

Official: 1,500 Of Russia's North Caucasus People Fight In Iraq, Syria

BY VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV
Associated Press

MOSCOW — A senior Russian official says about 1,500 residents of Russia's North Caucasus are fighting alongside Islamic State militants in Syria and Iraq.

Sergei Melikov, President Vladimir Putin's envoy to the North Caucasus, says at least five militants who came back after fighting in Syria were killed in security sweeps last year.

Melikov said Thursday the Islamic State group poses a "very serious threat" to the North Caucasus, Russian news agencies reported. He said efforts are needed to prevent young people from joining the ranks of militants.

Melikov's comment echoed Putin's speech to senior officials of the Federal Security Service, the main KGB successor agency, in which he said one of its top priorities should be tracking Russian citizens who have

From Russia to the Islamic State

A senior Russian official reported that about 1,500 residents of Russia's North Caucasus are traveling to Syria and Iraq to fight alongside Islamic State militants



left to fight alongside the Islamic State group.

"It's important to take additional measures to cut international links and resource base of the terror-

ists, block avenues for their entry and exit from Russia," Putin said Thursday.

Chechnya has become more stable under the watch of Kremlin-backed strong-

man Ramzan Kadyrov following two separatist wars, but its Islamist insurgency has engulfed other North Caucasus provinces.

Melikov singled out Dagestan, a province between Chechnya and the Caspian Sea, as the most volatile spot, adding that Islamic State group recruiters are likely active in Dagestan's religious schools.

An online guide written by a man calling himself Mukhammad Abu Barud al-Dagestani has offered advice for those eager to join the Islamic State group. The guide, available on the Russian social network VKontakte, suggests that militants travel through Turkey to Syria and provides tips such as how to answer Russian officials' questions while crossing the border. It also suggests the newcomers sell their belongings and bring as much money as they can on their "final voyage."

Yellen: A Gradual Rate Increase May Become Warranted Later This Year

BY MARTIN CRUTSINGER
AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON — Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen said Friday that continued improvement in the U.S. economy means an increase in the Fed's key interest rate could come later this year.

But Yellen stressed that any rate increases would likely be very gradual.

The Fed has kept its benchmark rate at a record low near zero for more than six years. Yellen said in a speech in San Francisco that the time to start raising the rate could occur "sometime this year," though she said the time hasn't yet arrived.

In her speech, Yellen said that the Fed's first move would depend on how the economy performs. She said that when the Fed does start raising rates, policymakers expect the increases to be "rather gradual" for the next

few years.

Yellen said Japan's experience over the past 20 years argues for a cautious approach. Over that time, Japan has struggled with anemic economic growth as well as deflation — a period of falling prices that's been hard for its policymakers to overcome.

Yellen said a key reason for a gradual approach to higher rates is that the danger of raising them too fast is greater than the risk of doing so too slowly. If the Fed were to tighten loan rates too quickly, the economy could stall and, with rates still relatively low, the Fed would have little room to cut them.

But she did say that taking a "gradualist approach" to raising rates carries its own risks. One is the possibility that it might undermine the Fed's credibility as an inflation fighter and could risk instability in financial markets by allowing an excessive buildup in borrowing.

"At this point, the evidence indicates that such vulnerabilities do not pose a significant threat, but the (Fed) is carefully monitoring developments in this area," she said.

Yellen's comments offered an elaboration on signals the Fed sent after its latest policy meeting last week. It said then that it was content to move slowly to raise rates because it wanted to see further improvement in the job market and an increase in inflation levels.

Inflation recently has fallen further below the Fed's 2 percent target for annual price increases.

On Monday, Fed Vice Chairman Stanley Fischer said in a speech in New York that he expected the central bank to start raising rates sometime this year.

Both Yellen and Fischer stressed the Fed's expectation that rate hikes would be incremental and that the

Fed's action would depend on how the economy performs.

Paul Ashworth, chief U.S. economist at Capital Economics, said Yellen's remarks didn't alter his view that the Fed will start raising rates in June, though many other economists foresee no increase before September.

"We still think that sizeable gains in payrolls over the next few months will prompt the Fed to start raising rates in June," Ashworth said.

He predicted that while rate hikes this year would be gradual, the increases would pick up in 2016 as the Fed responds to stronger wage growth and higher inflation.

In its policy statement last week, the Fed said it wouldn't be appropriate to start raising rates until the job market improved further and Fed officials were "reasonably confident" inflation would return to their 2 percent target.

History

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At first, the plan was to add on to the new fire station during construction, but budgetary concerns prevented it.

"We originally thought we'd like to put an addition on the new station for that — it was actually drawn up when we did the station — but we were afraid we were going to be over budget, and it turns out we weren't," he said. "If we'd have done it then, we probably could've done it for \$60,000. Now it would cost us \$160,000."

As a result of the increased costs of an addition, the department is opting to build a separate structure for the memorabilia.

"The next step was to go to what was a 30 X 30 building to the east of the new fire station off the lot to display these two trucks," he said.



Nickles

"We changed our plan a bit and went to a 30X40 (building) because the Territorial Museum has a vintage hose cart that's been restored and a few other items and they'll be given to us on loan."

The building will have a glass front that will allow passersby to see the trucks. The display will be illuminated at night.

Nickles added the museum will also make provisions to display a piece of firefighting memorabilia from outside of Yankton.

