

Russia to Washington: Talk to Us over Syria or Risk 'Unintended Incidents'

MOSCOW - Russia called on Friday for Washington to restart direct military-to-military cooperation to avert "unintended incidents" near Syria, at a time when U.S. officials say Moscow is building up forces to protect President Bashar al-Assad's government.

The United States is leading a campaign of air strikes against Islamic State fighters in Syrian air space, and a greater Russian presence would raise the prospect of the Cold War superpower foes encountering each other on the battlefield.



Both Moscow and Washington say their enemy is Islamic State. But Russia supports the government of Assad, while the United States says his presence makes the situation worse. In recent days, U.S. officials have described what they say is a build-up of Russian equip-

ment and manpower. Lebanese sources have told Reuters that at least some Russian troops were now engaged in combat operations in support of Assad's government. Moscow has declined to comment on those reports. At a news conference, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Russia was sending equipment to help Assad fight Islamic State. Russian servicemen were in Syria, he said, primarily to help service that equipment and teach Syrian soldiers how to use it. (Reuters)

Germany Puts 4,000 Troops on Standby to Help with Refugee Influx

BERLIN - Germany has placed 4,000 troops on standby for this weekend alone to help with incoming refugees, Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen said on Friday. The troops will be able "to help out in emergency cases" and more could be called up if necessary, she said, in remarks reported by the news weekly Der Spiegel. "We still have room to scale this up," she said, after Germany last weekend also mobilised thousands of troops to help with a record influx of 20,000 refugees, most of whom came on trains from Hungary via Austria. The troop's watchword would be to exercise



"maximum goodwill" toward the asylum-seekers, she said, according to pre-released excerpts from the article in Saturday's edition. So far this year, 450,000 refugees have ar-

rived in Germany, including 37,000 in the first eight days of September alone, Vice Chancellor Sigmar Gabriel told parliament on Thursday. With thousands arriving every day, refu-

gees are being housed in old schools, office blocks and even army barracks, with the army saying Thursday it was now putting up 14,500 refugees in 41 locations. (AFP)

Russia to Keep Sending Arms for Syria's Fight Against IS: Lavrov

MOSCOW - Russia will continue to send military equipment to Syria to help it with the fight against the Islamic State (IS) terrorist group, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Friday. "We will continue to deliver this equipment to the Syrian state in order to ensure its defense capabilities to confront the terrorist threat," Lavrov said at a press conference. He added that Russian soldiers and military experts are in Syria to service the military equipment and teach Syrian servicemen to use it. Last week, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry expressed to Lav-

rov concerns about reports of alleged Russia's military build-up in Syria, which he said could lead to "an escalation of conflict" in the war-torn country. Dismissing the comments, the top Russian diplomat insisted that the resolution of the crisis should include all forces in the region capable of resisting the IS, including the Syrian army. However, Western countries and their allies insist on the resignation of the country's president, Bashar al-Assad. Lavrov clarified that what Russia supported in Syria was not Assad's regime ... (More on P4)... (20)

UNto Mediate Yemen Peace Talks, Rebel Rockets Hit Market

SANAA - Yemen's government in exile said Friday that it would join UN-mediated peace talks next week, as Iran-backed rebels were accused of killing 20 civilians at a busy market. The Saudi-led coalition battling the Iran-backed Shiite Huthi insurgents meanwhile sent new reinforcements over the border into Yemen

in preparation for an offensive to retake the capital Sanaa. Coalition warplanes struck an arms depot in Sanaa, triggering powerful explosions that killed at least seven civilians and wounded 10, witnesses and medics said. International rights groups have repeatedly voiced alarm at the heavy civilian toll in the conflict, which has

killed more than 4,500 people since March, according to UN estimates. The coalition sent more military vehicles and troops across the border into Yemen Friday to try to recapture more territory from the Huthis, who overran the capital a year ago and swept southwards across the impoverished country. An AFP reporter at

the Wadia border post between Saudi Arabia and Yemen saw at least 40 coalition military vehicles cross over into Yemen's oil-rich Marib province on Friday. The vehicles were carrying Yemeni troops trained in Saudi Arabia as well as coalition troops whose nationality military officials in the area declined to specify. (AFP)

