

'Don't Underestimate Us': China Snubs US as DefSec Rallies Asian Allies against 'Chinese Threat'

BEIJING - Beijing has warned the US not to underestimate its resolve to protect its sovereignty, just as the acting Pentagon chief effectively accused China of undermining regional stability and urged allies to boost their defense budgets.

Amid unprecedented tensions between US and China, acting Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan held brief talks with Defense Minister Wei Fenghe on Friday in Singapore to discuss an array of security issues. The Chinese side used the opportunity to slam Washington's repeated 'freedom of navigation' trips through the Taiwan Strait and urged the US to abide by the 'one-China principle,' which views the island nation as an integral part of the mainland. "The Chinese side resolutely



opposes the recent series of negative actions by the US on Taiwan issues," Chinese defense ministry spokesman Senior Colonel Wu Qian said after the meeting.

While Shanahan firmly disagreed with Beijing's assessment that US military endeavors half a world away from home are deliberately testing its patience and violating China's

sovereignty in the region, including the South China Sea, the two military leaders did agree to work on reducing tensions in the Pacific during their 20-minute discussion on the sidelines of the three-day Shangri-La Dialogue security summit.

Addressing regional defense chiefs during his speech the following morning, Shanahan was diplomatic in his approach and did not name names when slamming China's growing influence in the region.

"Perhaps the greatest long-term threat to the vital interests of states across this region comes from actors who seek to undermine, rather than uphold, the rules-based international order," the Pentagon's chief said. (RT)

Trump Tariff Threats Alarm Mexico Growers, Economists

CULIACAN, Mexico - Tomato exporter Sergio Esquer Peiro spent much of Friday in hastily called meetings with other stunned growers, trying to evaluate the potential fallout of U.S. President Donald Trump's threat to slap coercive tariffs on all imports from Mexico. The sudden announcement caught observers on both sides of the border by surprise and prompted President Andrés Manuel López Obrador to dispatch his top diplomat to Washington for talks seeking to head

off the proposed tariffs. Obrador said Mexico won't panic over the threatened hike, but economists and those whose livelihoods depend on the trade relationship worth hundreds of billions of dollars a year worry that stiff duties could have dramatic, negative consequences and potentially spark a trade war between the neighboring countries. Already, Esquer and other exporters were having to contend with a 17.56% tariff on ...*(More on P4)...(14)*

Iran Showcases MASSIVE Underground Bunker & Launch of A Missile in A New VIDEO

TEHRAN - Tehran has revealed a large and secretive underground facility, designed to safely store its missile arsenal and, apparently, to launch the projectiles as well, should the need arise. The video features a missile storage bunker at an [obviously] undisclosed location, as well as pre-launch maintenance and blast-off of a Qiam-1 missile. The projectile has been in service since 2010 and is said to have an operational range of some 750 km.

The video was quietly released last week, yet caught the attention of the online crowd only on Friday. The bunker, full of missiles and their warheads, looks quite old-school - it's a long, vast tunnel, presumably bored under a mountain. The entrance to the storage area is protected by a heavy blast door, that is decorated in quite some style - there are portraits of Iranian leaders on the sides, an Israeli flag to drive over and the "Death to Israel"



slogan right before the entrance. The video then shows servicemen taking a missile's frame and a warhead from stock and carefully assembling them into a combat-ready projectile, then mounting it on a launch vehicle. The ...*(More on P4)...(10)*

Pope Urges Hungarians, Romanians to Put Troubles Behind Them



MIERCUREA-CIUC, Romania - Pope Francis urged ethnic Hungarians and Romanians to put their troubled past behind them on Satur-

day as bad weather disrupted his visit to Transylvania, forcing him to be driven for hours on winding mountain roads.

More than 80,000 people gathered on muddy slopes around one of Romania's most popular Catholic shrines to see the pope on the second day of his trip to the country. Transylvania, which was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire until the end of the First World War, has a large ethnic Hungarian population and there have been tensions sometimes between ethnic Hungarians and Romanians. Ethnic Hungarians, many of whom are

Catholic in a predominantly Orthodox Christian nation, are the largest minority in Romania, around six percent of the population. This has often caused friction between the two European Union neighbors with tensions flaring occasionally over the public use of ethnic minority flags. In his homily to the rain-soaked crowd, which included Hungarian President Janos Ader, the pope suggested past troubles should not be a ...*(More on P4)...(11)*