"We were one of the few departments in South Dakota to secure a chunk of the steel from the World Trade Center," he said. "Right now, it's in our lobby and not a lot of people get to see it."

A special display will be built for the piece that will

also include a memorial to the first responders killed on 9/11.

Nickles said other memorabilia will also be included in the museum.

"We've got photographs that are put away in boxes that really need to be out," he said. "The photographs will be on display in this museum (along with) some old pieces of equipment we have all the way up to updated equipment."

He added this is an opportunity for people to learn something about the history of fire safety as well as the department's past.

"It's a learning (experience) that we hope to get out of this — not only to display our antique equipment (but also) to show people what it was like at the turn of the century: This is where we're at now and this is what it's taken to protect our community," he said. "Hopefully some of it will reflect some of our code changes. There's certain events — not so

much in Yankton — in different parts of the United states, significant fires, that have addressed the codes today that we live by."

The plan is to have the museum open by Fire Prevention Week in October. Estimates on the project cost are between \$25,000-\$30,000, with \$14,000 raised so far and \$10,000 in kind.

Anyone with questions on the project or who would like to donate to the museum is encouraged to contact Nickles at 605-668-5228.

You can follow Rob Nielsen on Twitter at twitter.com/RobNielsenPandD/. Discuss this story at www.yankton.net/.

Men Forced To Fish Are Now Stranded

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — The number of foreign fishermen stranded on several remote eastern Indonesian islands has spiraled to 4,000, including some revealed in an Associated Press investigation to have been enslaved.

Many are migrant workers abandoned by their boat captains after the Indonesian government passed a moratorium on foreign fishing five months ago, according to the International Organization for Migration in Indonesia, which released the number Friday. However, others have been trapped on the islands for years, after being dumped by fishing boats or escaping into the jungle.

"This is the worst moment in our life right now," one former slave told the AP, which is not releasing the names of the men for their safety. "It is even worse than being in hell. We have to work every day to survive. ... There is no hope for us anymore."

The AP reported earlier this week that slaves — some of them beaten and locked in cages — are forced to fish, and their catch ends up in the supply chains of American supermarkets and restaurants. The IOM said Friday that the report follows several years of close work with Indonesian authorities to rescue hundreds of fisherman identified as victims of trafficking in Indonesia.

However, for every man they've rescued, many more now need help. With the fishing ban, boats have docked or fled, ditching their crews.

Sen. Harry Reid Says He's Retiring

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid, a pugnacious and glamour-averse tactician who united Democrats to help deliver tough victories for President Barack Obama, said Friday he's retiring next year. He immediately endorsed brash New York Sen. Chuck Schumer to succeed him as leader of a party desperate to regain the Senate majority.

Reid, 75, rose from hardscrabble beginnings in Nevada, and brought his amateur boxer's tenacity to the pinnacle of congressional politics.

Friends said his doggedness and indifference to popularity helped rebuff Republicans who fiercely oppose Obama on health care, spending, immigration and other issues. But critics say Reid added to Washington's poisonous partisanship, particularly by changing Senate filibuster rules in 2013 to enable Obama to appoint more judges.

On Friday, Schumer seized the inside track to succeed Reid as the Democratic Senate leader after next year's elections. Potential rival Dick Durbin of Illinois said he would back Schumer. Durbin is currently Reid's No. 2; Schumer is No. 3.

Stylistically, Reid and Schumer are miles apart. Schumer is voluble, outgoing, eager to talk campaign strategy, on TV or anywhere else. He sometimes works with Republicans, including an ultimately unsuccessful effort to overhaul immigration laws in 2013.

Project

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Thursday, Wenande told the *Press and Dakotan* that the new stations will add an addition 60MW of capacity to the community.

"We will be effectively almost doubling the capacity of our service in the area," he said. "In addition, we will be going from one substation to two, adding a layer of reliability to the system. This way, if something were to happen to either substation, we would have the redundancy to be able to continue providing uninterrupted service."

He noted that the new substation is being designed with the long-term goal of accommodating additional natural-gas fired generation at the Whiting Drive location.

"This has been a long process," Wenande said. "We studied the situation for several years and then, three years ago, we got the go-ahead to move on the project. After receiving final permitting approval from the city and county in the summer of 2014, construction began last fall."

Information provided Wenande said the new transmission switchyard near Napa Junction will connect to NorthWestern's existing 115kV transmission line which runs from the Yankton Junction substation to the Utica Junction substation near Lesterville. From Napa Junction, the new nearly 11-mile-long 115kV transmission line will tie into the existing Yankton generating plant.

The new substation will be tied in with existing infrastructure.

When asked if the new infrastructure will increase rates for the area, Wenande said rates have been impacted more by significant upgrades to the company's three generator plants across the region.

"We see on average 1 to 1.5 percent growth (in usage) in the Yankton area per year," Wenande said. "If a new company were to come into town, we could see an increase by as much as 3 percent. At that rate, we would have maxed out our capacity very quickly. This is something that had to be done."

Wenande added that the majority of the initial work has been contracted out to outside providers, but once the main structures are in place, the final installation will be completed by local employees.

Currently, out of the Yankton NorthWestern Energy location, there are seven linemen and three service techs for the Yankton area and an additional seven service men that focus on the outlying communities. There are a total of 22 employees based out of the Yankton office.

Wenande noted that customers will not see any interruption in service when the NorthWestern Energy brings the new infrastructure online.

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