861

Since 2001

Newzbytes is a ministry of Calvary Chapel of Appleton

www.ccapleton.org

“Let us be alert to the season in which we are living. It is the season of the Blessed Hope, calling for us to cut our ties with the world and build ourselves on this One who will soon appear. He is our hope—a Blessed Hope enabling us to rise above our times and fix our gaze upon Him.” Tozer

Israel says airstrikes dealt ‘severe blows’ to Iran, Syria as border tensions escalate

by ASSOCIATED PRESS

JERUSALEM — Israel's prime minister said Sunday his country delivered "severe blows" to Iranian and Syrian forces and vowed to take further action against its adversaries following the most serious Israeli engagement in Syria since the war there erupted almost seven years ago.

Benjamin Netanyahu's tough words to his Cabinet came a day after Israel carried out a wave of airstrikes in Syria. Israel ordered the airstrikes after it intercepted an Iranian drone that had infiltrated its airspace, and an Israeli F-16 was downed upon its return from Syria.

"Yesterday we dealt severe blows to the Iranian and Syrian forces," Netanyahu said. "We made it unequivocally clear to everyone that our rules of action have not changed one bit. We will continue to strike at every attempt to strike at us. This has been our policy and it will remain our policy."

Israel has tried to stay on the sidelines since civil war broke out in neighboring Syria in 2011, though it has periodically carried out airstrikes against suspected weapons shipments believed to be headed for Lebanese Hezbollah, the Iranian and Syrian-allied militant group.

But as the Syrian war winds down, Israeli officials have voiced increasing alarm that Iran and its Shiite allies are establishing a permanent presence in Syria that could turn its aim toward Israel.

"We do not just talk, we act," said Cabinet Minister Yoav Galant, a former Israeli deputy chief of staff and member of Netanyahu's Security Cabinet.

"I think that also the Syrians now understand well that the fact that they are hosting the Iranians on Syrian soil harms them," he told The Associated Press.

Saturday's airstrikes marked the toughest Israeli aerial assault in Syria in decades.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which monitors the war in Syria through a network of activists on the ground, said Sunday that at least six Syrian troops and allied militiamen were killed in the airstrikes. The six included Syrian and non-Syrian allied troops, the Britain-based Observatory said.

In Saturday's attacks, the Israeli jets came under heavy Syrian anti-aircraft fire and the pilots of one of

the F-16s had to eject before the plane crashed in northern Israel. One pilot was seriously wounded and the other one lightly.

Israel would not confirm whether its aircraft was shot down by enemy fire, which would mark the first such instance for Israel since 1982, when it was fighting a war in neighboring Lebanon.

Israel has recently issued several stern warnings about the increased Iranian involvement along its borders with Syria and Lebanon.

Israel fears Iran could use Syrian territory to stage attacks or create a land corridor from Iran to Lebanon that could allow it to transfer weapons more easily to Hezbollah — a powerful Iran-backed Shiite militant group sworn to Israel's destruction.

UN members look through binoculars as they monitor the Israel-Syria border in the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights, on Feb. 10, 2018. Jalaa Marey / AFP - Getty Images

Though Israel has largely stayed out of the Syrian conflict, it has struck weapons convoys destined for Hezbollah dozens of times since 2012.

Israel has also shot down several drones that previously tried to infiltrate its territory from Syria, but the capture of an Iranian drone and the direct targeting of Iranian sites in response marked a dramatic escalation in the Israeli retaliation.

Israel has long complained about the involvement of archenemy Iran, and Hezbollah, in the Syria war. Both have sent forces to back Assad, who appears headed toward victory. Israel has said it will not accept a permanent military presence by Iran and its Shiite allies in Syria, especially near the Israeli border.

Netanyahu has held several consultations with Russian President Vladimir Putin, who has also sent forces to back Assad. Following the Israeli strikes, the two spoke again on Saturday, with Netanyahu conveying Israel's determination to counter Iran's intentions.

Still, Russia's foreign ministry appeared to criticize Israel's actions by calling for restraint and respecting Syria's sovereignty.

"It is absolutely unacceptable to create threats to the lives and security of Russian servicemen who are in Syria at the invitation of its legitimate government," it said.

The United States, on the other hand, strongly backed Israel.

Heather Nauert, the State Department spokeswoman, said Iranian actions across the region were putting the entire Middle East at risk.

"The U.S. continues to push back on the totality of Iran's malign activities in the region and calls for an end to Iranian behavior that threatens peace and stability," she said.

Israeli minister wants Jewish temple built at Al-Aqsa

Muslims consider Al-Aqsa compound as world's third holiest site, while Jews refer to it as "Temple Mount"

Feb 7, 2018

An Israeli minister on Wednesday called for building the Jewish temple in place of East Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque in retaliation for the killing of an Israeli settler, according to Israeli media.

