

ISIS Posts Hit List of 100 U.S. Military Personnel

NEW YORK - The latest online threat from ISIS is a list of one hundred U.S. military personnel, with instructions for "our brothers residing in America" to hunt them down and "deal" with them. The listings include names, photographs, and other information.

According to the New York Post, the original website that published the list has been taken down, but it has been spread through social media and hosted on numerous mirror websites.

Although ISIS wanted to make it look like their team of hackers extracted this

information from secure American military systems, the New York Times quotes a Defense Department official saying "most of the information could be found in public records, residential address search sites and social media."

Contrary to the terrorists' assertion that it was targeting officers who waged war against ISIS in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen (which the Islamic State apparently considers its turf now), many of the personnel on the list had nothing to do with operations in those theaters. The Islamic State chose them because they appeared in news reports



and public Defense Department documents, and there was enough readily available online information about them to cobble together convincing "dossiers" of the targets.

Analysts quoted in several media sources said they thought ISIS put the list together primarily to enhance its reputation for aggression and technical savvy. International Business

Times reports the U.S. military "issued a statement Sunday urging its personnel to maintain 'vigilance' against the potential threat from ISIS' kill list. Marine Corps spokesman Lt. Col.

John Caldwell advised his personnel to "check their online/social footprint, ensuring privacy settings are adjusted to limit the amount of available personal information." (Agencies)

No U.S. intelligence in Yemen or Syria, McCaul warns

WASHINGTON - The U.S. lacks intelligence in the terrorist hotspots of Yemen and Syria, limiting the military's ability to respond to the Islamic State, the chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee warned Sunday.

"The problem is that we're not going to have any intelligence in Yemen," said Michael McCaul, a Republican who represents Texas. "Yem-

en is one of the most dangerous spots in the world."

The U.S. removed the last of its military presence in Yemen Saturday following the deterioration of stability in the region amid fighting between groups linked with the Islamic State, Iran, and al Qaeda. The Islamic State took responsibility for suicide bombings in the capital Friday that killed and

wounded hundreds at prayer in mosques.

McCaul said in an interview with ABC Sunday morning that the U.S. no longer has human intelligence in Yemen. "If you don't have that intelligence on the ground, how do you know who to hit, and where and when?" he asked.

The congressman also predicted that the Islamic State would gain support from terror-

ist groups previously aligned with al Qaeda as it gains influence in Northern Africa, and called for a more direct approach to taking on the Islamic State.

"We have no intelligence in Syria, which is a major problem," McCaul said. "We have to get more aggressive in taking out [the Islamic State] where they exist, and the head of the snake is in Iraq and Syria." (Agencies)

India Ready to Talk with European Union on FTA: Nirmala Sitharaman

NEW DELHI - Negotiations for the proposed free trade agreement with the European Union may resume as India on Monday said that it is "ready to talk" with the EU on the pact. No negotiation was held after both sides failed to bridge substantial gaps on crucial issues including data security status for the IT sector in May 2013.

"I have assured the EU ambassador and ambassadors of individual EU countries that we are ready to talk with the European community. They have been our traditional trading partners," Commerce and Industry Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said in New Delhi.

No negotiation was held after both sides failed to bridge substantial gaps on crucial issues including data security status for the IT sector in May 2013.

Launched in June 2007, the negotiations for the proposed Broad-based Trade and Investment Agreement (BTIA) between India and the 28-nation European bloc has witnessed many hurdles with both sides having major differences on crucial issues. The two sides are yet to iron out issues related to tariffs and

movement of professionals but the EU has shown an inclination to restart talks.

She said that the FTA has been delayed for a very long time and several rounds of negotiations were held, but did not reach any logical conclusion.

"This was stated by great concern and worry by the European community Ambassador we did ask the Ambassador if their priority is still on a FTA with India, considering there is talk about Trans Atlantic partnership going on and the Ambassador said yes. The EU is looking forward to having an FTA with India and talks would be encouraging. "We readily accepted and therefore we certainly and definitely want to engage with the EU on that," she added. The two-way commerce stood at USD 101.5 billion in 2013-14.

Under the proposed Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA), two sides aims to significantly reduce duties on the maximum number of tradable goods besides by liberalising norms for service and investments. It also aims at facilitating movement of professionals. (PTI)

Putin Sacks Two Senior Kremlin Officials Amid Speculation of Turf Wars

MOSCOW - President Vladimir Putin dismissed two senior officials on Monday in a surprise move that followed recent rumours of feuding at the heart of the Kremlin.

