

# U.S. Remains World's Biggest Military Spender in 2015: Research Institute

STOCKHOLM - The United States remained "by far the world's biggest spender" on military in 2015, according to a report released on Tuesday by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). According to the report, despite falling by 2.4 percent, a much slower rate of decline than in recent years, U.S. military spending was the highest globally at 596 billion U.S. dollars in 2015. The report pointed out that such a slower rate of decline was "the result of measures passed by the U.S. Congress to partially



protect military spending from previously agreed budget deficit-reduction measures", and said that

"U.S. military spending is projected to remain roughly level in real terms in 2016." Military spend-

ing in North America and Western Europe has been decreasing since 2009, largely as a result of the

global economic crisis, as well as the withdrawal of most U.S. and allied troops from Afghanistan

and Iraq. "There were signs in 2015, however, that this decline was coming to an end," according to the report. Meanwhile, "Western European expenditure was down 1.3 percent but this was the lowest rate of annual decline since the start of the recent fall in spending, which began in 2010." Britain, France and Germany have all announced plans for modest spending increases in the coming years "sparked by concerns about Russia and the threat posed by the Islamic State", according to the report. (Xinhua)

## European Leaders Worried about Refugee Children

SOFIA - European leaders here on Tuesday during a high-level conference expressed concern about the protection of refugee children, especially those who are not accompanied by their parents. The record number of crises worldwide and their interaction make international environment insecure and more unpredictable, and children pay the heaviest price, Bulgarian President Rosen Plevneliev said while addressing the conference dur-

ing which the Council of Europe launched its new Strategy for the Rights of the Child for 2016-2021. "Despite our efforts, despite the results achieved, we continue to witness daily violations of children's rights. Migrant children and unaccompanied children today are particularly vulnerable to violence," Plevneliev said before the eyes of more than 300 participants from the Council of Europe member states, including his Maltese



counterpart Marie-Louise ColeiroPreca and 16 ministers. Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe Gabriella Battaini-

Dragoni said "Let me stress the urgency with which Europe's governments must now act to protect the many refuge-

## Moscow Blasts Washington for Blocking Nuclear Disarmament

MOSCOW - Russia on Tuesday criticized the United States for blocking the process of nuclear disarmament and accelerating its military buildup near Russia. "We note with regret that the lack of progress on nuclear disarmament is the result of a destructive and even openly hostile line of the Obama administration with regard to Russia," Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said. Promoting the disarm-

ment process has been hindered by reinforced U.S. military buildup near Russian borders, including the deployment of a missile defense system in Eastern Europe, she added. The current U.S. administration has launched the most ambitious modernization of the country's nuclear arsenal since the end of the Cold War with estimated costs of around 350 billion U.S. dollars over the next 10 years, said the spokeswoman. ... (More on P4)... (20)

## Kyrgyzstan Offers Political Assistance in Resolving Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict

BISHKEK - Kyrgyzstan is concerned about the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh and is ready to offer political assistance in achieving peace in the region, the Kyrgyz Foreign Ministry said Tuesday. "Kyrgyzstan is deeply concerned about the aggravation of the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh on the night of April 2, 2016, which led to the bloodshed, suffering and loss of human life," a statement issued by the Kyrgyz Foreign Ministry said. The statement calls on both parties to "sit down imme-

diately at the negotiating table to resolve the conflict, regulate and de-escalate the conflict by peaceful and diplomatic measures on the basis of generally accepted principles and norms of international law." Kyrgyzstan stands ready to provide political assistance in reaching a settlement of the conflict, based on its experience of initiating the Bishkek Protocol, which was signed in the country's capital in 1994 for enforcing a ceasefire between Armenia and Azer... (More on P4)... (21)

## Armenia, Azerbaijan Confirm Ceasefire Agreement in Nagorno-Karabakh

YEREVAN/BAKU - The Armenian and Azerbaijani Defense Ministries both confirmed Tuesday that a ceasefire agreement in the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region is currently being prepared. Military operations have been suspended on the contact line between Azerbaijani and Armenian armed forces since Tuesday noon local time (0800 GMT) with the consent of both parties, the Azerbaijani Defense Ministry said in a statement.



