

Belgium Largest Source of European Fighters in Syria Per Head: Study

AMSTERDAM - French, Germans and Britons make up the highest number of foreign fighters in the Syrian rebel ranks from European countries, but Belgium is the largest contributor in proportion to its population, a Dutch study shows. Europeans fighting alongside Islamist groups in Syria and Iraq have been high on the agenda of European security concerns for several years. Returned volunteers have been involved in attacks in Paris and Brussels over the past 18



months, including last month's bomb blasts in the Belgian capital. The study, prepared by the Hague-based International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, said European Union countries should not be complacent about their citizens leaving to fight in the Middle East, even those that have seen little such movement. "Many terrorist organizations aim to undermine tolerant and pluriform, rule-of-law based societies," the researchers wrote. (Reuters)

Australia Signs Nuclear Cooperation Agreement with Ukraine

CANBERRA - Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs Julie Bishop announced on Friday that her government has signed a Nuclear Cooperation Agreement with Ukraine, enabling Australia to export uranium to Ukraine. Ukraine is one of the world's top 10 generators of nuclear power. Bishop said in a statement issued by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade that all exports of Australian uranium will be subject to internationally agreed security standards and will be strictly controlled to ensure Aus-

tralian nuclear material is only used for peaceful purposes. Bishop signed the agreement with Ukrainian Energy and Coal Industry Minister Volodymyr Demchysyn during the nuclear security summit in the United States. Under the Agreement, the use of Australian nuclear material for the development of weapons or explosive devices is strictly prohibited. "This agreement provides Ukraine with the opportunity to diversify its energy supply and will enhance bilateral cooperation between Australia ... (More on P4)...(25)

Russia's Absence at NSS Due to Absence of Equal Right Guarantee: FM

MOSCOW - Russia refused to participate in the fourth Nuclear Security Summit (NSS) in Washington because of absence of equal right guarantee to its participants, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Friday. "We have repeatedly explained both in written and in an oral form that we will be ready to participate only in events which would imply collective and equal work, including collective discussion and coordination of the final documents," Lavrov said.

"Secondly, (the United States made) an attempt to substitute the United Nations, Interpol and the International Atomic Energy Agency by itself," Lavrov told a joint press conference with his visiting Serbian counterpart Ivica Dacic. Moscow earlier stressed that such gatherings should be convened under the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) framework. Currently the United States was trying to deceive the world public saying Rus-



sia's refusal to participate in the summit took them by surprise, Lavrov said. He added that Russia had explained its position to U.S. partners many times since the idea to organize

this event emerged a year and a half ago. Lavrov said he respected the decision of other countries to accept the invitation and participate in the forum. (Xinhua)

EU Adds three People to Sanctions List Against Libya

BRUSSELS - The Council of the European Union added three names to the list of people subject to EU restrictive measures against Libya on Friday. The Council said in a statement the three names are respectively Agila Saleh, president of the Libyan Council of Deputies in the House of Representatives; Khalifa Ghweil, prime minister and defence minister of the General National Congress; and Nuri Abu Sahmain, president of the General National Congress. They are viewed as ob-

structing the implementation of the Libyan Political Agreement of December 17, 2015 and the formation of a Government of National Accord in Libya. The Council said it remains concerned about the situation in Libya, in particular about acts that threaten peace, security or stability of the country, and that impede or undermine the successful completion of Libya's political transition. On March 16 last year, the Council recalled that only a political solution can provide a sustainable way forward and contribute



to peace and stability in Libya. It urged against actions that could exacerbate current divisions. The legal acts adding the three names were pub-

lished in the Official Journal on Friday. The Council will keep these measures under regular review in light of developments on the ground. (Xinhua)

North Korea to Pursue Nuclear and Missile Programs: Envoy

GENEVA - North Korea will pursue its nuclear and ballistic missile program in defiance of the United States and its allies, a top Pyongyang envoy said on Friday, adding that a state of "semi-war" now existed on the divided Korean peninsula. So Se Pyong, North Korea's ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva, denounced the huge joint U.S.-South Korean military exercises taking place

which he said were aimed at "decapitation of the supreme leadership of the DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea)" and conquering Pyongyang. North Korea conducted a fourth nuclear test in January and launched a long-range rocket in February. The South Korean military said on Friday that North Korea had fired a missile into the sea off its east coast. (Reuters)

