

Iran Holds Surprise Military Drills Near Turkish Border

TEHRAN - Iran's army has launched unannounced military drills in the northwest of the country bordering Turkey, Iranian state media reported.

The semi-official ISNA news agency reported on October 9 that the exercises included rapid reaction units, mobile and offense brigades, and helicopters.

The maneuvers in Iran's Western Azerbaijan Province are being overseen by Iran's army chief, Major General Abdolrahim Musavi, according to state TV.

The reports did not mention the number of



troops taking part.

The announcement of the drills comes as Turkey says it is about to launch an offen-

sive into northern Syria.

Tehran, a key ally of President Bashar al-Assad in Syria's civil war, opposes the

planned Turkish incursion.

On October 9, Iranian President Hassan Rohani called on Ankara to show restraint and avoid military action in northern Syria.

"Turkey is rightfully worried about its southern borders. We believe that a correct path should be adopted to remove those concerns," the state-run IRNA news agency quoted Rohani as saying.

He also said that U.S. troops "must leave the region" and Kurdish forces in Syria "should support the Syrian Army." (Rferl)

Anti-Brexit Campaigners Claim Victory as Scottish Court Delays Decision on Extension Law

LONDON - Anti-Brexit campaigners claimed victory after Scotland's highest court decided on Wednesday to wait before ruling whether to force Prime Minister Boris Johnson to seek a delay to Britain's EU divorce date if he has not struck a deal in the next 10 days.

An alliance of rebels in Johnson's Conservative Party and opposition lawmakers voted through a law, known as the Benn Act, last month

which requires him to ask for a Brexit delay if there is no deal in place by Oct. 19.

The chances of any agreement with the European Union by next week appear slim at the moment with Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar saying there were big gaps between the two sides.

Johnson has said Britain will leave the bloc on Oct. 31 as scheduled and that he would rather ... (More on P4)...(14)

Kurds Mobilize in Syria as Turkey Poised for Imminent Attack

A K C A K A L E , Turkey - Warning of a "humanitarian catastrophe," Syrian Kurdish forces who are allied with the United States issued a "general mobilization" call on Wednesday in northeastern Syria, along the border with Turkey, as Ankara threatened an imminent invasion of the area.

The Turkish operation would ignite new fighting in the war-ravaged country's eight-year-old war, potentially displacing hundreds of thousands of

people. Turkey has long threatened an attack on the Kurdish fighters in Syria whom Ankara considers terrorists allied with a Kurdish insurgency within Turkey. A Syrian war monitoring group, the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, reported Wednesday that people were fleeing the border town of Tal Abyad.

AP journalists on the Turkish side of the border overlooking Tal Abyad saw Turkish forces crossing into



Syria in military vehicles Wednesday, though there was no official statement from either side that the offensive had begun.

Expectations of a Turkish invasion rose after President Donald Trump on Sunday ... (More on P4)...(11)

Trump Defends Syria Move, Doesn't Want US Troops in Mideast



WASHINGTON - President Donald Trump lashed out Wednesday over sharp bipartisan criticism of his decision to pull back U.S. troops

from northeastern Syria, saying he is focused on the "BIG PICTURE" that does not include American involvement in "stupid endless wars"

in the Middle East.

"Fighting between various groups that has been going on for hundreds of years. USA should never have been in Middle East," Trump said in a series of morning tweets. "The stupid endless wars, for us, are ending!"

Turkey launched its offensive Wednesday, with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announcing on his official Twitter account that the operation had begun. Erdogan said the operation aims to

eradicate "the threat of terror" against Turkey. Turkey views the Syrian Kurdish fighters who have helped the U.S. against the Islamic State as terrorists, and Trump's decision to pull back U.S. troops leaves them vulnerable to the military onslaught. It's also been condemned by some of Trump's staunchest Republican allies.

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., a close Trump ally, stepped up his criticism of the president ... (More on P4)...(12)

Iran Claims It Will Use More Advanced Centrifuges, Ramping up Nuclear Tensions

TEHRAN - Iran's nuclear chief said Monday the country will start using 30 advanced centrifuges for enriching uranium, again violating terms of the 2015 nuclear deal and ramping up pressure on Europe to save the accord.

