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Hurricane warnings as Dorian approached Bahamas likely Sunday into Monday.

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For 2 years, no income tax of any new business until it can offset its establishment

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08.29.19

Iraq ordered all militias to leave or one month to fully integrate

Iraq facing resistance in crackdown on Iran-allied militias allegedly targeted by Israel
Baghdad gives mainly Shi'ite paramilitary groups that have wielded increasing power one
month to fully integrate with armed forces, but refusals underline government's struggle
to assert its authority with groups that helped drive out Islamic State

Reuters|Published: 08.29.19 , 13:39

BAGHDAD — At checkpoints leading into the northern Iraqi city of Mosul, the flags of
Brigade 30, a paramilitary force, still fly nearly two months after the Baghdad
government ordered all militias to leave.

Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi's decree gave Iran-backed paramilitary groups, which have wielded increasing power in Iraq, a month to fully integrate with the armed forces, leave checkpoints and sever ties with political groups.

Brigade 30's refusal to abandon its positions on the eastern edge of Mosul -- instead it cut off roads and whipped up angry protests -- underlines Baghdad's struggle to assert its authority and raises the risk of further instability in a region marked by U.S.-Iranian rivalry.

Washington warned this year it would take action against Iran-backed militias if Baghdad failed to control them, and imposed sanctions on groups and their leaders, including Brigade 30's Commander Waad Qaddo. It blamed paramilitaries for attacks on bases hosting U.S. forces in May.

Tension ramped up in the past month when alleged Israeli air strikes hit weapons depots and bases of paramilitary factions in western and central Iraq. Israel has hinted it was involved but has not explicitly said so. The Israeli military declined to comment.

Paramilitaries in turn accuse the United States of helping Israel attack their positions, and have threatened to retaliate.

The Pentagon denies involvement. No evidence has been provided for the mutual allegations.

Rivalry between Iraq's two biggest allies, Tehran and Washington, has put the region on edge this year. Oil tankers in the Gulf have been attacked and Israel has bombed Iranian allies in Syria.

If Iraq cannot rein in its paramilitary groups, which have more than 100,000 members, there could be further violence, Iraqi officials and analysts say.

In parts of Salahuddin province, north of Baghdad, flags of some factions still fly at checkpoints and paramilitaries man roadblocks in neighboring Anbar province.

The armed groups dominate local security in some towns and cities across the country, especially territory formerly occupied by Islamic State (IS) militants. Their allies, meanwhile, occupy parliamentary seats, exercising new political strength that has deepened their influence on the government.

"Abdul Mahdi failed ... to make a small group leave its positions near Mosul. It raises the question, what could he do against more powerful Iran-backed groups?" said Baghdad-based security analyst Jasim al-Bahadli.

The prime minister's office did not respond to a Reuters request for comment. In an interview with local journalists broadcast on Aug. 9, Abdul Mahdi said the integration was complicated and would take more time.

Paramilitary power

The Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) - Iraq's umbrella grouping of mostly Shi'ite Muslim paramilitaries backed by Iran - played a key role defeating IS and formally became part of the armed forces last year, reporting to the prime minister.

In Baghdad, its influence is growing through new senior military appointments, security sources and analysts say.

A commander from one PMF group was appointed inspector-general of the defense ministry this month.

The retirement in May of the military's Mosul commander - a U.S. ally since the fight against IS - has made it easier to resist government efforts to bring paramilitaries in line, sources with knowledge of the appointments said.

Abdul Mahdi set a July 31 deadline for PMF factions to integrate with the armed forces, including handing over roadblocks.

PMF chief Falih al-Fayyadh said last month most factions were already complying. A PMF spokesman declined to comment for this story. The U.S. Department of Defense did not respond to a request for comment.

Leverage

Analysts say Brigade 30, like other groups that took territory in northern Iraq as they fought IS, is reluctant to give up power.

The faction, controlled by Iraq's Shi'ite Shabak minority, is one of a number of paramilitary groups in Iraq's northern Nineveh province believed to control parts of the local economy. The PMF has denied its members are involved in trade.

"Brigade 30 have gained quite a bit of leverage in Mosul ... they feel like they made some good gains during the fight and are now being told to give up major checkpoints," said Renad Mansour, a research fellow at Chatham House.

Commander Waad Qaddo's office declined to comment. Washington placed him on a sanctions list in July over alleged human rights abuses and corruption.

In response to Abdul Mahdi's decree, Qaddo's group bulldozed dirt barriers onto a highway leading into Iraq's second-largest city in early August. Supporters blocked roads and burned tyres as the army stood by.

Demonstrating the group's political heft, the PMF's top leadership negotiated joint checkpoint control between Brigade 30, the army and local officials.

Supporters said abandoning checkpoints could leave the Shabak open to the same abuse and killings minorities suffered at the hands of the Sunni extremist IS in Sunni Arab majority Mosul.