Turkey PM in Defiant Visit to Diyarbakir after Attack

DIYARBAKIR - Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu on Friday made a rare visit to the Kurdish-dominated city of Diyarbakir, declaring he was "not scared" after an attack by rebels that killed seven police. The car bomb attack on a police bus in Diyarbakir Thursday -- which underlined the precarious security situation in the main city in Turkey's southeast -- was claimed by the military wing of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). Turkish security forces have since the summer waged a relentless campaign to drive PKK militants out of urban centres in the southeast, leading to ferocious clashes that show no sign of abating. Davutoglu began his visit -- which took place under heavy security -- by attending a funeral ceremony for the police killed. In a symbolic move, he then took part in Friday prayers outside the Great Mosque in the central Sur district. (AFP)

Norway, U.S. Sign MoU on Nuclear Non-Proliferation Cooperation

OSLO - Norway said on Friday it had signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the United States on nuclear non-proliferation cooperation and nuclear security. The agreement, which was signed on Thursday in Washington D.C., on the margins of the Nuclear Security Summit, is designed to make it easier to identify, secure and remove nuclear material and to counter illicit trafficking across national borders, the Norwegian government said in a statement. "Norway and the United States have a long history

of cooperating on nuclear non-proliferation. The memorandum of understanding ... will in practice strengthen ongoing Norwegian efforts to assist Ukraine in securing its radioactive material and preventing it from falling into the wrong hands," Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg was quoted as saying. "It is in Norway's interest to provide assistance to Ukraine, together with our close allies," she added. The new MoU will further strengthen Norway's close cooperation with the United States and supplement the 2014



MoU entered into with the U.S. Department of Energy, according to the statement. In addition to joint projects with the United States, Norway is participating in several large-scale nuclear safety ... (More on P4)...(26)

US Navy Increases Order for Australian Designed Combat Vessel

SYDNEY - The U.S. Navy has increased their order for a Littoral Combat Ship from Australian maritime defence manufacturer Austal Ltd. in a deal worth up to 564 million U.S. dollars. Perth-based Austal on Friday said the U.S. Navy had ordered an additional Littoral Combat Ship, increasing its LCS orders to 11 from the original 10 contracted in 2010, taking the total value to 3 billion U.S. dollars and securing construction at its U.S. shipyard until 2021. ... (More on P4)...(27)

Trapped Civilians Stall Iraqi Forces Battling IS in Anbar

BAGHDAD - Tens of thousands of trapped Iraqi civilians have stalled the government's advance in the battle against the Islamic State group in the western Anbar province, the spokesman for Iraq's elite counterterrorism said Friday. The civilians are trapped between the Iraqi forces' lines and the IS extremists hunkered down in the center of the town of Hit, 85 miles (140 kilometers) west of Baghdad, the official told The Associated Press. Meanwhile, IS claimed responsibility for two suicide car bombings that killed ... (More on P4)...(28)

170,000 Migrants have Entered Europe via SeaRoutes: IOM

GENEVA - The International Organization for Migration (IOM) said Friday that nearly 170,000 migrants and refugees have entered Europe along sea-borne routes in the first three months of 2016. The organization pointed out it was more than eight times the number recorded during the first three months last year. According to IOM reports, 169,060 migrants and refugees had entered Europe by sea as of March 30, and this includes 150,703 via the Eastern Mediterranean (Turkey to Greece) and 18,357 via the Central Mediterranean (North Africa to Italy). IOM reports also showed that there have been 620 deaths at sea so far in 2016, compared with 505 through this period last year, an increase of 23 percent. In 2015, a record 1 million migrants and refugees crossed the Mediterranean to reach Europe. (Xinhua)

