

## **US sends B-52 to bomb on Daesh near Mosul**

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A B-52 bomber from North Dakota does a flyby for the Centennial anniversary of the creation of the La Fayette Escadrille at the Escadrille Memorial in Marnes-la-Coquette. Photo: AFP.

The UN began evacuating hundreds of people from besieged Syrian towns in a rare sign of humanitarian progress, as the US Air Force for the first time deployed a B-52 bomber against Islamic State.

In Geneva, where UN-brokered peace talks have faltered as a fragile ceasefire has come under strain, the Syrian governments aid it was pushing on with indirect negotiations, calling the opposition's freeze on taking part "absurd theatre".

The High Negotiations Committee this week suspended its participation in the talks, which do not include either Islamic State or al-Qa'ida's offshoot Jabhat al-Nusra, until it could see progress on political transition and humanitarian issues.

On the ground, the UN secured the evacuation of dozens of people needing medical attention from the besieged rebel-held towns of Zabadani and Madaya near Damascus and the government-held towns of Fuaa and Kafraya in northwest Idlib province, as part of a complex humanitarian mission, while the US-led coalition upped the ante on the battlefield.

Washington sent in a B-52 bomber to destroy a weapons storage facility south of Mosul, the Pentagon said, days after Defense Secretary Ashton Carter announced extra US troops, cash and equipment for the anti-Islamic State campaign in Iraq. In other signs of increasing tempo, US commandos working with Kurdish troops conducted a raid targeting a senior Daesh figure.