"We'll stay in the area to protect our people," pro-PMF lawmaker Qusay al-Shabaki said.

Mosul lawmakers and security sources say the episode showed how easily one faction could oppose the government, even as the PMF says it is obeying the prime minister.

"Nineveh is under the pressure of the PMF. It's the main power in the province now - the army has become a secondary force," MP Shirwan Dubardani said.

08.29.19

Lieberman presses Likud officials on ousting Netanyahu after elections

Lieberman presses Likud officials on ousting Netanyahu after elections

Yisrael Beytenu leader says intense talks already taking place between several key Likud people about future of party after **Netanyahu**; prime minister **hits back: Only I can navigate Trump and Putin**

Moran Azulay|Published: **08.29.19**, 11:21

Yisrael Beytenu Chairman Avigdor Lieberman has met with senior **Likud** officials to **discuss replacing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as party leader if he fails to secure a 61-member bloc in the Knesset** after the September 17 elections, Ynet has learned.

Netanyahu hit back furiously, saying Lieberman was trying to avoid a right-wing government and that only he could manage the relationship with the U.S. under Donald Trump.

In a closed-door meeting at the Likud headquarters, Lieberman said he had met with Likud MKs and mayors as well as members of the Likud central committee.

In their estimation, at **least two-thirds of the Likud party is praying that Netanyahu does not get 61 seats**, Lieberman said.

"The time will come to replace the Likud nominee for forming a coalition," said Lieberman, who was Netanyahu's chief of staff before entering politics and later his defense minister.

Those who were present at the Likud offices in Or Yehuda during Lieberman's appearance said that he claimed he had spoken to a few prominent and influential members inside the Likud.

Apparently, Liberman said, there were already intense talks going on between several key Likud people about the future of the party after Netanyahu.

"It's unbelievable that those who so recently signed a declaration of loyalty to Bibi are so eager to get rid of him," said Liberman, referring to the prime minister by his nickname.

"In their estimation, at least two-thirds of the party is praying that Netanyahu does not get 61 seats (out of the 120-member parliament). If this situation does indeed arise, they are adamant they will not take part in dissolving the Knesset again and heading into yet another election.

"If the situation does call for it, they will be able to change leadership at the earliest given opportunity. They claim the Likud will be able to choose different leadership to form a government without going through the hassle (of elections). As for a permanent chairman, they will need to conduct primaries once the government is established."

Liberman's words came said after Netanyahu tried to stall the possibility that his own party members would want to replace him as Likud leader, asking members to sign a loyalty pledge stating that none of them mean to replace him on the day after the elections. All members of the Likud signed the petition.

The push to replace Netanyahu came after Liberman said that if the prime minister was not able to put together a government, he would actively act to advance another candidate from the Likud in his place, and mentioned Knesset Speaker Yuli Edelstein - who also signed Netanyahu's loyalty pledge - as a possible replacement.

Liberman also attacked Netanyahu for the pledge, calling it a "North Korean-style petition" that was a "disgrace to every member of the Likud - it only shows the lack of faith Netanyahu has in his party members."

Liberman later told Ynet that Netanyahu was irrelevant from the minute he announced he would not form a broad coalition government. He also claimed that Yamina leader and former justice minister Ayelet Shaked would not back Netanyahu for prime minister.

"What's interesting is that if you listen closely to what Ayelet Shaked and (far-right Transportation Minister Bezalel) Smotrich have to say, you understand their intention to recommend Bibi for prime minister is nonexistent. I don't think they'd even recommend him as the chairman of the Public Inquiries Department (at the Justice Ministry). There's a real rift there, coupled with Ayelet Shaked's own ambition."

Netanyahu slammed his former ally for what he said was an attempt to install a left-wing government in his place.

"If you vote for Liberman, you vote for a government under (Blue and White leaders Benny) Gantz and (Yair) Lapid, is that what you want?" Netanyahu said.

He also claimed that he was the only person who could lead Israel when U.S. President Donald Trump unveils his long-awaited Middle East peace plan in the immediate aftermath of the elections.

"I have a feeling it would be very soon after the elections," he said. "Who do you want to negotiate with Trump over the deal of the century - me at the head of a right-wing government, or Gantz and Lapid?"

"Do you really think Trump or (Russian President Vladimir) Putin will be impressed by Gantz and Lapid? This is the question at the center of the coming elections, because the political topic is to meet us at full strength in a few weeks. Who's going to lead Israel in this critical moment? That pair? They can barely run their own party."

'No longer whispers'

Blue and White co-leader Yair Lapid told Ynet that, "Lieberman is right. There's talk about it inside the Likud - it's no longer only whispers."

The Democratic Union - a joint list of Meretz, Ehud Barak's Democratic Israel party and Labor defector Stav Shaffir - said: "The days of the suspect in Balfour Street (the prime minister's Jerusalem residence) in government are numbered, the panic on Balfour Street will only grow stronger; the incitement will only get more intense.