Zarif to Travel to China for Major Visit



TEHRAN - Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif will pay an official visit to China next week to discuss mutual ties and the nuclear agreement of July 14 between Iran and the P5+1 group of countries. The Iranian foreign minister will visit Beijing on September 15 upon the official invitation of China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei said at a regular press conference on Friday. "We hope to have an exchange of views with the Iranian side on deepening China-Iran relations and enhancing all-round cooperation under the new circumstances," the Chinese spokesman said. He added that the two sides are to discuss the implementation of the nuclear agreement between Iran and the P5+1, dubbed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). China and Iran have always maintained close diplomatic, economic, trade and energy ties. As a permanent member of the UN Security Council and a member of the P5+1 group, China has always expressed support for Iran's peaceful nuclear activities and opposed unilateral sanctions imposed on Tehran by the United States and the European Union. Beijing has also repeatedly highlighted its active role in the achievement of the nuclear agreement. On July 14, Iran and the P5+1 countries - the United States, Britain, France, China and Russia plus Germany - finalized the text of the JCPOA in the Austrian capital of Vienna. (PressTV)

Eastern European Countries Reject Migrant Quotas



PRAGUE - Eastern European countries rejected migrant quotas on Friday, exposing a deep rift on the continent over how to respond to the crisis as new footage raised further questions about Hungary's treatment of floods of refugees. Pressing his Czech, Hungarian, Polish and Slovakian counterparts in Prague, Germany's foreign minister warned that the influx of hundreds of thousands of migrants could be "the biggest challenge for the EU in its history." "If we are united in describing the situation as such, we should be united that such a challenge is not manageable for a single country," Frank-Walter Steinmeier said, calling for "European solidarity." But Steinmeier's appeal to agree to European Commission proposals unveiled

on Wednesday to share around 160,000 migrants among the 28-nation bloc fell on deaf ears. "We're convinced that as countries we should keep control over the number of those we are able to accept," said Czech Foreign Minister Lubomir Zaoralek after the meeting. The UN's refugee agency meanwhile welcomed the EU plan - which Berlin has said should go further still - to distribute refugees, but said more was needed to relieve pressure on frontline states. "The proposed relocation scheme for 160,000 refugees from Greece, Italy and Hungary would go a long way to address the crisis," UNHCR spokesman William Spindler told reporters, warning though that "our initial estimates indicate even higher needs." (AFP)

Neighbour News

Increasing Exports only Way out for Heavily Indebted Pakistan: PM

ISLAMABAD - Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on Friday stressed upon the need for enhancing Pakistan's exports to bring it at par with other countries of the region and world in the field in order to overcome the ever increasing financial woes of the country. Speaking at a high-level meeting, attended by heads of chambers of commerce, representatives of All Pakistan Textile Mills Association (APTMA) and exporter groups, the premier said that increasing exports is the only way traders

can bring revenue to the 'heavily indebted' country. He assured the business community that the government is ready to help it in whatever way possible to increase the exports and can even subsidise some export commodities. "But we cannot provide subsidy until and unless we do not get equal returns. Providing subsidies is no permanent cure for increasing exports and it sometimes causes heavy losses to the national kitty," maintained Nawaz. Federal Finance Minister Ishaq Dar, Fed... (More on P4)... (22)

Russia's Putin to Offer Help to Crisis-Hit Tajikistan on Visit Next Week

MOSCOW - Russian President Vladimir Putin will visit Tajikistan next week where he will discuss what Moscow can do to help the Central Asian nation handle a recent bout of violence, the Kremlin's top foreign policy aide said on Friday. Bloody gun battles killed 22 people in Tajikistan this month, stoking fears of religious-related unrest in the impoverished ex-Soviet state, a close Russian ally. Putin will visit the Tajik capital Dushanbe on Sept. 14-15 for talks with President Imomali Rakhmon, the Kremlin aide, Yuri Ushakov, told reporters. "We are ready

to provide assistance one way or another, as well as political support, and I think this matter will be one of the key ones during talks," said Ushakov. Asked if Russia could offer military assistance to Rakhmon, Ushakov said: "I don't know in what way the discussion will develop." Moscow has a military base in Tajikistan and worries instability there could grow following the withdrawal of NATO troops from neighboring Afghanistan, or from conflict in the Middle East, where Islamic State has captured swaths of territory, spilling over. (Reuters)

Iran Drops Oil Price to Grab Market Share

TEHRAN - Latest trading data figures show Iran has lowered the quarterly price for its flagship crude to the lowest in three years in a bid to lure Asian buyers to lock in more term supplies next year. Reuters says in a report that the price reduction is just one of the steps taken by Iran to ramp up output and regain market share lost after a series of draconian sanctions that were put into place against the country by the US and the European Union cut its crude oil exports by more than half. Asian buyers have called for lower prices amid a supply glut that has made it tougher for Iran to elbow its way to higher sales volumes despite optimism over the deal that eased some of the sanctions in exchange for curbs on Tehran's nuclear work, Reuters adds. Iran's oil sales in September are set to hit a six-month low, according to tanker loading data recently provided to Reuters. An executive at a North Asian oil refiner said it is in talks with the