"The time has come for the recognition of the right of Jews in this land and time has come to build the Temple Mount," Agriculture Minister Uri Ariel said in the funeral of the settler, who was killed in a knife attack in the West Bank on Monday.

For Muslims, the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound is considered the world's third holiest site. Jews, for their part, refer to the area as the "Temple Mount", claiming it was the site of two Jewish temples in ancient times.

Ariel called on the Israeli government to "impose full sovereignty" in the Palestinian territories.

"We must say it in a clear way that there will be only one sovereign state between Jordan and the [Mediterranean] sea, that is the State of Israel with united Jerusalem as its capital," he said.

The Palestinian territories have remained dogged by tension since U.S. President Donald Trump recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital on Dec. 6, triggering world outcry and protests in the occupied lands -- and multiple clashes with Israeli troops -- that have left at least 25 Palestinians dead.

The holy city, in which Al-Aqsa is located, remains at the heart of the Middle East conflict, with Palestinians hoping that East Jerusalem -- currently occupied by Israel -- might one day serve as the capital of a Palestinian state.

Showdown looms over SBC and Calvinism

February 5, 2018 | Bill Bumpas (OneNewsNow.com)

A longtime Southern Baptist leader warns there is a theological civil war brewing over the influence of Calvinist leaders within the denomination.

Richard Land, the former head of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, says he supports Ken Hemphill to lead the SBC as president in order to preserve the gospel message and to defend the role of evangelism.

Hemphill, 69, the former president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, announced Feb. 1 that he is seeking the nomination of SBC president in June.

The current president is Steve Gaines, who pastored Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis after the retirement of the late Dr. Adrian Rogers.

Hemphill is currently on staff at North Greenville University, where he leads the Center for Church Planting and Revitalization, which began as the SBC's Empowering Kingdom Growth initiative.

There have always been Calvinists within the Southern Baptist Convention, observes Land, who likens their influence to the "harmony and never the melody" of the 15-million member denomination.

He describes the current struggle over the next leader as a battle between the "Billy Graham wing" of the SBC versus the "John Calvin wing."

"This is about the gospel and whether or not the gospel is for everyone, not just the elect," Land tells OneNewsNow.

Hemphill would make a great president for the SBC, says author and Christian apologist Alex McFarland, who knows Hemphill at NGU.

Hemphill is a disciple, an evangelizer," McFarland says of the SBC leader. "And a man who stands for everything that the Southern Baptist Church epitomizes, which is fidelity to the Word of God and to Christ's Great Commission."

McFarland says the denomination has seen an increase in young leaders who espouse "New Calvinism," an idea that he rejects. The denomination must adhere to its traditional understanding of salvation.

"We're not commissioned to talk theology over lattes," he says. "We're commissioned to go and preach the gospel to every creature – win the world for Christ – and we need a president that will inspire us."

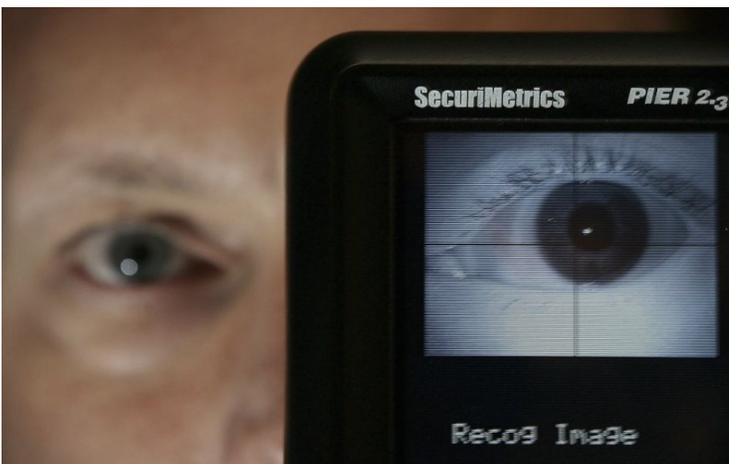
Hemphill's announcement comes after J.D. Greear, 44, a North Carolina pastor, has been nominated to be SBC president for the second time in a row.

Greear was nominated along with Gaines in 2016. Just hundreds of votes separated them, with Gaines enjoying a one-percent lead, when Greear announced he was withdrawing as a sign of unity.

Land tells OneNewsNow that his backing of Hemphill is not an attack on Greear, whom he describes as a great pastor and attractive candidate to lead the SBC.

"This is not an anti-JD campaign," he says. " This is a pro-John 3:16 campaign."