Meanwhile, Armenian television reported that "the ceasefire is observed for several hours." Hostilities between Armenia and Azerbaijan

on the contact line of the mountainous Nagorno-Karabakh region flared up overnight Saturday with the two countries blaming each other for

triggering the escalation. The Azerbaijani Defense Ministry said its forces have killed 70 Armenian soldiers and destroyed ... (More on P4)... (22)

## Over 172,000 Migrants Reach EU by Sea in 2016

GENEVA - The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) said Tuesday that 172,089 refugees and migrants have reached Europe by sea since the beginning of the year while 714 individuals have died attempting to do so. Figures show that 152,137 of these entries have been recorded in Greece. Almost 50 percent of those reaching the country this year are from Syria, while around 25 percent are Afghans. The remaining arrivals have been recorded in Italy (19,287), Spain (638), and Cyprus (27). While 366 refugees have lost their lives attempting to cross the eastern Mediterranean route separating Turkey and Greece, IOM indicated in a statement that there have been "no deaths on the Eastern Mediterranean since the start of implementation last week of a new migrant agreement between Turkey and the European Union that allows for repatriation of those arriving on the Greek islands." In compliance with the new agreement, 202 people were repatriated to ... (More on P4)... (24)

## Syrian Refugee to be Among Torchbearers of Olympic Flame for Rio 2016 Games

ATHENS - A Syrian refugee who has requested asylum in Greece is to be among the torch bearers of the Olympic Flame that will be burning for the 2016 Rio Olympic Games, the president of the Hellenic Olympic Committee (HOC) Spyros Capralos said here on Tuesday. The announcement was made during a press conference at the Panathinaic Stadium in central Athens on the lighting and hand over ceremonies of the flame scheduled for April 21 in Olympia, the birthplace of the Olymp-



pics, and the Greek capital on April 27. Capralos did not elaborate on the identity of the man, as more details will be announced later this month. However, he underlined that under an initiative

of HOC which was welcomed by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and UNHCR, the Olympic Flame would pass through a refugee camp in Athens before ... (More on P4)... (23)

## 1st S-300 Shipment to Head to Iran in Coming Days: Russia Official

TEHRAN - A senior Russian official says Moscow is to deliver the first shipment of its S-300 air defense systems to Iran in the coming days as part of a long-running contract between Tehran and Moscow. "I don't know if this will happen today, but they (the consignments) will be loaded [for shipment to Iran]," Zamir-Kabulov, a department chief at the Russian Foreign Ministry, was quoted by Russia's Interfax news agency as saying on Tuesday. In mid-February, the official had said that Moscow would deliver the surface-to-air missile ... (More on P4)... (25)

## US Law to Recognise India as Partner with Equal Status

WASHINGTON - The Obama administration was working with Congress for passing a law that would recognise India as a major partner of equal status, a senior Pentagon official said on Monday. Also on Monday, India objected to US President Barack Obama's statement during a nuclear summit in Washington last week, urging both India and Pakistan to stop moving in the wrong direction. Indian officials said that Mr Obama's "lack of understanding" caused him to club India's nuclear programme with Pakistan's. Duncan M. Lang, who heads the India Rapid Reaction Cell (IRRC) in the Pentagon, ... (More on P4)... (26)

## Turkey on Manhunt for IS Suspects, Offers \$14 Mln Rewards

ANKARA - Turkey on Tuesday offered over 14 million U.S. dollars for any information leading to the arrest of 23 Islamic State (IS) suspects wanted over attacks in the country. The IS suspects are involved in suicide bombing attacks in Turkey's capital Ankara, Istanbul and Suruc town in Sanliurfa province this year and the

last, according to the anti-terrorism branch of Turkey's Interior Ministry. Three militants, namely Ihami Bali, Mustafa Dokumaci and YunusDurmaz, are on the red list with 1.4 million dollars offered for each, according to the ministry's website. The remaining 20 are on the blue list, which includes five women, two of them foreigners. (Xinhua)

## North Korea can Put Nuclear Warhead on Mid-Range Missile: South

SEOUL - North Korea can mount a nuclear warhead on a medium-range missile, a South Korean official said on Tuesday in a new assessment of the capability of a country that conducted its fourth nuclear test this year. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said last month his country had miniaturized nuclear warheads to mount on ballistic missiles. It was his first direct statement of a claim often made in state media though never independently verified. [nL4N16G5IY] "We believe they have accomplished miniaturization of a nuclear warhead to

mount it on a Rodong missile," the South Korean official, with knowledge of South Korea's assessment of the North's nuclear program, told a small group of reporters on condition of anonymity. The Rodong missile can fire a 1 tonne (1,100 lb) warhead a distance of up to 2,000 km (1,250 miles), the official said. That would put all of South Korea, most of Japan and parts of Russia and China in range. "We believe they have the ability to mount a nuclear warhead on a Rodong. Whether they will fire it like that is a political decision," said the official. (Reuters)