Masked Group Targets US Embassy with Arson Attack During Protests

TEGUCIGALPA - Masked protesters set fire to the gate of the US embassy in Honduras on Friday during massive demonstrations against public sector reforms in the country. Thousands of doctors, teachers and students had taken to the streets to demand the government abandon plans to privatize the health and education sectors. Firefighters came to extinguish the blaze, which destroyed the diplomatic mission's

gate without damaging the main embassy building. The US embassy issued a statement after the attack urging Hondurans to refrain from "acts of violence." Police spokesman Jair Meza told local media that one of the suspects, a 23-year-old man, had been arrested. Relatives of the suspect later went with a crowd to the police headquarters where they shouted demands for his freedom. (AFP)

Mecca Summit Supports Palestinians, Backs Saudis in Iran Standoff

MECCA (Saudi Arabia) - A Saudi-hosted Islamic summit on Saturday threw its support behind Palestinians ahead of a US-led peace plan suspected to be skewed in favour of Israel, as Muslim states rallied around Saudi Arabia over tensions with Iran.

The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) meeting, the third and final Iran-focused summit in the holy city of Mecca this week, denounced controversial US moves to transfer its embassy to Jerusalem and recognise Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights. The summit of ...*(More on P4)...(15)*

UK Volunteers Still Honor US Airmen, 75 Years after D-Day

TOPCROFT, England - David Woodrow, 95, raises the American flag beside a memorial on his farm in eastern England every morning, weather permitting.

He makes sure that memorial is tip-top, too. Dedicated to the U.S. Army Air Force's 93rd Bombardment Group (Heavy), it is surrounded by irises and geraniums Woodrow planted himself. The grass is trimmed to the millimeter. The granite gleams.

"There's one thing for certain: If Americans hadn't come over here and went to Normandy with us in '44 and the Germans had pushed us back into the sea, we couldn't have gone back again for another two or three years," Woodrow, a D-Day veteran himself, said when asked why he put it there. "By that time, Germany ...*(More on P4)...(16)*

China Says U.S. Actions on Taiwan, South China Sea Threaten Stability

SINGAPORE - The United States' actions on Taiwan and the South China Sea are hardly conducive to maintaining stability in the region, a senior Chinese military official said on Saturday, responding to comments by acting U.S. Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan.

"He (Shanahan) has been expressing inaccurate views and repeating old tunes about the issues of Taiwan and the South China Sea," Shao Yuanming, a senior official of the People's Liberation Army, told reporters after



Shanahan's speech. "This is harming regional peace and stability." Shao added that China would defend its sovereignty at any cost should anyone try to separate Taiwan from its territory. It views the self-ruled island as a wayward province and has not ruled out the use of force to return it to the fold. "China will have to be reunified," Shao said. "If anybody wants to ...*(More on P4)...(12)*

South Korea, Japan, EU Upbeat about Korean Peninsula Denuclearization

SINGAPORE - South Korean and Japanese defense ministers and the EU high representative for security expressed optimism about the positive developments on the Korean Peninsula over the past one and a half years here on Saturday at the 18th Shangri-La Dialogue.

During a plenary session, South Korean Defense Minister Jeong Kyeong-doo said the two summits between leaders of the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the three inter-Kore-

an summits have greatly alleviated military tension in the region. He also hailed the significant achievements of the Panmunjom Declaration signed by South Korean President Moon Jae-in and DPRK's top leader Kim Jong Un in 2018, in which the two sides agreed to a complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, and the comprehensive military agreement signed by the two militaries which led to the alleviation of military tensions in border areas. Although the ...*(More on P4)...(13)*

India Hopeful of Resolving GSP Issue after U.S. "Withdrawal of Benefits": Gov't

NEW DELHI - India shall always uphold its national interests even as its people aspire for better standards of living, said an official statement issued by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry on Saturday, in response to the U.S. withdrawing India's "Generalized System of Preferences (GSP)" benefits.

The U.S. has withdrawn India's GSP benefits with effect from June 5. The withdrawal of GSP benefits was over the U.S. belief that there was a lack of access to India's market. The GSP program allows emerging countries to export goods to the U.S. without paying duties.

Reacting to the U.S. decision, the statement said, "These are unilateral, non-reciprocal and non-discriminatory benefits extended by some developed countries to developing countries. India, as part of our bilateral trade discussions, had offered resolution on significant U.S. requests in an effort to find a mutually acceptable way forward."