The issue of Calvinism's influence is the biggest issue facing the Southern Baptist Convention at the moment, Land adds.



What if my fingerprint gets stolen?
Getting practical about the rise of
biometrics cityam.com

A system that uses biometrics is being developed for use on the London Underground (Image Source: Getty)

A KFC restaurant in China is using a facial recognition system that allows customers to pay

for their dinner with a smile.

It's an example of how biometric technology is finding an increasing number of ways to make our lives easier.

Biometrics identifies people either through unique physical characteristics – such as their facial features, fingerprints, iris, and vein patterns – or by the way they behave, as we all walk, sign our names or use our keyboards slightly differently.

The technology is common in areas where verifying identities is crucial, such as banks and airports. In Brazil, Banco Bradesco claims to have reduced ATM fraud to almost zero by installing palm vein scanners in over 35,000 machines. At London City Airport, staff scan their fingerprints to access restricted zones.

However, biometrics is set to find a host of new applications. Starting here at home, a system that uses facial recognition, palm vein scanning and object tracking is being developed for use on the London Underground. The Cubic Transportation Systems initiative aims to remove the need for barriers and reduce overcrowding by monitoring each passenger as they pass through the station.

In the automotive sector, German company Continental has unveiled a new level of security whereby simply having the key isn't enough to start the vehicle – a fingerprint is also required. In addition, a facial recognition system recognises the driver and personalises vehicle settings such as seat position and music.

And Onfido, a company founded by three Oxford graduates, recently raised \$60m, thanks to the success of its technology for helping websites verify users' identities via their photo ID and facial biometrics.

Although governments began to take biometrics seriously after the 9/11 attacks, it wasn't until the introduction of biometrics sensors, such as fingerprints on mobile devices, that the technology really entered the public consciousness. It is only now that we're starting to properly consider the issues.

Dr Richard Guest, a reader in biometric systems engineering at the University of Kent, leads the EU's AMBER project, which is researching the use of mobile biometrics.

He believes mobile is the future, but warns that it is not just technical problems (like poor lighting and noise in external settings), but also privacy issues that have to be overcome. "Behavioural biometrics, for example, requires long-term monitoring, but how comfortable are we with organisations such as Apple or Google watching us 24/7?" he asks.

The Biometrics Institute, which promotes the responsible adoption of the technology, also sounds a note of caution.

Chief executive Isabelle Moeller points to the huge advantages, but believes we must get serious about dealing with privacy issues.

It's a simple thing to change a password if it is compromised, but what do you do if your fingerprint is stolen? And how can organisations be sure of the identity of people providing biometric samples?

Ultimately, if the public is to get fully behind the technology, industries need to be transparent about what data they have, how it's being managed, what it's being used for, and how secure it is.

The technology is there – now the privacy, security and ethical frameworks need to catch up.

Pro-EU campaign secures £400,000 from George Soros

8 February 2018

Mr Soros made his donation to Best for Britain through one of his foundations.

The Daily Telegraph says the group will launch advertising later this month to rally public opinion and convince MPs to vote against the final Brexit deal.

Best for Britain chairman Lord Malloch-Brown, a former Labour minister, said Mr Soros was a "valued" supporter but small donors had contributed more.

Mr Soros, a Hungarian-born US citizen, made a fortune in 1992 betting against sterling on Black Wednesday, forcing then-PM John Major to take the pound out of the European Exchange Rate Mechanism.

He has previously suggested it was possible that the UK would apply to rejoin the European Union soon after Brexit.

According to the Telegraph, the donation was made through Mr Soros's Open Society Foundation

Best for Britain was co-founded by Gina Miller, who took the UK government to court in 2016 over its triggering of the Article 50 process to leave the EU. A judge ruled Parliament must give its consent before Theresa May can start official talks on the terms of the UK's exit. Mrs Miller left Best for Britain last June.

Lord Malloch-Brown confirmed Mr Soros's contribution but said some of the campaign's other major donors had given more.

He added Best for Britain had followed rules governing financial contributions.

He said: "We have never hidden our agenda; we have been campaigning hard to win a meaningful vote on Brexit, which we did, and to keep all options on the table, including staying in the European Union."

He said the campaign was a "democratic and patriotic effort to recover our future and we welcome support for our efforts from many quarters".

The involvement of Mr Soros was reported in the Daily Telegraph in a story co-written by Theresa May's former chief of staff Nick Timothy.

In an article in the paper, Mr Timothy maintained the objective of the campaign was "to convince MPs to vote against the deal Theresa May negotiates with Brussels, regardless of its content".

He said: "Malloch-Brown and his backers believe that, if Parliament rejects the Brexit deal, the government will fall, and Brexit can then be stopped."