IS to Bomb Syria’s Ancient City of Palmyra: Monitor

WASHINGTON - Heading to Europe, Pentagon Chief to Push U.S. Allies to Ditch “Cold War Playbook”

Pentagon Chief to Push U.S. Allies to Ditch “Cold War Playbook”

When Pentagon Chief Gen. Lloyd Austin announced at a news conference last week that the U.S. military would send hundreds more troops to take on the Taliban, there was an immediate reaction: “Cold War Playbook.”

But Austin says there is no Cold War strategy, only a long-term view of strategic competition. He adds that the U.S. military is changing its approach to the Taliban from a focus on direct military action to a more indirect strategy that targets the Taliban’s support network.

The goal is to disrupt the Taliban’s ability to fund and sustain its fight against the Afghan government.

ISRAELI PM SLAMS FRENCH PEACE INITIATIVE, CALLS IT “DICTATE”

Jerusalem (Agencies)

Israel’s prime minister on Sunday slammed a French-brokered initiative to settle the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

“Without question, this is the first international initiative that will come out of the French government in the next months,” said Benjamin Netanyahu.

He added that the initiative is “a dictate” and will not be accepted by either side.

WASHING-ON, US. - Congress passes the defense budget with a $50 billion increase

WASHINGTON - Congress has passed the defense budget with a $50 billion increase, a move that will be welcomed by the Pentagon.

The bill, which passed the House of Representatives by a vote of 284-144, increases funding for the military by 10 percent over the current year.

The bill also includes $10 billion for the F-35 fighter jet, $4 billion for the Abrams tank, and $3 billion for the Virginia-class submarine.

UNITED NATIONS - UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon confirmed on Sunday that the UN will begin to draw up a report on the situation in Syria.

The report will be based on information gathered by UN monitors on the ground in Syria and will be presented to the Security Council.

The UN has been criticized for its slow response to the crisis in Syria, and Ban Ki-moon has been under pressure to do more.

The report will be presented to the Security Council on March 15.

China Busts Gang, Seizes 62nd Birth Anniversary of Chairman Mao

A group of Chinese officials has arrested 62 people in connection with the 62nd birth anniversary of Chairman Mao.

The arrests were made in the cities of Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou, according to local authorities.

The 62nd anniversary of Mao’s birth was marked by a number of protests across China, with activists calling for democracy and human rights.

The arrests are part of a larger crackdown on dissent in China, and come as the government tries to maintain control over the country.

Turkmenistan to Hold Its 2nd Energy Exhibition

As part of its efforts to attract foreign investment, Turkmenistan will hold its 2nd Energy Exhibition in Ashgabat.

The country’s energy sector is one of its main sources of revenue, and the government has been trying to attract foreign companies to invest in its oil and gas sector.

The exhibition will be held in Ashgabat from March 15 to 17, and will feature companies from around the world.

The goal is to showcase Turkmenistan’s potential as a major energy producer, and to attract foreign companies to invest in the country's energy sector.