"Israel's image as a democratic country is at stake - these are the most important elections in decades. This government of criminal suspects needs to be replaced by a true democratic government, one that will determine Israel's image as it was written in the Israeli Declaration of Independence. That is the only way for a truly democratic country."

08.29.19

Israel: Iran, Hezbollah intensifying production of precision missiles in Lebanon

Hezbollah flags on Israel-Lebanon border

Israel: Iran, Hezbollah intensifying missile efforts

Israeli military says the Islamic Republic's Lebanese proxy has stepped up attempts to establish facilities for production of precision missiles in Lebanon; 'Iran and Hezbollah are endangering Lebanon,' IDF says

News Agencies|Published: 08.29.19, 17:01

The Israeli military is accusing Iran and its Lebanese proxy Hezbollah of stepping up attempts to build missile-production facilities in Lebanon and says these efforts are putting Lebanese civilians in danger.

The announcement comes at a time of rising tensions. In recent days, Israel has struck Iranian targets in Syria and Iraq, and Hezbollah has accused Israel of a drone strike in Lebanon.

"Dir balak," Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in public remarks directed at Lebanon, using the Arabic for "watch out," after the IDF published what it said were details about an extensive Iranian-sponsored campaign to provide Hezbollah with the means to produce precision-guided missiles.

Lieutenant Colonel Jonathan Conricus, an Israeli military spokesman, said Iran had in recent months increased the pace of the project such that it was "faster in terms of buildings, facilities, locations, conversion and manufacturing facilities, and it means more people, operatives involved in doing so".

He released the names of four officials, led by an Iranian brigadier general, allegedly leading the effort.

"It is time for them (the Lebanese government) to understand their responsibility and understand the fact that what they are **letting Hezbollah and Iran do on Lebanese soil** is their responsibility," Conricus said.

"They are the ones who are complicit in endangering Lebanon and Lebanese civilians which Hezbollah and Iran are using as human shields."

Israel considers it a major escalation if Hezbollah manages to obtain large quantities of guided missiles.

Conricus said there was no change to Israel's position on the Lebanese army. But he appeared to play down the threat.

"We continue to classify Hezbollah as our main enemy and the Lebanese Armed Forces as a potential enemy," he said. "If they fire at Israel, tactically speaking, ... then that specific force on the ground will be considered an active enemy, but strategically speaking Hezbollah is the enemy."

08.29.19

Netanyahu promises cannabis import laws as part of deal with economics Chairman
For 2 years, no income tax of any new business until it can offset its establishment

Netanyahu promises cannabis import laws as part of deal with Feiglin

The ruling Likud joins forces with Moshe Feiglin's party ahead of September elections that would see the **Zehut leader** becoming a minister in the sphere of either **economics of welfare** in the Netanyahu government

Itay Shikman, Moran Azulay|Published: **08.29.19**, 19:12

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and **Zehut Chairman Moshe Feiglin** officially announced **Thursday** they will run together in the **upcoming elections** under a special

agreement. The deal apparently includes promotion of legislation on imports of medical marijuana and promises the Zionist party leader would become a minister in the sphere of economics or social welfare in the Netanyahu government.

Feiglin hasn't left Zehut as was reported earlier but rather joined his faction to the Likud.

The 57-year-old, an ultranationalist libertarian with a criminal record who left Likud to establish his own fringe party based on promises to legalize marijuana, has gathered a strong following among cannabis proponents during the run-up to the last elections.

"We are embarking on a joint path to promote values of personal freedom and free economy," said the prime minister during a press conference at Maccabiah Village in Ramat Gan.

"The root of the proposal which Moshe presented me, and with which I absolutely agree with is to open the (medical cannabis) market for import," Netanyahu said, before addressing Feiglin directly, "I see you as a minister in my government, these are not just words, I really mean it."

Feiglin then took the stage, emphasizing the issue of marijuana legalization for recreational use would be "a life-saving revolution."

"There is also great news for the free and private market, the cost of living - especially for small business owners in Israel - would be lowered," he said. "For two years, any new business, with a turnover of up to NIS 2 million, will not pay income tax until it has made enough to offset its establishment."

08.29.19

PA imposed a diplomatic boycott of US in protest to recognition of Jerusalem

Palestinians shun U.S. consular events after widespread protests

Latest meeting initiated by the American embassy in Jerusalem was meant to bring together Palestinian businessmen and embassy's commercial attaché, but had to be canceled due to public uproar over 'unfair American policies toward Palestinian cause'

The Media Line|Published: 08.29.19 , 21:50

The United States Embassy in Jerusalem on Thursday canceled a meeting that was scheduled to take place in Ramallah between Palestinian business people and the embassy's commercial attaché after widespread pressure from the Palestinian public.

It is the second activity to be canceled in August after the embassy was forced to postpone a conference it organized in the West Bank city of Ramallah last Monday due to Palestinian protests.

