

Trump Says Missile Strikes Against Syria in U.S. "Vital Interest"

PALM BEACH, United States - U.S. President Donald Trump said Thursday he had ordered targeted missile strikes at a Syrian military airfield and called the strikes in the nation's "vital interest."

Speaking to reporters at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida, Trump said the Syrian government "ignored the urging of the UN Security Council." "The refugee crisis continues to deepen and the region continues to destabilize," said Trump.

According to local news reports, U.S. warships launched around 50 Tomahawk cruise missiles at a Syrian government airbase.

The United States believed



that Syrian planes based at the airbase carried out chemical attacks on Tuesday that killed over 70 people and wounded scores of others, most of whom civilians in Syria's northwestern province of Idlib.

Syria's Foreign Minister Walid al-Moallem said early on Thursday that the Syrian airstrike on a rebel-held town in Idlib struck a rebel depot containing chemical materials, denying that the air force fired toxic gas during the attack.

At a press conference held in response to the international accusation that Syria allegedly fired toxic gas in Idlib, al-Moallem said the reports are "lies." (Xinhua)

U.S. Missile Strikes Leave Huge Damages to Targeted Airbase in Central Syria

DAMASCUS - The U.S. missile strike that targeted a Syrian airbase in Homs province at dawn Friday left big damages, Homs governor Talal Barazi told Xinhua.

The governor said that rescue operations have started at the facility over an hour and a half ago. He added that he thinks there are no big number of casualties, but huge damage to the airbase.

The Barazi said the airbase is located east of Homs, and

was a key backer to the Syrian army in the war on the Islamic State (IS) group, noting that the airbase played a significant role in liberating the ancient city of Palmyra from IS.

At dawn Friday, the U.S. struck the Syrian airbase in Homs with tens of Tomahawk missiles, a Syrian military source told Xinhua.

The attack targeted the Shairat military base in ...*(More on P4)...(29)*

Russian Official Says U.S. Missile Strike in Syria Act of Aggression

MOSCOW - The U.S. missile strike in Syria can be regarded as an act of aggression, Victor Ozerov, chairman of the Russian Federation Council's Committee on Defense and Security said on Friday.

According to media reports, U.S. warships launched over 50 Tomahawk cruise missiles at a Syrian military airfield in the center province of Homs at dawn Friday. A monitor group said at least four Syrian soldiers have been killed.

U.S. President Donald Trump said earlier that he

had ordered the strikes and called the operations in the nation's "vital interest."

"Russia will first of all demand an urgent meeting of the UN Security Council," Ozerov was quoted as saying by the RIA Novosti news agency. Ozerov said that the U.S. missile strike will likely worsen the already clouded relations between Moscow and Washington and hurt bilateral military cooperation as the United States failed to communicate properly on the matter. (Xinhua)

May, Tusk Meet on Brexit, Talks Positive on Both Sides

LONDON - European Council President Donald Tusk met British Prime Minister Theresa May for Brexit talks on Thursday in London, with 10 Downing Street saying later that both leaders agreed the tone of discussions had been positive. The two agreed to try and remain in close contact as negotiations about Britain's departure from the EU progressed, said an official spokesperson for May.

It was the first time the two had met since May triggered the Article 50 process last week, setting in motion Britain's departure

from the European Union (EU) through an official letter delivered to Tusk on Britain's decision to leave the bloc.

Tusk smiled to waiting media as he left Number 10, but gave no comment about their private 90-minute meeting.

In a communique after the meeting, Downing Street said: "The PM reiterated the UK's desire to ensure a deep and special partnership with the EU following its exit and noted the constructive approach set out by the Council in its draft guidelines published last week." "She said the UK



looked forward to formally beginning negotiations once the 27 member states agreed guidelines."

The statement added that May also made it clear that on the subject of Gibraltar, Britain's position had not

changed. "The UK would seek the best possible deal for Gibraltar as the UK exits the EU and there would be no negotiation on the sovereignty of Gibraltar without the consent of its people," it said. (Xinhua)

UN Envoy for Syria Calls Urgent Meeting

BEIRUT - The U.N. envoy for Syria tells The Associated Press that his office is in "crisis management mode" following a U.S. strike on a Syrian air base. Staffan de Mistura said he was convening an "emergency meeting" later Friday of the International Syria Support Group's cease-fire task force. He said Russia requested the meeting, which was "agreed upon" by the United States.

The two countries are the co-chairs of the multi-country panel that meets regularly in Geneva. In a text message to the

AP, de Mistura said: "We currently are in full operational crisis management mode," without elaborating.

