U.S. Rebalance to Asia Begins with Major Military Drill in Philippines

MANILA — Philippine President Benigno Aquino III has ordered his biggest combined maritime and air drills in years on Monday, in a demonstration of Washington’s commitment to its long-term ally as it shifts its focus to the face of China’s expansion in the South China Sea.

The “Balikatan” (shoulder-to-shoulder) exercises were part of a new U.S. military initiative known as Pacific Pathways, involving a series of drills across the Asia-Pacific region. The drills deploy ships, troops, and aircraft in the region.

Moscow Denies Norway’s Protests Over Arctic Islands Visit

MOSCOW — Russia on Monday dismissed Norway’s protests over a visit to Arctic islands that Russia claims as its own. Norway’s foreign minister said the visit was a provocation.

President Vladimir Putin implied the visit was a provocation.

Moscow also said it was a provocation.

CIA Chief Holds Talks with Egypt President

CAIRO — US Central Intelligence Agency Director John Brennan held talks with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi during an unannounced visit to Cairo, the presidency said.

Brennan met with President Sisi to discuss “regional developments” and the situation in the Middle East and North Africa.

EU Promises to Act over Migrant Crisis

LUXEMBOURG — EU foreign ministers on Monday did not offer a strong response to the Mediterranean refugee crisis, setting back efforts to forge a breakthrough and spark fresh talks with Turkey, by staying away from the Libyans.

The European Union has been faced with increased pressure on its eastern borders, and its leader said that it was ready to use its border mechanisms.

The meeting was convened to discuss the situation in the Mediterranean, where thousands of migrants are risking their lives to reach Europe.

The EU has repeatedly warned about the dangers of the Mediterranean crossing.

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Chinese President Xi Jinping’s visit to the Philippines was seen as a crucial step towards normalisation between the two countries.

Tajik President, Chinese Official Discuss Cooperation Issues

DUSHANBE — Tajik President Emomali Rahmon and Chinese Vice Premier Zhang Dejiang held talks in Dushanbe.

The talks focused on bilateral cooperation in various fields, including trade, investment, and energy.

China can Play Important Role in Asian Security

AKABA — China can play a very important role in Asia by engaging with many African countries, the United Nations said.

The UN Security Council has already discussed the issue, and it is likely to come up again.

China has been a major player in the region, and it has been increasingly involved in the security of the Middle East.

China and Pakistan Launch Economic Corridor Plan

Worth $46 Billion

ISLAMABAD — China and Pakistan unveiled a plan to develop an economic corridor that would link the two countries.

The economic corridor would cover an area of 80,000 square miles, with a population of 40 million.

The plan includes the construction of a railway and a road, as well as the development of a port.

The plan is expected to create 1.5 million jobs and to increase Pakistan’s exports by 50%.

The economic corridor is expected to be completed by 2020.