The twin sackings come less than a month after the killing of Kremlin critic Boris Nemtsov, which had exposed rarely seen tensions between various factions within Putin's inner elite.

Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Oleg Morozov, 61, was leaving his post as head of the president's domestic policy department because of family reasons.

Peskov also announced the departure of head of the international cooper-

ation department, Sergei Bolkhovitin, but gave no reason for his removal. His department deals with technical aspects of foreign cooperation.

Morozov was replaced by Tatyana Voronova, who previously headed the youth section of Putin's ruling United Russia party, served as a lawmaker and sat on the country's central elections committee before moving to the Kremlin in early 2013.

Analysts said Voronova is a protégé of Vyacheslav Volodin -- Putin's first deputy chief of staff who was blacklisted by the European Union last year for what the bloc said was his role in the annexation of Crimea



from Ukraine. Commentators saw her appointment as a possible signal that the Kremlin was gearing up for local elections due in some regions later this year as well as national parliamentary polls due in 2016. No successor was named

for Bolkhovitin. The sense of intrigue at the Kremlin this month was heightened when Putin vanished from public view for 10 days. The president laughed off his disappearance when he finally re-emerged at a public event on March 16. (Reuters)

IS Moves West to Attack Syrian Army in Homs

BEIRUT - Islamic State fighters attacked a military airport in Syria's Homs province on Monday as they pushed on with an offensive against government strongholds towards the west, a monitoring group said.

Skirmishes by Islamic State -- which is strongest in the northeast and east -- into the provinces of Homs, Hama and even Damascus pose a fresh challenge for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

Syria's army has carved a bulwark of territory from Damascus through the cities of Homs and Hama to the western coast by defeating other, less powerful militias including rebels fighting under the banner of the Free Syrian Army.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which tracks the violence through a network of sources in the country, said Islamic State attacked a military airport in Tadmur, a town in Homs province, early on Monday. Syrian officials could not immediately be reached for comment, and the fighting was not reported on state media. The offensive fol-

lowed a three-day battle that erupted on Friday further west in Hama around Sheikh Hilal village, the Observatory said. Islamic State was trying to cut the road from Hama to Aleppo, once Syria's most populous city, it added.

Observatory head Rami Abdulrahman, said 74 soldiers in Hama had been killed by Islamic State, which he speculated launched both attacks to raise morale after losses to Kurdish forces in the northeast.

Around 200,000 people have been killed since 2011 in Syria's civil war, which pits Assad against a range of rebels including jihadist groups such as Islamic State and al Qaeda's Nusra Front. A U.S.-led coalition is bombing Islamic State in both Syria and Iraq.

Kurdish forces, backed by coalition air strikes, defeated Islamic State in the northern Syria town of Kobani this year and other areas in the northeast. Syrian state television said Syria's army killed 19 Islamic State fighters on Monday in the eastern province of Deir al-Zor, one of the insurgent group's strongholds. (Reuters)

Israel Shuns UN Rights Session on Gaza Onslaught

NEW YORK - Israel has inexplicably shunned a UN Human Rights Council's special session on the grim situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, and the Israeli military's devastating offensive against the besieged Gaza Strip last summer.

A source close to the council said on condition of anonymity that Israel's absence from the meeting in the Swiss city of Geneva on Monday clearly amounted to a boycott.

"We won't comment on that," a spokeswoman with the Israeli mission said. The United States also did not take part in Monday's discussions. Monday's session had initially been organized to discuss a probe into Israel's actions during last



year's war in Gaza, but the investigations were hit with a delay after the head of the team had to step down under pressure from the Israeli regime. "The process cannot be rushed," former New York judge Mary McGowan Davis, who has taken over as new head of the team, told the council. Israel has

expressed strong dissatisfaction with the inquiry into the 2014 Gaza conflict, calling for the entire process to be shelved. Tel Aviv claims that the UN Human Rights Council and its commission are adamantly biased against it. Israel started its latest war on the Gaza Strip in early July last year. The offensive ended on Au-

gust 26, 2014, with a truce that took effect after indirect negotiations in the Egyptian capital, Cairo. Nearly 2,200 Palestinians, including 577 children, were killed in Israel's 50-day onslaught. Over 11,100 others - including 3,374 children, 2,088 women and 410 elderly people - were also injured. (Press TV)

No Military Solution to Ukraine Conflict: Germany's Steinmeier

BRATISLAVA - The crisis in Ukraine does not and cannot have a military solution and the involved parties must avoid any steps that could lead to a new escalation of the sit-

uation, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said on Monday. "One thing is clear I think to all of us: there is no, and there cannot be, a military solution

to the crisis in Ukraine," Steinmeier told reporters after meeting his counterparts from four central European countries in Bratislava. He said there would be a meeting in