The acknowledgement marked the biggest sign yet that the first intentional U.S. military action against President Bashar Assad's forces could affect nearly three years of peace-making efforts by the U.N. envoy. Syria's Foreign Ministry is calling the chemical attack that killed scores in northern Syria a "premeditated



action that aimed to justify the launching of a US attack on the Syrian army." The ministry described the U.S. missile attack

that heavily damaged the Shayrat air base in the central province of Homs "a flagrant aggression." (AP)

Hollande, Merkel Say Assad "Responsible" for Escalating Situation in Syria

PARIS - French President Francois Hollande and German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Friday said Syrian President Bashar al-Assad bore "full responsibility" for the U.S. military action.

The U.S. military on Thursday launched a targeted missile strike at a Syrian military airfield in its first direct assault on al-Assad's army since the Syria crisis began six years ago.

A total of 59 Tomahawk Land Attack missiles were launched from the destroy-



ers USS Porter and USS Ross in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea at about 8:40 p.m. EDT (0140 GMT Friday). Syrian aircraft, hardened aircraft shelters, fuel

points, air defense systems, and radars were targeted, according to a Pentagon statement.

The two European leaders ...*(More on P4)...(30)*

US Strike in Syria not Enough, Further Steps Needed: Erdogan

ANTAKYA, Turkey - Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Friday welcomed the US strike on an airbase of the Syrian regime but said it was not enough and more action was needed.

"I want to say that I welcome this concrete step as positive," Erdogan, a longtime foe of President Bashar al-Assad, said in a rally in the southern city of Antakya just north of the Syrian border.

"Is it enough? I don't see this as enough... the time has come for steps for a serious result to protect the oppressed Syrian people," he added. US President Donald Trump ordered the missile strike in retaliation for the suspected chemical weapons attack in the town of Khan Sheikhoun in northwestern Syria's Idlib province that killed dozens and was blamed by many world leaders on ...*(More on P4)...(31)*

U.S. "Response" to Syria must be Pursued within UN Framework: Hollande

PARIS - French President Francois Hollande on Friday said the U.S. military response to alleged use of chemical arms in Syria must be pursued under the helm of the United Nations.

"Today, there was a new use of chemical weapons and the Americans decided to strike military facilities in Syria. It was a response. It must now be pursued in the international framework of the United Nations, if it's possible," Hollande said. French president recalled that France had been seeking U.S. missile strikes in 2013 after a previous chemical attack in Syrian province of Al Ghouta.

However, he added along with military option, "France will, with its European partners, take every initiative to restart the political transition process in Syria."

In a visit to Ardeche, south central France, French president said he called a defense council Friday to discuss ways to extend punitive action over Syrian government's "apparent use of toxic gas attack on civilians."

The U.S. military on Thursday launched a targeted missile strike at a Syrian military airfield in its first direct assault on the army of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad since Syria crisis began six years ago. The strike was ordered by U.S. President Donald Trump, said a Pentagon statement, adding that the assault was in response to the alleged Syrian government's chemical weapons attack on Tuesday in the rebel-held town of Khan Sheikhoun, which killed over 70 people and wounded scores of others, most of whom were civilians. (Xinhua)

European Parliament Approves Visa-Free EU Travel for Ukrainians

BRUSSELS - The European Parliament on Thursday approved by overwhelming majority an informal deal that will allow Ukrainian citizens to enter the European Union (EU) without visas for short stays.

The agreement, approved by 521 votes to 75 with 36 abstentions, still needs to be formally adopted by EU member states.

Under the new law, Ukrainians who hold a biometric passport will be able to enter the EU without a visa for 90 days in any 180-day period. The deal applies to all EU countries, except Ireland and the UK, plus Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. ...*(More on P4)...(32)*

UN Security Council Condemns DPRK's Missile Launch

UNITED NATIONS - The UN Security Council on Thursday strongly condemned the most recent ballistic missile launch conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).

On Wednesday, the DPRK test-fired a ballistic missile into eastern waters, according to the Republic of Korea defense ministry. In a press statement issued here, the 15-nation council said that the launch is in grave violation of the DPRK's international obligations under UN Security Council resolutions.

The council members deplored all DPRK's ballistic missile activities, noting that "such activities are contributing to the DPRK's

development of nuclear weapons delivery systems and are significantly increasing tension in the region and beyond."