National Iranian Oil Company for next year's term supply, but that Iran's crude prices have been noncompetitive. Iran set its official selling price (OSP) for Iranian Light crude for October at a 25 cents a barrel premium to Oman/Dubai, down 35 cents from the month before, two sources with knowledge of the matter said on Thursday. This puts Iranian Light OSP at a 15-cent premium to Saudi's Arab Light in the fourth quarter, the lowest quarterly price since the last three months of 2012, according to Reuters data. Iran sets its OSPs every quarter at differentials to Saudi prices, following discussions with key customers. In the fight for market share, Iran and fellow members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, including Kuwait and Iraq, have dangled carrots in the form of extended credit and free oil deliveries in addition to outright price cuts to increase their sales. (PressTV)

China, U.S. Eye more Cooperation in Tourism

LOS ANGELES - Focusing on tourism cooperation and mutually beneficial marketing initiatives, the 9th U.S.-China Leadership Summit, which kicked off here Thursday, attracted nearly 200 tourism industry leaders from the two countries. "China is now the world's fourth-largest tourist destination, the largest source of tourists, and the largest domestic tourism market," said Li Jinzao, chairman of China National Tourism Administration. "In 2014, China and U.S. together contributed to 15.4 percent of outbound international tourists and received 11.45 percent of inbound international tourists in the world," said Li. The

United States has witnessed the rapid growth of Chinese visitors in recent years, said Chris Thompson, president and CEO of Brand USA, a public-private entity for promoting U.S. tourism. "China is currently the fourth-largest source market for inbound tourism to the United States. Slightly more than 2 million Chinese visited America during 2014. By 2018, we expect China to become our number one long-haul source market." The booming of Chinese tourism and the increase in outbound Chinese visitors attracted the expansion of business of U.S. tourism companies in China. As an important gateway to the ... (More on P4)... (23)

UNHCR Welcomes European Commission's Proposals on Refugee Issue

GENEVA - The UN refugee agency UNHCR on Friday welcomed the European Commission's proposals unveiled last Wednesday to address the current refugee crisis in Europe, adding given the urgency of the situation these proposals need to be implemented fully and swiftly. "The proposed relocation scheme for 160,000 refugees from Greece, Italy and Hungary would go a long way to address this crisis," William Spindler, UNHCR Spokesperson Friday told press. Spindler highlighted the relocation scheme can only succeed if it is accompanied by large scale emergency reception, assistance and registration efforts in the countries most impacted by arrivals, particularly Greece, Hungary and Italy. To support these countries, EU should mobilize its asylum, migration, and civil protection agencies and mechanisms, including the resources of member states, with the support of UNHCR,

IOM and civil society. UNHCR welcomed the reference to opening legal channels for migration and encourages member states to expand these legal avenues for refugees, through enhanced resettlement and humanitarian admission, family reunification, humanitarian visas, and other schemes. While calling for strong measures to be taken against people traffickers and smugglers, UNHCR insisted that the management of borders needs to be consistent with national, EU and international law, including guaranteeing the right to seek asylum. The UN refugee agency supported states implementing effective return policies for individuals found not to have a valid protection claim and who cannot benefit from alternative legal means to regularize their stay. These persons should be assisted to return quickly to their home countries, in full respect of their human rights. (Xinhua)

Australia, China, U.S. Joint Military Drill ends

DARWIN - KOWARI 15, the trilateral military exercise that includes forces from Australia, China and the United States, has come to an end for its survival phase on Friday as soldiers and marines came out of the bushes near Darwin where they had undergone survival training in the past three weeks. This is the second time the trilateral exercise has taken place, this year involving 30 soldiers and marines working closely together in the hot and dry Northern Territory wild. The 30 military personnel include 10 from the Australian Army, 10 from the Chinese Peo-

ple's Liberation Army, 5 from the U.S. Army and 5 from the U.S. Marine Corp. Divided into three groups, each containing a mix of nationalities, the participants first received training at the North West Mobile Force (Norforce), a Regional Force Surveillance Unit of the Australian Army in Darwin, and were then deployed to an inland camp in the Daly River region, where they learned fire making, hunting, trapping, finding water and making shelter. They were then put in the wild without food or water for survival training for five days, three in ... (More on P4)... (21)