Amr Osama, the head of the Palestinian Businessmen Association, said that he apologized for scheduling the meeting, saying he should not have done so, “because of the unfair American policies and position against the Palestinian cause and people.

“The private sector is a national sector too; we care about the country and what’s best for its people,” Osama said. “Especially because there is huge American pressure to bypass the Palestinian leadership and isolate it.”

Earlier this month, the U.S. Embassy had to cancel a youth conference organized by the U.S.-Palestinian Affairs Unit, which was created as part of the U.S. mission after it was moved to Jerusalem.

The conference was planned for Palestinian alumni of U.S. educational and cultural programs and was supposed to discuss "the situation of youth in the Palestinian territories."

The American Embassy refused to comment on the latest cancellation, but said the youth conference had only been rescheduled, with “a new date to be determined.”

“In order to avoid the Palestinian participants being put in a difficult situation, we decided to postpone the event for now,” an embassy spokesperson said.

“This and other public affairs activities supported by the U.S.-Palestinian Affairs Unit are designed to create opportunities for exchange and dialogue between Americans and Palestinians at the grassroots level.”

Osama Qwasme, a spokesperson for Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas' ruling Fatah faction, said “Palestinian business people, like all segments of Palestinian society, have one united position.

“The cancellation of the American Embassy activities shows the Palestinian street rejects the so-called economic solution instead of a political one,” Qwasme said, referring to the Trump Administration decision to begin its peace push by first presenting an economic plan rather than a political one.

"The White House has to realize that it can't hold any of these meetings or activities until it changes its hostile position against the Palestinian people," said Qwasme.

In reaction to American efforts to engage with the Palestinian people, rather than the government, the National and Islamic Forces in Ramallah and al-Bireh, which represents all Palestinian factions, as well as social committees, has targeted such activities and forced their cancellation.

Issam Abu Baker, coordinator of the National and Islamic Forces, said that he considers the continuation of efforts by the U.S. to hold meetings in the name of economy and

development shows “an extreme rudeness by the American settler U.S. Ambassador David Friedman.

“These kinds of meetings and activities are out of our national standards,” Abu Baker said. “We refuse any effort to create new alternatives away from our legitimate frame. We continue to boycott the American administration for its biased position against the Palestinian people.

“Under the current circumstances,” he continued, “we don’t communicate with the American administration, which failed in all of its attempts to bypass the Palestinian leadership.”

Abu Baker stressed that his organization will continue to oppose any Palestinian participation in activities organized by the U.S. Embassy or any American institution that “supports the (Israeli) occupation and the U.S. policies that deny the rights of the Palestinian people. Whoever participates will be undermining national responsibility.

“While the United States is de-listing Palestine from official U.S. websites,” he said, “it attempts direct and indirect endeavors to liquidate the national cause through the so-called ‘deal of the century’,” a term denoting the Trump peace plan.

Palestinian-American relations have been tensing since December 2017, when the PA imposed a diplomatic boycott on the U.S. administration in protest of its recognition of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital.

Written by Dima Abumaria. Reprinted with permission of The Media Line

08.26.19

Brazil's Bolsonaro causes global outrage over Amazon fires

Brazil government impunity among farmers illegal acts to deforest has G7 focus

Brazil state of Para “a day of fire” Aug 10 has backfired, with G7 outrage

Brazil's Bolsonaro causes global outrage over Amazon fires

Far-right leader who initially dismissed the hundreds of blazes, suggested activists started them to discredit his government, sends soldiers to battle flames after European leaders threaten to end trade deal with Brazil

AP|Published: 08.26.19, 09:07

Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro has insulted adversaries and allies, disparaged women, blacks and homosexuals, and even praised his country's 1964-1985 dictatorship. Yet nothing has rallied more anger at home and criticism from abroad than his response to fires raging in parts of the Amazon region.

The far-right populist leader initially dismissed the hundreds of blazes and then questioned whether activist groups might have started the fires in an effort to damage the credibility of his government, which has called for looser environmental regulations in the world's largest rainforest to spur development.

In response, European leaders threatened to end a trade deal with Brazil and other South American nations. Thousands of people have demonstrated in cities across Brazil and outside Brazilian embassies around the world. #PrayforAmazonia became a worldwide trending topic. Pope Francis added his voice to the chorus of concern, warning that the "lung of forest is vital for our planet."

Bolsonaro finally took a less confrontational approach Friday and announced he would send 44,000 soldiers to help battle the blazes, which mostly seem to be charring land deforested, perhaps illegally, for farming and ranching rather than burning through stands of trees.

Some say it's not enough and comes too late.

"No democratic government has suffered such international criticism as Bolsonaro is going through," said Mauricio Santoro, an international relations professor at Rio de Janeiro State University. "By breaching international environmental agreements, Brazil has been discredited, blurred and unable to exercise any type of leadership on the international stage."

