



Continued: Is Russia Getting Entangled in Southwest Syria?

Source:

Adnan Ahmed. "The 6th Corps: Russian Containment of Daraa's Residents or of Iran and its Militias?" *al-Araby al-Jadid*, 1 March 2019.

<https://goo.gl/drGBTk>

الفيلق السادس: احتواء روسي لأهالي درعا أم لإيران ومليشياتها؟

Last February 19, the spokesman for the Russian Reconciliation Center, Colonel Igor Federov, said that the people of Daraa are resorting to Russians to solve many of their affairs, which they cannot address themselves, including knowing the whereabouts of their relatives and problems relating to residency, housing and real-estate. Naturally, even if Russia has authority over the regime, it does not have the experience that the regime and the Iranians have in dealing with local issues. It also does not have sufficient staffing to deal with such tasks. Most of the time Russian officers are manipulated by regime officers who present them with false information or put off things they promise to do, relying on the Russians' inability to follow up on every single detail. In the meantime, the regime's security agencies compete to regain their former influence in any way possible, including assassinations which often target members of prominent families and for which they accuse members of other prominent families, with the goal of stirring up tribal and familial disputes in the province and making that particular security service the one to resolve the dispute, in order to increase their influence in the province.

Iran Diverting Money from Development to Military

OE Watch Commentary: President Hassan Rouhani, whose administration is now approaching its sixth anniversary, has repeatedly increased the Iranian military budget. According to the accompanying excerpted article from *Tasnim News*, an outlet close to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the Iranian government may soon increase its military budget by raiding the National Development Fund. The article suggests that the Iranian parliament has agreed to withdrawal around \$2.7 billion from the fund and will direct \$1.7 billion of it to the Iranian military. If Iranian budget statistics are taken at face value, this would represent more than a ten percent supplement to the current budget. The parliament would allocate the remaining billion dollars for a variety of sectors. Beyond that excerpted in the accompanying translation, the article provides additional funding for Iranian state television and film, water (potable and for irrigation) and various academic programming.

The justification for the diversion from the National Development Fund lies in the government's desire to fulfill the sixth development plan, which itself was approved by the Supreme Leader. Article 106 of the development plan demanded the strengthening of national defense.

The notion of a national development fund, much like other regional states' sovereign wealth fund, is to invest in the future and expand and diversify a government's wealth. That the Iranian government now withdraws money from its fund suggests that international sanctions are impacting the Iranian economy and that the Iranian government is increasingly looking for new ways to fund its current operations. Given the reality of power inside Iran and the influence of both the Supreme Leader and Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, utilizing the National Development Fund to supplement the budget seems more realistic in the short-term than taxing properties linked to Iran's most influential power centers. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

“...1.5 billion euros to strengthen the defense base.”



The Iranian government appears prepared to increase spending on the military. Pictured is one of Iran's Fateh-class submarines.

Source: Defa News, http://www.defanews.ir/sites/default/files/NAME-A-971128-1030_6.jpg.

Source: "Majles 1.5 Milliard Euro baraye Taghvit Beneyeh Defa'-ye Etesas Dad (The Majlis allocated 1.5 billion euros)," *Tasnim News*, 24 February 2019. <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1397/12/05/1954812>

According to the parliamentary correspondent of the Tasnim News Agency, at the public meeting of the Islamic Consultative Assembly on Sunday evening [24 February], the legislature passed two supplementary notes and four budget bills that authorized the government to withdrawal 2.375 billion euro [\$2.674 billion] from the 2019-2020 development fund in the form of foreign exchange and with the government's guarantee, and it is determined that these resources will be expended subject to the following decisions:

- Up to 150 million euros for pressurized water and modern irrigation schemes
- Up to 150 million euros for watershed and aquaculture
- Up to 100 million to counteract the destruction effect of pollutants and their impact on powergrids.
- Up to 1.5 billion euros to strengthen the defense base in fulfillment of Article 106 of the 6th Development Plan.
- Up to 40 million euros for laboratory and workshop equipment for the universities of the ministry of science...