It further added, "It is unfortunate that this did not find acceptance by the U.S. India, like the U.S. and other nations, shall always uphold its national interest in these matters." According to the statement, India has significant development imperatives and concerns and its people also aspire for better standards of living. "This will remain the guiding factor in the government's approach," it added. In any ...*(More on P4)...(17)*

Neighbor News

Sisi Discusses Counter-Terrorism with Pakistan's Prime Minister

ISLAMABAD - Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi received Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan at his residence at the holy city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia on Friday, where they discussed strengthening bilateral cooperation especially regarding security, economic cooperation and trade and investment exchanges.

President Sisi praised the stable historical relations between the two countries. He expressed hope to enhance cooperation between Egypt and Pakistan, especially in the commercial field, as well as to enhance coordination with Islamabad on various regional issues and issues of common

concern, such as combating terrorism and extremist thought.

On his end, the Pakistani Prime Minister stressed the deep, friendly relations between the two countries, particularly praising Egypt's recent achievements. He further stressed his nation's appreciation of the pivotal role Egypt plays within in the Arab and Islamic world. The two leaders reviewed the latest developments in the Middle East and the Islamic regions, stressing the importance of continuing cooperations and pushing forward joint efforts in light of the crises in the region, in order to maintain peace and security. (Monitoring Desk)

IRGC Chief Rejects Anti-Iran Accusations, Says US Behind All Tensions in Region

TEHRAN - The commander of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) has called the United States the root cause of all tensions in the Middle East, rejecting accusations raised by the US and its Arab allies that Iran was behind the attacks on four vessels off the coast of the United Arab Emirates.

Major General Hossein Salami on Friday categorically denied Iran's involvement in the vessel attacks in Fujairah port, saying, "Iran is a powerful country. We do not need to hide anything. If we do something, we'll announce it publicly." He made the comments

in reaction to allegations by US National Security Advisor John Bolton and some Saudi and Emirati officials that the IRGC launched the attacks through its "proxies". Speaking to Press TV on the sidelines of the International Quds Day rallies in Tehran, General Salami said "Iranians don't take the Arab states' anti-Iran stances and remarks seriously." "Some primitive Arab regimes in the Persian Gulf are sidekicks of the US and under total control of Washington, and their comments and messages are not even worthy of any response," he added. (Press TV)

Iran, Tajikistan Vow to Broaden Bilateral Ties

TEHRAN - Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and his Tajik counterpart Sirodjidin Muhriddin, in a Saturday meeting in Tehran, pledged to expand bilateral relations between the two countries.

Zarif and Muhriddin, in a meeting this morning, underlined the need to boost bilateral cooperation in different fields of mutual interests.

Expanding political, economic, and parliamentary ties, boosting energy and transportation cooperation, holding political and consular meetings, and fighting against ter-

rorism and extremism were among discussed topics of the meeting. Heading a high-ranking delegation, Muhriddin arrived in Tehran on Friday evening. Late on Friday, he held a meeting with Iranian Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian to discuss energy cooperation between the two countries. Back in mid-March, Iran's new Ambassador to Tajikistan Mohammad Taqi Saberi met with Muhriddin in Dushanbe, and underlined that the ground is ready for consolidating bilateral ties between the two sides. ...*(More on P4)...(18)*

Turkmen President Notes High Level of Turkmen-Russian Relations

ASHGABAT - President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov held a meeting with Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev in Ashgabat, Trend reports referring to the Turkmen Dovlet Habarlary (TDH) state agency.

The head of state expressed confidence that this meeting will give a new impetus to fruitful cooperation between Turkmenistan and Russia, and will allow defining future prospects and ways of developing cooperation in various fields. The president noted the high level of Turkmen-Russian relations.

As emphasized, Turkmenistan and Russia have long-standing friendly relations. In the modern era, interstate dialogue is dynamically developing both

in bilateral and multi-lateral formats, within the framework of authoritative international organizations. About 190 companies with Russian capital operate in Turkmenistan. The ARETI International Group (formerly Itera Group) has been operating in the Turkmen Sea on the basis of the signed production sharing agreement (PSA) since 2009. In 2019, after a three-year break, Russia's Gazprom resumed purchases of Turkmen gas. Moreover, Russia and Turkmenistan are initiating cooperation in the Caspian. In particular, it is being planned to launch a freight line across the sea, which will connect Russia's Makhachkala with the Turkmen port of Turkmenbashi. (Trend)