Brazilian military planes began dumping water on fires in the Amazon state of Rondonia over the weekend, and a few hundred of the promised troops deployed into the fire zone. But many Brazilians again took to the streets in Rio de Janeiro and other cities Sunday to demand the administration do more. Some held banners that read: "Bolsonaro is burning our future."

Bolsonaro has previously described rainforest protections as an obstacle to Brazil's economic development. Critics say the record number of fires this year has been stoked by his encouragement of farmers, loggers and ranchers to speed efforts to strip away forest. Although he has now vowed to protect the area, they say it is only out of fear of a diplomatic crisis and economic losses.

"The international pressure today has a bigger impact than the demonstrations by Brazilians on the streets," Santoro said.

The leaders of the Group of Seven nations said Sunday that they were preparing a plan for helping Brazil battle the fires and repair the damage.

French President Emmanuel Macron said the help would involve both technical and financial mechanisms "so that we can help them in the most effective way possible."

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said her country and others will talk with Brazil about reforestation in the Amazon once the fires have been extinguished.

"Of course (this is) Brazilian territory, but we have a question here of the rainforests that is really a global question," she said. "The lung of our whole Earth is affected, and so we must find common solutions."

Fires are common during Brazil's dry season, but this year has set an alarming record. The country's National Space Research Institute, which monitors deforestation, has recorded more than 77,000 wildfires in Brazil this year. That is an 85% rise over last year, and about half of the fires have been in the Amazon region.

"We've had eight months without any type of concrete action in defense of the Amazon," said RÃ³mulo Batista, a member of Greenpeace Brazil's Amazonia Campaign. He said the flames licking over swaths of the Amazon are a reflection of Bolsonaro's environmental policy.

"The government created a sense of impunity among farmers who were willing to commit illegal acts to deforest," he said.

"Thousands of species of plants and animals are being killed, many of them that we don't even know. The population of nearby cities is suffering terrible damage because they're breathing that air and it's causing them respiratory problems. And the rise in deforestation can completely alter the rain patterns by region and devastate agriculture, even in South America."

Bolsonaro has argued with critics who note that the Amazon produces vast amounts of oxygen and is considered crucial for efforts to contain climate change. But Batista predicts the fires will prove a turning point and the pressure by G-7 leaders will shift Bolsonaro's view on the environment.

Brazil's federal police agency announced Sunday that it would investigate reports that farmers in the state of Para, one of those most affected by the blazes, had called for "a day of fire" to ignite fires Aug. 10. Local news media said a group organized the action over WhatsApp to show support for Bolsonaro's efforts to loosen environmental regulations.

Justice Minister Sergio Moro, who oversees the police, said on Twitter that Bolsonaro "asked for a rigorous investigation" and said "the criminal fires will be severely punished."

Merkel noted Bolsonaro is putting "significant forces" into the effort to save the rainforest.

But Bolsonaro has had a tense relationship with foreign governments -- including Germany's -- and non-governmental groups that he accuses of meddling in his country's management of the Amazon.

Macron's office on Friday complained that the Brazilian leader "had lied to him" about environmental commitments.

Asked if he would speak with Macron, Bolsonaro said Saturday: "If he calls me, I will answer. I am being extremely well-mannered with him even though he called me 'a liar.'"

08.25.19

Australia to block internet domains hosting extremist content during terror attacks

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Tech giants Facebook, YouTube, Amazon, Microsoft and Twitter, Telstra, Vodafone, TPG and Optus

Australia to block internet domains hosting extremist content during terror attacks

Tech giants including Facebook, YouTube, Amazon, Microsoft and Twitter are expected to provide details to the Canberra government by the end of next month on how they will carry out the recommendations

Reuters|Published: 08.25.19 , 10:18

Australia will block access to internet domains hosting terrorist material during crisis events and will consider legislation to force digital platforms to improve the safety of their services, officials said on Sunday.

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison, who is in France to take part in the G7 leaders' forum, said the government intended to prevent extremists from exploiting digital platforms to post extremely violent content.

"We are doing everything we can to deny terrorists the opportunity to glorify their crimes," he said in a statement.

Australia and New Zealand have increased scrutiny of websites and social media companies in the wake of the Christchurch massacre in March, when 51 worshippers were killed in attacks on two New Zealand mosques.

The attack was livestreamed by alleged gunman Brenton Tarrant over Facebook.

The government said it would establish a framework to block domains hosting such material. Australia's eSafety Commissioner would determine on a case-by-case basis what should be censored, and was working with industry on arrangements to quickly block access during an attack.

A 24/7 Crisis Coordination Centre would be established to monitor the online world for extreme violence or terrorist material.

In addition to extremist violence, domains hosting any abhorrent violent material - defined as content showing murder, attempted murder, rape, torture, or kidnapping - that is recorded by anyone involved in the conduct also would be blocked, the government said.