Paris on Wednesday including senior officials from Germany, Ukraine and Russia to discuss an oversight mechanism for a ceasefire in eastern Ukraine. (Reuters)

Neighbor News

Strong Political Presence at Pak Day Celebrations in Delhi

NEW DELHI - Several Indian politicians, including Minister of State for External Affairs Gen (Retd.) V.K. Singh and Congress veteran Mani Shankar Aiyer, were present at the Pakistan Day celebrations at the Islamic Republic's High Commission in New Delhi on Monday.

The former Indian army chief was seen interacting with the esteemed guests, including Pakistan High Commissioner Abdul Basit.

Aiyer on his part expressed delight to be present at the celebrations, saying it is important to have an 'uninterrupted dialogue' with Islamabad in order to resolve the issues between both nations.

"Hope, we will show maturity to undertake uninterrupted dialogue with

Pakistan without which we won't be able to resolve any issue...It was foolish to break down the dialogue with Pakistan on ground that the High Commissioner met Hurrayat leaders," Aiyer said. "The meeting between separatists and the Pakistan High Commission had started during Vajpayee ji's time and it has continued during our times," he added.

The event also witnessed the presence of separatist leaders Syed Ali Shah Geelani, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq and Yasin Malik among others.

Pakistan Day commemorates the Lahore Resolution of 1940 and the adoption of the first constitution of the country during its transition into an Islamic Republic on March 23, 1956. (ANI)

Canada PM's Anti-Iran Remarks Illogical, Spiteful



TEHRAN - Iran has dismissed as "repetitious, illogical and tedious," Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper's allegations that Iranians live under "tyranny."

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, Marziyeh Afkham, said on Monday that the Canadian premier made very superficial and unrealistic remarks about Iran, adding that Canada's conservative government is in fact an "extremist" administration.

"It is most probable that the freedom-seeking gesture of Mr. prime minister is aimed at mustering the votes of Canada-based

Iranian community in the upcoming parliamentary elections," Afkham added. She emphasized that such an approach to Iranian nationals living in Canada indicates that the Canadian officials are suffering from "egotism" and have an "incorrect assessment" of the Iranian community. Speaking in a ceremony to mark the Iranian new year, Nowruz, in Vancouver on Saturday, Harper harshly criticized Iran's policies. Canada's Prime Minister Stephen Harper speaks at a ceremony to mark Nowruz in Vancouver on March 21, 2015. (Press TV)

China and Europe Mulling Joint Space Mission

LONDON - China and Europe are in collaboration for the launch of a low-cost space mission.

The proposed project, called Discovering the Sky at the Longest Wavelengths (DSL), is one of around 15 submitted for a call by the European Space Agency (ESA) and the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) that concluded recently, Nature reported.

The DSL project would use the satellite array to detect radio signals with wavelengths a few hundred metres in length.

"The call is a win-win situation for China and the EU," Taotao Fang, an astronomer at the Xiamen University in China, who is part of the team that proposed the MESSIER orbiter, was quoted as saying.

When passing around the Moon's dark side, the tel-

escape might be able to spot signatures of hydrogen thought to have existed from 370,000 years to 550 million years after the Big Bang.

The final mission will be led by principal investigators affiliated with both European and Chinese institutions, with an aim to launch in 2021.

Other proposals include an X-ray imager called SMILE that would study Earth's magnetosphere, and SIRIUS, an extreme-ultraviolet telescope that would look at 'hot objects', such as stellar coronae, in the Galaxy.

EU scientists had contributed to the payload of China's Double Star mission, which launched in 2003 to study the near-Earth environment.

But it will be the first jointly-run project set up in collaboration from the start. (ND TV)

China Hopeful of Stronger Tajik Ties in Rahmon's New Term

BEIJING - A spokesman for the Foreign Ministry said that China believes its strategic partnership with Tajikistan will grow stronger under the new term of President Emomali Rahmon.

Hong Lei made the remarks at a regular press briefing when asked to comment on Tajikistan's presidential election on Wednesday. Rahmon, Tajikistan's incumbent president, won

83.6 percent of the votes and will serve in the post for another seven years, preliminary results showed on Thursday.

Hong said China was happy to see the successful conduct of the elections in Tajikistan and believes that Tajik people will make still greater achievements in development under the leadership of President Rahmon. (Xinhua)