

# US House Defies Obama Veto Threat, Passes Defense Policy Bill

WASHINGTON - The House defied a veto threat from President Barack Obama on Friday and approved a \$612 billion defense policy bill that Democrats complain busts budget limits on military spending and makes it harder for the president to close the U.S. prison for suspected terrorists at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba. The vote was 269 to 151 for the legislation, a blueprint for next year's spending on military and other national security programs. While Republicans voted overwhelmingly for the bill, 41 Democrats disregarded Obama's objections and joined the GOP



lawmakers in passing it. Another 143 Democrats voted against it. A 2011 bipartisan budget deal placed limits on defense and domestic spending. The House defense bill skirts those caps by put-

ting \$89 billion of the total into an emergency war-fighting fund, which is exempt from the restrictions. Democrats warned that Republicans won't do the same end-run around spending caps when it comes to financing non-defense agencies later this year, opening the door to sharp cuts in domestic spending. House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., said the defense bill would be a prelude to future reductions that would "devastate other vital pillars of our national strength," including homeland security, veterans, road building and ...*(More on P4)...(23)*

## U.S.-Led Coalition Launches 21 Air Strikes against Islamic State: Task Force

WASHINGTON - The United States and its allies conducted six air strikes in Syria and 15 in Iraq since early on Friday targeting Islamic State militants, the Combined Joint Task Force carrying out the operations said on Saturday. In Syria, air strikes using bomber and fighter aircraft hit near Al Hasakah, the task force said in a statement. In Iraq, air strikes using attack, fighter

aircraft and drones hit near Al Hawijah, Bayji, Mosul, Ramadi, Sinjar and Tal Afar, it said. The statement said the air strikes took place between 8 a.m. local time on Friday and 8 a.m. on Saturday. The statement made no mention of the overnight U.S. special operations raid in eastern Syria announced by the White House and Pentagon on Saturday. (Reuters)

## Iran Nuclear Deal Could Be Lesson for North Korea: Kerry

BEIJING - U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said Saturday he is hopeful that the successful conclusion of a nuclear deal with Iran will send a positive message to North Korea to restart negotiations on its own atomic program. Speaking at a joint news conference with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Beijing, Kerry said he believed an Iran agreement could have "a positive influence" on North Korea, because it would show that giving up nuclear weapons improves domestic economies and ends isolation. He stressed, though, that there was no way to tell if North Korea's reclusive leadership would be able

to "internalize" such a message. "I am sure Foreign Minister Wang would join me in expressing the hope that if we can get an agreement with Iran, ... that agreement would indeed have some impact or have a positive influence" on North Korea, Kerry said. Although Wang did not appear to respond, Kerry explained that an Iran deal could help in showing North Korea how "your economy can do better, your country can do better, and you can enter into good standing with the rest of the global community by recognizing that there is a verifiable, irreversible, ...*(More on P4)...(27)*

## Syrian War Not Likely to End before He Leaves Office: Obama



WASHINGTON - US President Barack Obama said the war in Syria would not likely end before he leaves office in early 2017 and reaffirmed his belief that there is no "military solution" to the conflict. "The situation in Syria is heart-breaking but it's extremely complex" Obama said in an interview with the Saudi-owned Al-Arabiya television network. Asked if the conflict, which has left more than 220,000 people dead, might be resolved before he ends his second term, Obama responded "probably not." "You have a civil war in a country that arises out of longstanding grievances" he said. "It was not something that was triggered by the United States and it was not something that

could have been stopped by the United States," he said, adding that "all too often in the Middle East region, people attribute everything to the United States." Obama emphasized that settling the conflict would require the cooperation of Gulf allies and other regional nations such as Turkey, but that "a military solution is not going to be the solution." He reiterated that it makes more sense to work with those countries, instead of engaging them "unilaterally." At the beginning of May, officials announced that the US military had begun training a small unit of "moderate" Syrian rebels in Jordan to return home and take on the might of the Islamic State. (AFP)

## U.N. Seeks Speedier Inspections on Yemen-Bound Goods

GENEVA - The United Nations on Friday urged Saudi Arabia and its allies to ease inspections of Yemen-bound cargo, to accelerate imports of vital aid that is being held up despite a humanitarian truce. The aim is to get supplies to 2.5 million Yemenis deprived of food, fuel and medicine due to fighting by an Iranian-allied militia and air strikes against them by a Saudi-led coalition, violence that has killed at least 1,600 people, U.N. humanitarian coordinator