The government **did not elaborate on what legislative options would be used** if digital platforms failed to improve safety.

Tech giants including **Facebook, YouTube, Amazon, Microsoft and Twitter**, along with **Telstra, Vodafone, TPG and Optus** are expected to provide details to the government by the end of next month on **how they will carry out** the recommendations.

The firms are all members of the Taskforce to Combat Terrorist and Extreme Violent Material Online, which had recommended a clear framework be established.

It was not immediately clear how the move would affect media reporting of terror attacks or civil unrest.

Sky News New Zealand was fined NZ\$4,000 (\$2,560) by New Zealand's Broadcasting Standards Authority earlier this month for **showing a number of edited clips taken from** the alleged Christchurch **attacker's** 17-minute livestream video during its news broadcast.

The regulator said in its judgment that, while the broadcast was newsworthy, the clips contained disturbing violent content which **could** cause distress, or **glorify the alleged attacker and promote his messages.**

08.29.19

Thursday Iran telecommunication satellite rocket exploded on its launch pad

Satellite photos show burning Iran space center launch pad

The black plume of smoke appears to be a result of **satellite launch failure** which caused the explosion; **Iranian officials didn't immediately acknowledge** the incident

Associated Press|Published: **08.29.19**, 20:52

A rocket at an Iranian space center that was to conduct a satellite launch criticized by the U.S. apparently **exploded on its launch pad Thursday**, satellite images show, suggesting the Islamic Republic suffered its third failed launch this year alone.

State media and officials did not immediately acknowledge the incident at the Imam Khomeini Space Center in Iran's Semnan province.



This satellite image from Planet Labs shows a fire at a rocket launch pad at the Imam Khomeini Space Center in Iran (Photo: Planet Labs INC)

However, [satellite images by Planet Labs Inc.](#) showed a black plume of smoke rising above a launch pad there, with what appeared to be the charred remains of a rocket and its launch stand. [In previous days](#), satellite images had shown [officials there repainted the launch pad blue.](#)

On Thursday morning, [half of that paint apparently had been burned away.](#)

"Whatever happened there, it blew up and you're looking at the smoldering remains of what used to be there," said David Schmerler, a senior research associate at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies.

Schmerler told The Associated Press that the images of the space center suggested that the [rocket either exploded during ignition or possibly briefly lifted off before crashing back down on the pad.](#)

NPR first reported on the satellite images of the apparent failed launch at the space center, some 240 kilometers ([150 miles](#)) [southeast of Iran's capital, Tehran.](#)

Iranian satellite launches had been anticipated before the end of the year.

In July, Iran's Information and Communications Technology Minister Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi told The Associated Press that Tehran planned three more launches this year, two for satellites that do remote-sensing work and another that handles communications.

The Nahid-1 is reportedly the telecommunication satellite, which authorities plan to have in orbit for two-and-a-half months. Nahid in Farsi means "Venus."

The semi-official Mehr news agency quoted Jahromi on August 13 as saying that the Nahid-1 was ready to be delivered to Iran's Defense Ministry, signaling a launch date for the satellite likely loomed. Iran's National Week of Government, during which Tehran often inaugurates new projects, began August 24.

The apparent attempt to launch the Nahid-1 comes after two failed satellite launches of the Payam and Doosti in January and February. A separate fire at the Imam Khomeini Space Center in February also killed three researchers, authorities said at the time.

Over the past decade, Iran has sent several short-lived satellites into orbit and in 2013 launched a monkey into space.

The U.S. alleges such launches defy a U.N. Security Council resolution calling on Iran to undertake no activity related to ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons.

Iran, which long has said it does not seek nuclear weapons, maintains its satellite launches and rocket tests do not have a military component. Tehran also says it doesn't violate the U.N. as it only "called upon" Tehran not to conduct such tests.

The tests have taken on new importance to the U.S. amid the maximalist approach to Iran taken by President Donald Trump's administration. Tensions have been high between the countries since Trump unilaterally withdrew the U.S. from Iran's nuclear deal over a year ago and imposed sanctions, including on Iran's oil industry. Iran recently has begun to break the accord itself while trying to push Europe to help it sell oil abroad.

e Springer

The Iranian news agency says the launch was a success, and the smoke which followed was from fireworks to celebrate the launch, along with smoke from local cigarette smokers. All this from officials unauthorized to disclose details.

'Absolute monster' Hurricane Dorian strengthens to Category 3 'major' hurricane
Ryan W. Miller, USA TODAY Published 6:16 a.m. ET Aug. 30, 2019 | Updated 6:01 p.m. ET Aug. 30, 2019

All 67 Florida counties are in a state of emergency
Trump compared the storm to Andrew, which hit in 1992
Landfall is expected Monday into Tuesday as a possible Category 4
Hurricane Dorian hurtled toward the United States and strengthened to a 115-mph, Category 3 "major" hurricane Friday ahead of its expected landfall Monday into Tuesday along Florida's east coast, forecasters say.