Ali Akbar Salehi, the head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization (AEO), told Iranian state television that additional IR6-centrifuges will be used in the coming weeks. The centrifuges can enrich uranium 10 times faster than IR1-centrifuges. The country is now

producing up to 13 pounds of enriched uranium every day, according to Salehi.

"It means we have restored pre-[nuclear]-deal capacity" of uranium production, he said.

The 2015 pact allows for 3.67 percent uranium enrichment. Iran says it has already hit 4.5 percent. Prior to the nuclear deal, it only reached up to 20 percent, which is a short technical step away from the weapons-grade ... (More on P4)...(15)

China, Pakistan Eye Enhanced Economic Cooperation

BEIJING - Chinese and Pakistani businesses are looking forward to enhanced economic cooperation for shared benefits.

The two countries have much to partner in fields like agriculture, manufacturing and energy, and Chinese entrepreneurs are welcome to invest and do businesses in Pakistan, Abdul Razzak Dawood, who serves as an advisor to the Pakistani Prime Minister, said at a symposium held Tuesday on trade and investment cooperation opportunities between the two countries.

Chinese mobile payment and e-commerce firms are welcome to expand into Pakistan as the country is seeking to develop e-commerce, he added. (Xinhua)

5 Killed, 8 Injured in Central Nigeria Road Accident

ABUJA - Five people were killed and eight others severely injured following a road accident in central Nigeria late Tuesday, the local road safety police said on Wednesday. The accident occurred when a moving truck rammed into a bus in the city of Jos, capital of the central state of Plateau, said Andrew Bala, a spokesman for Nigeria's Federal Road Safety Corps. The injured were taken to a private hospital in the city, Bala said. The official attributed the accident to brake failure on the part of the truck driver who was on a high speed. (Xinhua)

Two Killed in Shooting in Eastern German City of Halle: Police

BERLIN - Two people were killed in a shooting in the eastern German city of Halle on Wednesday and a suspect was arrested, police said, with broadcasters showing images of an alleged perpetrator dressed in combat garb including a helmet. Mass-selling daily Bild said the shooting took place in front of a synagogue, and that a hand grenade was also thrown into a Jewish cemetery. An eyewitness told n-tv that someone had also fired shots into a kebab bistro in Halle.



The violence occurred on Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year in Judaism when Jews fast for 25 hours, seeking atonement.

An unnamed eyewitness told local media the assailant at the synagogue was dressed in combat gear including a

helmet, and had thrown several explosive devices into the cemetery. Regional public broadcaster MDR broadcast images of a man in combat clothing firing shots along a street from behind a car. Broadcaster Welt also showed a ... (More on P4)...(13)

U.S. Secretary of State Calls for EU to Condemn Iran Over Tanker

WASHINGTON - U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Wednesday called on the European Union to condemn Iran and hold Tehran accountable after he said oil from Iranian tanker Adrian Darya had been offloaded in Syria.

"Oil from the #AdrianDarya1 has been offloaded in Syria, proving that Iran lied to the UK and Gibraltar ... EU members should condemn this action, uphold the rule of law, and hold Iran accountable," Pompeo wrote in a

post on Twitter.

The United Kingdom seized the tanker in July off the coast of Gibraltar in July. After authorities received formal written assurances from Tehran that the ship would not discharge 2.1 million barrels of oil from Syria, the vessel was released.

But in September, Britain's foreign minister said the tanker had sold its crude oil to the Assad regime in Syria, breaking those assurances. (Reuters)

Syrian Gov't Pledges to Confront Possible Turkish Operation in Northern Syria

DAMASCUS - The Syrian Foreign Ministry on Wednesday condemned the Turkish planned military offensive on Kurdish positions in northern and northeastern Syria, stressing the Syrian government's determination to confront the «Turkish aggression by all means», according to the state news agency SANA.

In a statement, the ministry said the Syrian government condemns the «aggressive intentions of the Turkish regime» as well as the Turkish military build-up near the Syrian border, which, it said, constitutes a «blatant violation to the international law.»

This «aggressive behavior» exposes the «expansive ambitions» of Turkey in Syria, noting that the anticipated Turkish offensive cannot be justified under any pretext.