Johannes van der Klaauw said. The first U.N. aid flights landed in Yemen on Friday since a five-day humanitarian pause was declared on Tuesday night. Two of a planned six cargo planes, which will take a

total of 150 tonnes of shelter and relief items, arrived in Sanaa, the U.N. refugee agency said. A tightly enforced inspection regime has hindered delivery of humanitarian supplies, while roadblocks and continued sporadic fighting are holding up distribution inside the country, van der Klaauw told a Geneva news briefing via audio link from Sanaa. "The arms embargo and its inspection regime results in commercial goods, be it by air or ...*(More on P4)...(24)*

## Russia Ready to Receive French Refund for Undelivered Ship

MOSCOW - The annulment of a contract for France to deliver a warship to Russia wouldn't strain ties between the countries, the Kremlin said Friday. President Vladimir Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov said at a briefing that it's up to France to deliver the Mistral-class warship or offer a refund. He added that the issue wouldn't cause any problems in bilateral relations. The

Russian business daily Kommersant reported that France has offered a refund of 785 million euros (\$894 million), while Russia wants France to pay nearly 1.2 billion euros. Asked about the report, Peskov wouldn't comment on how much Russia wants France to pay. France, which suspended the delivery "until further notice" last year because of the conflict in Ukraine, hasn't yet made any announcement about

the cancellation of the contract. Russia's envoy to the European Union, Vladimir Chizhov, said on Rossiya 24 television that France has apparently opted for the annulment of the contract. "It's up to experts to determine a mutually acceptable figure," he said. "Such move doesn't benefit France as a major power, doesn't benefit it as a leading supplier of ...*(More on P4)...(25)*

## Iraq Sends Troops to Ramadi, Largely Held by Islamic State

BAGHDAD - Iraq's military has dispatched reinforcements to help its battered forces in Ramadi, a city now largely held by the Islamic State group after its militants swept across it the day before, an Iraqi military spokesman said Saturday.

The spokesman of the Joint Operations Command, Brig. Gen. Saad Maan Ibrahim, told Iraqi state television that the U.S.-led coalition was supporting Iraqi troops with "painful" airstrikes since late Friday. Ibrahim didn't give details on the ongoing battles, but described the situation on the ground as "positive" and vowed that the Islamic State group would be pushed out of the city "in the coming hours."

On Friday, the militants swept through Ramadi, the capital of Anbar province, launching a coordinated offensive included three near-simultaneous suicide car bombs. The militants seized the main government headquarters and other key parts of the city.

Local officials said dozens of security forces and civilians were killed, mainly the families of the troops, including 10 police officers and some 30 tribal fighters allied with Iraqi forces.

In a sign of how the latest advance is worrying Washington, U.S. Vice President Joe Biden spoke with Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi on Friday, promising the delivery of heavy weapons, including AT-4 shoulder-held rockets to counter suicide car bombs, according to a U.S. Embassy statement. (AP)

## IS Seizes Iraqi Govt. Compound, Kills Dozens in Syria

BEIRUT - Islamic State extremists made key gains, seizing a government compound in the strategic Iraqi city of Ramadi hours after allegedly massacring dozens of civilians as they closed in on Syria's ancient metropolis of Palmyra. Following the latest reported IS atrocity in Syria, jihadists raised their black flag over Ramadi's government headquarters after launching a wide of-

fensive using suicide car bombs that sent civilians fleeing the western city, edging closer to what would be their biggest victory in Iraq this year. IS "now occupies the government centre in Ramadi and has also raised its flag over the police HQ for Anbar", a police major told AFP on condition of anonymity. The loss of the capital of Anbar province would be a major setback for Iraq's government, which has

struggled to gain the upper hand against the IS group in the region and Baiji, north of Baghdad, despite months of US-led bombing raids. Iraq's government said Ramadi had not fallen yet and a major counter-offensive was under way. The jihadists already hold Mosul, Iraq's second city and the capital of the neighbouring Nineveh province, and US Vice President Joe ...*(More on P4)...(26)*

## US Weapons 'Expedited' to Iraq Amid IS Advance: Biden

WASHINGTON - The United States is sending "continued and expedited" weapons to Iraq, Vice President Joe Biden told Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, amid a major Islamic State group advance. The phone call took place after Islamic State extremists seized a government compound in the city of Ramadi earlier in the day, edging closer to what would be their biggest victory in Iraq this year. Biden thanked Abadi "for his steadfast leadership in Iraq and for promoting national unity at a time of significant security challenges, including today's ISIL attack on Ramadi," a White House statement



said. Using an alternative acronym for the IS group, the White House said that Biden reaffirmed "continued US support for the Iraqi government's ongoing efforts to defeat ISIL." "The vice president assured the prime minister of continued and expedited US security assistance to confront ISIL," the White House added,

including heavy weaponry, ammunition and supplies for Iraqi forces. IS has threatened to take control of Ramadi for months. The loss of the city, which Abadi has said would be the next target of government forces after wresting back Tikrit last month, would be a major setback. (AFP)