Hurricane warnings were put in place in the northwestern Bahamas as Dorian approached the island nation. A direct hit in the Bahamas is likely on Sunday into Monday.

The storm was slowly turning west on Friday as it makes its way back toward land and is expected to strengthen in the coming days, the National Hurricane Center said. Dorian is forecast to slam the southeastern United States as a possible Category 4 storm.

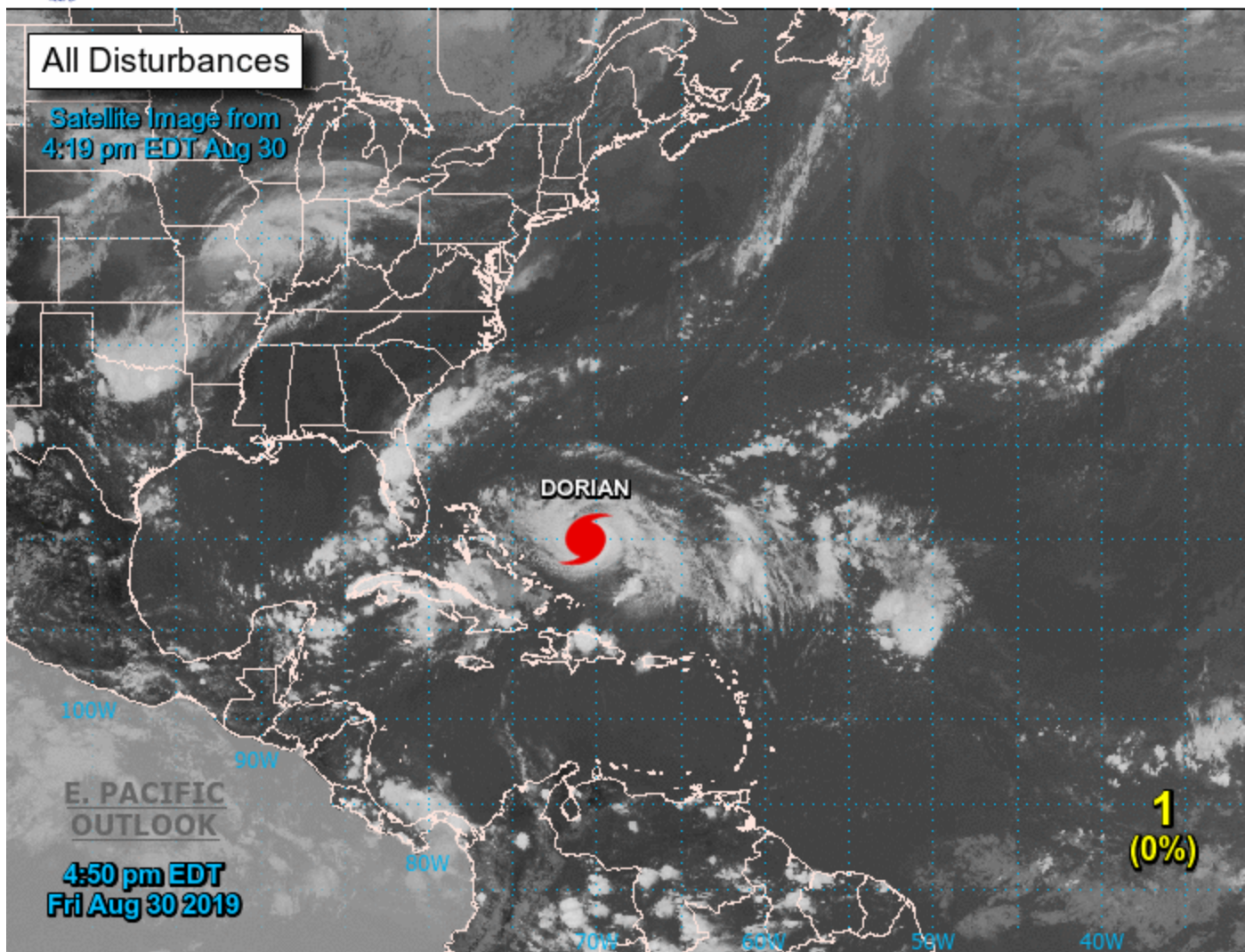
Forecasters say Dorian will likely slow down considerably as it approaches Florida, allowing for heavy rainfall, dangerous winds and life-threatening storm surge to linger.

"Dorian is likely to remain an extremely dangerous hurricane while it moves near the northwestern Bahamas and approaches the Florida peninsula through the weekend," the hurricane center said.