France Asks for U.N. Burundi Vote, U.S. Support Unclear: Diplomats

UNITED NATIONS - The United Nations Security Council could vote as early as Friday on a French-drafted resolution that would request options for a U.N. police deployment to Burundi, diplomats said, but it was not clear if it had the support of the United States. Council diplomats said on condition of anonymity that the United States, which has veto power as a permanent member of the council, was unhappy with vague language that asks the U.N. to work with the government of Burundi in the areas of disarmament, security and rule of law. The United States is concerned about linking the United Nations efforts to broker peace in Burundi with the country's security forces, who have been accused of human rights abuses, one council diplomat said. The United Nations said in January it has documented cases of Burundi's security forces gang-raping women during searches of opposition supporters' houses ... (More on P4)...(29)

Neighbor News

Iran, Austria Sign Major Basic Deal



TEHRAN - Iran says it has signed a basic agreement with Austria to promote mutual cooperation with the country in multiple industrial fields. The agreement that has been reportedly signed on Thursday between the chambers of commerce of the two countries could have a collected value of above \$2 billion. It comprises eight documents that envisage broader cooperation in several areas including the automobile sector, the steel industry, the pharmaceutical field and the engineering services, IRNA reported. The current level of trade

between Iran and Austria stands at around \$300 million. Officials from both countries announced last year that a serious plan has been devised to boost mutual trade to as high as \$1 billion before 2020. Austria's President Heinz Fischer visited Iran last September for three days at the head of a 240-member delegation to discuss ways to further expand Tehran-Vienna relations. Fischer expected to host Iran's President Hassan Rouhani this past week, but the trip was postponed by Tehran. (PressTV)

U.S. Embassy Trains Tajikistan's Law Enforcement Officers

DUSHANBE - Twenty participants from Tajikistan's Committee of Emergency Situation and Civil Defense graduated from the course on Chemical, Biological, Radiological, or Nuclear-First Responder Operations sponsored by U.S. Embassy Dushanbe's Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA) program. According to the U.S. Embassy in Dushanbe, the Chemical, Biological, Radiological, or Nuclear-First Responder Operations course focused on developing skills and knowledge that enable the participants to

enhance the capability of operational responders for incidents involving chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear materials. The course is the first ATA course in 2016 for Tajikistan's law enforcement agencies sponsored by Diplomatic Security's ATA Office and facilitated by Embassy Dushanbe's Regional Security Office. The ATA programs adhere to the "train-the-trainer" methodology, which amplifies the number of officers able to gain skills from the trainings sponsored by the Embassy. (Asia-Plus)

Pakistan Sees 40 Percent Drop in Violence

ISLAMABAD - A leading rights group in Pakistan says deaths due to violence-related incidents, including bombings and other militant attacks in the country, fell 40 percent in 2016. In its annual report released Friday, the independent Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) docu-

mented 4,612 deaths compared to 7,622 fatalities in the previous year. The findings support official claims of a reduction in casualties because of successes in the army's counter-militancy operations against bases of the anti-state Pakistani Taliban near the Afghan border. (Agencies)

Xi Calls for Closer Global Nuclear Security Cooperation in New Circumstances

WASHINGTON - Chinese President Xi Jinping said here Thursday that his country stands ready to strengthen international cooperation on nuclear security under the current new circumstances. Xi, who is in Washington for the fourth Nuclear Security Summit (NSS), made the remarks at a dinner hosted by U.S. President Barack Obama at the White House and themed "Nuclear Security Threat Perceptions." Speaking first after Obama's welcome speech, Xi pointed out that in order to strengthen the global nuclear security architecture, the international community should first grasp the two new characteristics of the current situation.

The first is that terrorist activities around the world have entered a new active phase in which nuclear terrorism has become too serious to be ignored and the risk of nuclear material proliferation is on the rise, he said. The second feature, he added, is that thanks to the six-year-old NSS process, the global line of defense for nuclear security has grown solid with broader international consensus, stronger sense of responsibility on the part of national governments, more effective laws and mechanisms, deeper cooperation in capacity-building and law enforcement, and wider awareness of the nuclear security culture. (Xinhua)