## Neighbour News

### Iran's Leader Vows to Protect 'Oppressed' People in the Region

DUBAI - Iran will help oppressed people in the region, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on Saturday, days after Gulf Arab leaders met U.S. President Barack Obama and expressed concern about Iranian expansionism. Khamenei also denounced Saudi Arabia for its role leading a coalition of Sunni-ruled Arab states against Yemen's Houthi rebels, comparing it to the pagans who ruled the Arabian Peninsula before the advent of Islam in the seventh century. His speech to a meeting of Iranian leaders and diplomats from the Muslim world, reported

by the state news agency IRNA, brought the issues of political and religious legitimacy squarely into the struggle between the two regional powers. "Yemen, Bahrain and Palestine are oppressed, and we protect oppressed people as much as we can," IRNA quoted him as saying. "Those people who bring suffering to Yemeni families during sacred months are even worse than the ancient pagans of Mecca," he said at the event for the holiday of Lailat al-Miraj, when Islam says the Prophet Mohammad visited heaven and met Jesus, Abraham, Moses and other prophets. (Reuters)

### China Infrastructure Bank will Uphold Standards: Minister

BEIJING - China's foreign minister worked on Saturday to allay concerns that Beijing's new regional infrastructure bank would not meet international standards as he met with US Secretary of State John Kerry. The United States declined to become a founding member of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) amid doubts over how it would be managed, but several of Washington's closest allies signed up, including Britain, France and Germany. The concerns include transparency of the AIIB, which will fund infrastructure in Asia, as well as Beijing using it to push its own geopolitical and

economic interests as a rising power. "The United States welcomes new multilateral institutions, including the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank provided they share the international community's strong commitment to high quality standards," Kerry said at a press conference with Wang Yi in Beijing. Those standards include "including genuine multilateral decision-making, ever improving lending requirements and environmental and social safeguards", he added. A total of 57 nations have applied for founding membership, including China, and Wang rebuffed Kerry's ...*(More on P4)...(28)*

### Two Islamic State Campaigners Arrested in Peshawar

PESHAWAR - The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) claimed to have arrested two campaigners of the self-styled Islamic State (IS) from Notia Bazaar Peshawar late on Friday. Leaflets and pamphlets calling for support for proscribed IS militant organisation were also recovered from the arrested suspects.

The arrested men are affiliated to a militant organisation and were preaching for IS in Peshawar's Notia Bazaar area when they were arrested, according to CTD officials. Daesh - or Islamic State - had

recently announced it was setting itself up for operations in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Attackers of the Safoora Goth carnage in Karachi last week had also left an IS pamphlet at the crime scene before fleeing on motorcycles. Pro-IS leaflets were seen in parts of Northwest Pakistan, while slogans have appeared on walls in several cities. The foreign office recently broke its silence regarding the Islamic State's activities inside Pakistan, admitting that the radical Islamist group posed a "serious threat" to the country. (Agencies)

### Ulugbek Muhammadiev Elected as Commissioner for Human Rights

TASHKENT - During a meeting of the Uzbekistan's Senate Muhammadiev Ulugbek Nasriddinovich by a majority vote of deputies was elected to the post of Ombudsman.

In this position he succeeded Sayyora Rashidova, who was in this position since 1995. Reference: Ulugbek Muhammadiev was born in 1971 in Yakkabag district of Kashkadarya region. In 1993 he graduated from the Faculty of Philosophy of the Tashkent State University (National University of Uzbekistan). Specialty - a philosopher. Candidate of political sciences. In 2010 he was elected to the Legislative Chamber of Oliy Majlis of Uzbekistan.

In 2010-2014 - Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Chamber of Oliy Majlis of Uzbekistan, a member of the Committee on International Affairs and Interparliamentary Relations, head of the Democratic Party of Uzbekistan "Milly Tiklanish" in the Legislative Chamber of Oliy Majlis of Uzbekistan. Since 2015 he worked as the chairman of the Committee on International Affairs and Interparliamentary Relations. As a deputy, he has contributed to the preparation and adoption of a number of draft laws envisaged in the "Concept of further deepening democratic reforms and formation of civil society." (Monitoring Desk)