Two-Day Graphical Tropical Weather Outlook

National Hurricane Center Miami, Florida



Current Disturbances and Two-Day Cyclone Formation Chance: < 40% 40-60% > 60%

Tropical or Sub-Tropical Cyclone: Depression Storm Hurricane

Post-Tropical Cyclone or Remnants

Tropical Weather Outlook
 NWS National Hurricane Center Miami FL
 200 PM EDT Fri Aug 30 2019

For the North Atlantic...Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico:

The National Hurricane Center is issuing advisories on Hurricane Dorian, located a few hundred miles east-northeast of the southeastern Bahamas.

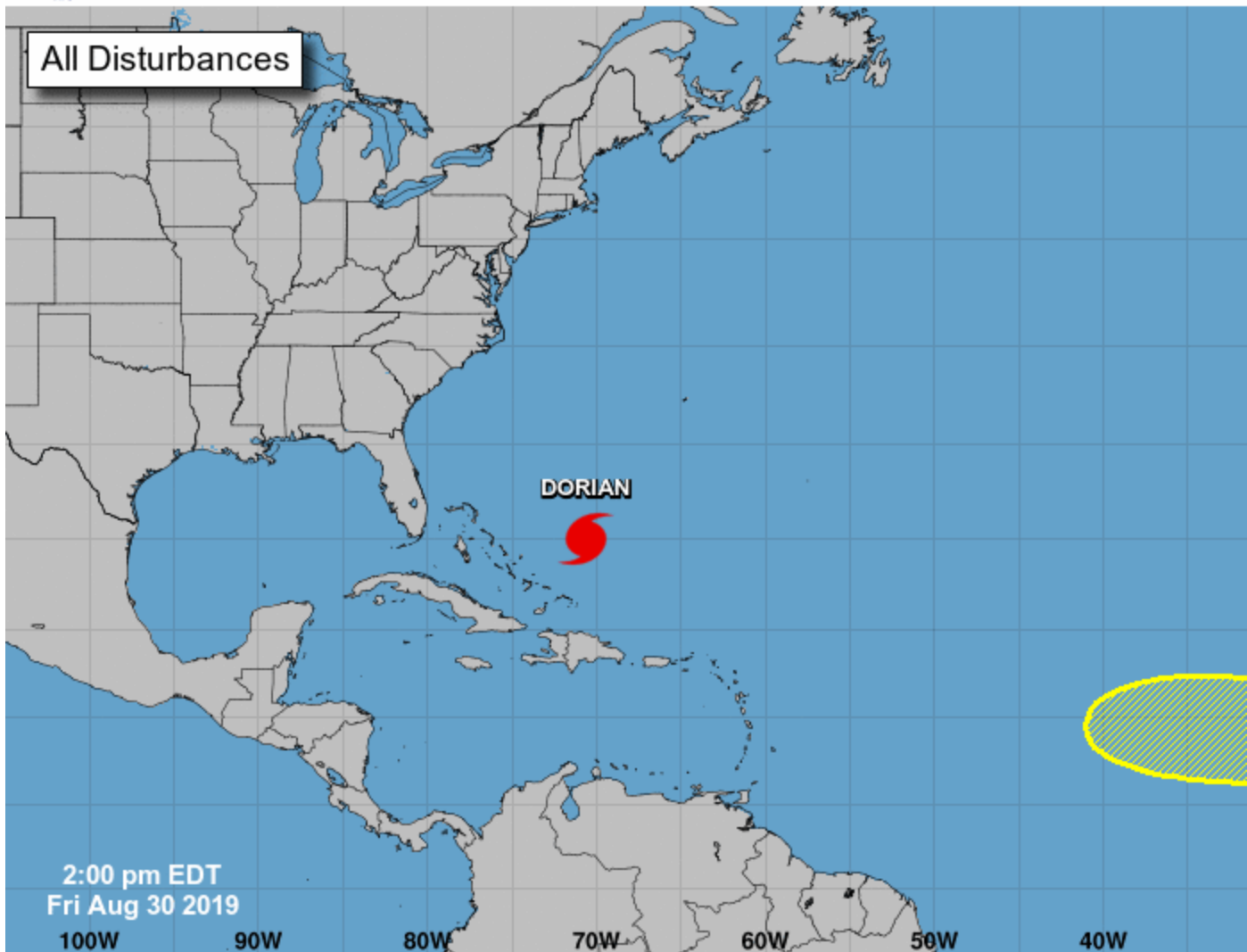
A tropical wave is located about 300 miles east-southeast of the Cabo Verde Islands. Some development of this system is possible early next week over the eastern and central tropical Atlantic as it moves west-northwestward at 10 to 15 mph.

- * Formation chance through 48 hours...low...near 0 percent.
- * Formation chance through 5 days...low...30 percent.

\$\$
Forecaster Roberts



Five-Day Graphical Tropical Weather Outlook National Hurricane Center Miami, Florida



Current Disturbances and Five-Day Cyclone Formation Chance: < 40% 40-60%
Tropical or Sub-Tropical Cyclone: Depression Storm Hurricane
 Post-Tropical Cyclone or Remnants