"The members of the Security Council reiterated the importance of maintaining peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and in North-East Asia at large, expressed their commitment to a peaceful, diplomatic and political solution to the situation and welcomed efforts by Council members, as well as other States, to facilitate a peaceful and comprehensive solution through dialogue," said the statement. The most powerful UN body also demanded the DPRK to refrain from further actions in violation ...*(More on P4)...(33)*

Nieghbor News

Xi, Trump Engage in Deep-Going, Friendly, Long-Time Talks at Mar-A-Lago Resort

MAR-A-LAGO, the United States - Chinese President Xi Jinping on Thursday engaged with his U.S. counterpart, Donald Trump, here in a deep-going, friendly and long-time exchange, as the ever first meeting between them catches global spotlight.

XI'S ARRIVAL AMID WORLD ATTENTION

Xi arrived in the southeastern U.S. coastal town of Palm Beach in Florida at noon after paying a state visit to Finland. His meeting with Trump was widely seen as an effort of both sides to chart the course of bilateral ties in a new era.

In cloudy sunshine, the plane carrying him and

his wife, Peng Liyuan, landed in the early afternoon at Palm Beach International Airport.

Under the gaze of an enthused welcoming crowd, including U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and his wife Renda St. Clair, Xi and Peng stepped out of the hatch and waved before they walked down the ramp hand in hand. During his two-day stay in the Sunshine State of Florida, Xi is expected to hold several talks with Trump at the Mar-a-Lago resort, which Trump calls "the Southern White House," to exchange views on bilateral ties and major regional and global issues of common concern. (Xinhua)

Pakistan Welcomes Britain's Desire to Join CPEC

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan has warmly welcomed Britain's desire to become a key partner in China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) after the United Kingdom (UK) expressed its willingness to join the multi-billion dollar project, Radio Pakistan reported on Friday. According to the Minister for Planning, Development and Reforms Ahsan Iqbal, several other countries in the European Union (EU) and Central

Asian Republics were also evincing keen interest in the mega project, apart from the UK. He said that their inclination towards the project proves that CPEC was not restricted only to Pakistan and China, but has a greater regional impact that will promote connectivity in the region and beyond. This country's eyeing to become key partner of CPEC Besides improving the ...*(More on P4)...(34)*

Hungary, Iran Eye Nuclear Research Cooperation

TEHRAN - Hungary and Iran are making preparations to sign an agreement on mutually developing small nuclear reactors for research purposes, Cabinet Chief János Lázár confirmed yesterday during his regular weekly conference.

Answering a question in relation to an earlier report by the Tehran Times, Lázár said the agreement is expected to be reached within the

framework of the Iran nuclear deal. Tehran Times reported that the two countries will be expanding nuclear cooperation by signing an agreement on April 8, Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) spokesman Behrouz Kamalvandi announced on Wednesday. The agreement will be inked by AEOI chief Ali Akbar Salehi and Hungarian Deputy Prime Minister Zsolt Semjén. (Agencies)

Green Climate Fund Approves EBRD Project Proposals in Tajikistan and Morocco

DUSHANBEH - Two EBRD climate resilience project proposals for the modernisation of a hydropower plant in Tajikistan and an irrigation scheme in Morocco have been approved for co-financing by the Green Climate Fund (GCF) on April 6, reports the EBRD. The total project volume for the two projects is US\$ 415 million, of which US\$ 81 million will be provided by the GCF in the form of concessional loans and grants:

In Tajikistan the EBRD and other co-lenders are providing US\$ 158 mil-

lion for the climate-resilient upgrade of Qairokum hydropower plant, with co-financing of US\$ 50 million from the GCF. Under the Morocco Saïss Water Conservation Project the EBRD and partners are extending US\$ 207 million for irrigation infrastructure that will protect agricultural production from the impacts of climate change with a co-financing grant contribution of €32 million from the GCF, together with a further €54 million contribution from the Kingdom of Morocco. (AKI)

Turkmenistan, South Korea Hold Business Talks

ASHGABAT - Ashgabat hosted a meeting of the Turkmenistan-South Korea intergovernmental commission on commercial, economic, scientific and technological cooperation, said the Turkmen Foreign Ministry in a message Apr. 7. The Turkmen side was headed by Deputy Prime Minister Maksat Babayev, the South Korean side - by Minister of Trade, Industry and Energy Joo Hyunghwan. The meeting's agenda included the issues of development of rela-

tions in the spheres of economy and trade, standardization and control of the financial system.

The two sides also discussed the issues of cooperation in the areas of energy and hydrocarbon resources, construction, agriculture, healthcare, transportation and communication. As part of events, a business forum was held, which was attended by heads of such companies as Hyundai, LG, Samsung, Daewoo and others. (Trend)