## Nieghbor News

### US Navy Orders Nine Ah-1z Viper Attack Helicopters for Pakistan

WASHINGTON - The United States (US) Navy awarded a \$170 million contract for the manufacture of nine AH-1Z Viper Attack Helicopters to Bell Helicopter, the US Department of Defense said in a statement on Monday. The combat helicopters will be manufactured and delivered to Pakistan under the Foreign Military Sales Program, the statement said. The Bell AH-1Z Viper is a twin-engine combat chopper based on the previous SuperCobra model developed for the US Marine Corps, Sputnik reported. It has a top

speed of 420 kilometres per hour and a range of 610km. The contract awarded "for the manufacture and delivery of nine AH-1Z aircraft and nine auxiliary fuel kits for the government of Pakistan" is "expected to be completed in September 2018". "Foreign military sales funds in the amount of \$170,173,188 will be obligated at time of award," the Defense Department statement says, adding that the Naval Air Systems Command is contracting the activity for the Pakistani government. (Agencies)

### Iran FM Urges Sustainable Peace in Karabakh

TEHRAN - Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad JavadZarif has called for the settlement of fierce conflict between Armenia-backed and Azerbaijani forces, saying sustainable peace must be established in the disputed border region of Karabakh. Zarif was speaking in a meeting with his Azeri counterpart ElmarMamadyarov in the northern Iranian city of Ramsar on Tuesday ahead of the fourth session of trilateral talks with Turkish Foreign Minister MevlutCavusoglu. "Given prevailing problems and crises in the region, all-out efforts

should be made so that we will never witness the escalation of any new problem and crisis," the Iranian minister said. The Iranian and Azeri foreign ministers discussed the latest developments in the region and ways to promote Tehran-Baku relations. Zarif also held a separate meeting with Turkish Foreign Minister MevlutCavusoglu on Tuesday. In a telephone conversation with his Armenian counterpart Edward Nalbandian earlier on Tuesday, Zarif expressed Iran's readiness to help restore calm to the Karabakh region. (PressTV)

### China Pledges to Perform Role well as Security Council Presidency

BEIJING - China pledged to perform its role well in holding the rotating presidency of the United Nations Security Council for April, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hong Lei said on Tuesday. "As a permanent member of the Security Council, China supports the Council, as an international collective security mechanism, to play its key role in ending war and keeping peace," Hong said at a regular news briefing. China will stay in close communication and coordination with Security Council members for a more efficient, transparent and open process, Hong said. The Security Council will hold about 30 meetings on hotspot issues related

to Syria, Yemen, Israel and Palestine, South Sudan and Somalia. It will have three open debates on the Palestine-Israel issue, counter-terrorism and piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. "The debates aim to concentrate international consensus, advance the Middle East peace process, curb terrorist threats and tackle challenges from pirates," Hong said. Under the UN Charter, the 15-member Security Council has the primary responsibility in maintaining world peace and security. The presidency of the UN Security Council rotates among its 15 member states on a monthly basis based on country names in alphabetical order. (Xinhua)

### Turkmenistan Signs Framework Partnership Program With UN Until 2020

BISHKEK - The Framework Partnership Program between Turkmenistan and the United Nations until 2020 has been signed at the Foreign Ministry of Turkmenistan. The document was prepared with participation of experts of government agencies,

non-governmental organizations, UN agencies in Ashgabat. The document is targeted at achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. It fully corresponds to the country's National Socio-Economic Development ... (More on P4)... (27)

### WB Provides \$10 Million to Support Strengthening of Property Market in Tajikistan

DUSHANBE - The World Bank Board of Executive Directors approved the financing of US\$10 million from the International Development Association for the Tajikistan Real Estate Registration Project, which will support the

implementation of a unified registration system for immovable property, which should contribute toward the development of property market in Tajikistan, the World Bank Country Office for Tajikistan said. "The World ... (More on P4)... (28)