On the other hand, the statement assigned the blame on the Kurdish forces and held them responsible for the current situation, saying the Kurdish militias have been warned not to bet on the U.S. support to them and not to be a tool that serves the U.S. policies.

Meanwhile, the ministry said the Syrian government is determined to confront the Turkish aggression by all means, stressing that the door is left ajar for the Kurdish powers who want to «return to their senses» and reach deals with the Syrian government. (Xinhua)

Neighbor News

Ashgabat, Minsk Mull Prospects for Co-op

ASHGABAT - Turkmen deputy prime minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs Rashid Meredov has met with Belarus Ambassador Vyacheslav Beskosty, Trend reports with reference to the Belarus Embassy in Ashgabat.

An exchange of views on the prospects for cooperation between the two countries took place. At the meeting, a high level of interaction was noted, both in a bilateral format and on international platforms.

Following the meeting, the parties expressed their firm intention to further develop cooperation

in a friendly and constructive manner, the report said.

The mutual trade turnover between Turkmenistan and Belarus amounted to \$65 million in 2017, and to \$32.2 million in 2018. Belarus' supplies to Turkmenistan mainly consist of high value-added goods including trucks, special purpose vehicles, tractors, road-building equipment, medicines, woodworking products, and agricultural products.

An intergovernmental agreement on trade and economic cooperation between the two countries was signed in 2014. (Trend)

Uzbekistan Still Pushing 'Silk Visa', Trade Minister Says

TASHKENT - Uzbekistan's trade minister reiterated his country's commitment to unified visa requirements for Central Asian nations based on a planned «Silk Visa», which is expected to increase tourism and promote regional integration.

Uzbekistan has the most liberal visa requirements in the region, granting visa-free entry to citizens of 86 countries. It would like to see its neighbors adopt the

same approach.

«The idea of visa-free travel was something revolutionary for our country,» said Sardor Umurzakov, minister of investments and foreign trade, in an exclusive interview with the Nikkei Asian Review. «We want other countries to join this because if we have a Silk Visa, then foreign tourists could benefit, and the countries of the region could benefit from this tourist flow.» (Tashkent Times)

Judicial Remand of Maryam Nawaz, Yousaf Sharif Extended for 14 Days in CSM Case

LAHORE - An accountability court in Lahore on Wednesday extended judicial remand of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Vice President Maryam Nawaz and her cousin and Sharif Group's managing director Yousaf Abbas Sharif for 14 days in the on-going Chaudhry Sugar Mills (CSM) case.

During the hearing headed by duty judge Jawad-ul-Hassan, National Accountability Bureau (NAB) requested to extend judicial remand of the two suspects which was subsequently accepted.

On Aug 8, an anti-graft team had arrested Maryam outside the Kot Lakhpat Jail in Lahore for skipping appearance in Chaudhry Sugar Mills case over a meeting with former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.

NAB claims that Maryam was unable to account for the foreign investment in sugar mills where she was a partner or majority stakeholder. She also failed to satisfy the bureau regarding the money used to purchase the shares.

The bureau also said that three foreign investors had transferred 11,000 shares worth millions of rupees on Maryam's name. (Pakistan Today)

Iran Won't Build, Store, Use Nukes Forbidden by Islam

TEHRAN - Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei says Iran will never spend its resources on developing nuclear weapons the proliferation, stockpiling and using of which are prohibited by the religion of Islam.

In a meeting with top Iranian students and young prodigies on Wednesday morning, Ayatollah Khamenei said that science unlocks the true benefits of knowledge only when it is paired with the right understanding of humanitarianism.

"In the case of the key and very beneficial nuclear science... when it was paired with a thirst for more power, it resulted in the creation of the nuclear

weapon and turned into a major threat to the world and humanity," he said.

"Although we have always had the ability to tread this path, we declared it haram (forbidden by religion) according to the verdict of the beloved Islam and therefore there is no reason for us to expend our resources on developing and stockpiling a weapon that is absolutely prohibited (by Islam) to use," the Leader asserted.

Ayatollah Khamenei said that while Iran sees no shame in learning new sciences from others, it does not want its universities to replicate the American education system and copy the "wrong Western ... (More on P4)...(16)