

U.S. Rebalance to Asia Begins with Major Military Drill in Philippines

MANILA - Philippine and U.S. soldiers began their biggest combined military exercise in 15 years on Monday, in a demonstration of Washington's commitment to its long-time ally as it rebalances to Asia in the face of China's expansion in the South China Sea. The annual "Balikatan" (shoulder-to-shoulder) war games are part of a new U.S. military initiative known as Pacific Pathways, involving a series of drills across the Asia-Pacific as America deploys more troops, ships and aircraft in the region.

"The exercises this week are part of a U.S. rebalance to Asia starting with Balikatan in the Philippines," Major-General Raul del Rosario told Reuters as more than 1,000 US Army troops joined the drills at a jungle army base. Pacific Pathways, which Washington says is part of a plan to establish a "semi-permanent" U.S. presence in Asia, will comprise 29 exercises across 12 countries in the region over the next five years. The exercise comes a few days after the Philippines said it was seeking more "substan-



support from the United States on how to counter China's rapid expansion in the South

China Sea. China's rapid reclamation around seven reefs in the Spratly archipel-

ago of the South China Sea has alarmed claimants, including the Philippines and Vietnam,

and drawn growing criticism from U.S. government officials and the military. (Reuters)

Moscow Dismisses Norway's Protests Over Arctic Islands Visit

MOSCOW - Russia on Monday dismissed Norway's protests over a weekend visit to a Norwegian archipelago by a delegation that included Russia's deputy prime minister Dmitry Rogozin. During a visit to the Arctic on Sunday to inaugurate Russia's new floating research station, the delegation stopped by Norway's Svalbard islands. Rogozin, who oversees defense in the government among other things and is known for his nationalist views, has been slapped with sanctions barring him entry to the European Union and

non-EU Norway over his position on Russia's annexation of Crimea. Norway demanded that Moscow explain why he visited the islands given the sanctions imposed on him. In response, Russia's foreign ministry dismissed the accusations as "absurd" and said that the delegation made the stop for "logistical reasons". The ministry also cited a 1920 treaty granting access to the islands to nationals of all signatory nations including Russia. "They are simply jealous that we took a dip on the North Pole," Rogozin said on Twitter. (AP)

Air Strike on Missile Base in Yemen Kills at Least Seven

SANAA - An air strike on a Scud missile base in the Yemeni capital Sanaa caused a big explosion that blew out windows in homes, killing seven civilians and wounding dozens, medical sources told Reuters. Yemen's state news agency Saba, run by the Houthi movement which controls the capital, said the bombing resulted in "dozens of martyrs and hundreds of wounded," citing a government official. Saudi Arabia has led an alliance of Sunni Arab countries in air strikes against the Iran-allied Shi'ite Houthi group and army units loyal to ex-president Ali Abdullah Saleh. The blast hit the base on Faj Attan mountain beside Hadda district, home to the presidential palace and many embassies, and sent a thick pillar of smoke into the air. Resident Adel Mansour said it was the largest explosion in more than three weeks of bombing by the Saudi-led coalition. "For the first time since the start of the bombing the windows of my house smashed," Mansour said. "My children are terrified and one of my relatives fainted because of the force of the blast." (Reuters)

US, Ukraine Start Military Training, Defying Russian Fury

YAVORIV, Ukraine - Troops from the United States and Ukraine kicked off joint training exercises Monday intended to help bolster Ukraine's defenses against incursions from Russian-backed separatists in the east. The exercises, dubbed "Fearless Guardian-2015," sparked an enraged reaction from Russia, which described them as a potential cause of destabilization. Moscow continues to dismiss mounting evidence of its involvement in fomenting and supporting a separatist insurgency in Ukraine that has claimed more than 6,100 lives over the past year. The 300 U.S. Army paratroopers involved in the training traveled to Ukraine last week and will be working alongside 900 national guardsmen. "The major-

ity of the participants here from the Ukrainian side have endured difficult trials on the front," Poroshenko said at the inauguration ceremony for the exercises. Fighting in the east has ebbed substantially since the signing of a February cease-fire deal, but sporadic clashes still break out along the 450-kilometer front line separating government and rebel forces. The truce deal includes provisions for all "armed formations" to be pulled out of the country. While Kiev interprets that language as being aimed at the Russian forces that Moscow denies are in Ukraine, the Kremlin has argued the United States is implicitly violating the cease-fire deal by stationing its military trainers in the country. Training for Ukrainian

troops is part of a broader package of assistance being provided by the United States. President Barack Obama's administration has said it will provide Ukraine's military with \$75 million in nonlethal aid, but has refrained so far from offering lethal equipment, despite calls from Congress to do so. Last month, Ukraine began receipt of a planned consignment of 230 Humvees from the United States. National guard units, many of which began as volunteer groupings, have been an important part of Ukrainian forces' fighting against the separatists. Two national guard units, working on weeklong rotations, are holding part of the village of Shyrokyne, currently the most fraught location in the east. (AP)

CIA Chief Holds Talks with Egypt President

CAIRO - US Central Intelligence Agency director John Brennan held talks with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi during an unannounced visit to Cairo, the president's office said. The Sunday evening meeting came amid a quickening rapprochement between the long-time allies after Washington in March lifted a partial freeze on its \$1.5 billion annual aid to Egypt that it imposed when then-army chief Sisi ousted elected president Mohamed Morsi in

2013. "The meeting underscored the strong ties between Egypt and the USA and the importance of their strategic relationship as well as their commitment to promote relations," a statement from the president's office said. "The two sides agreed to continue consultation and coordination on issues of mutual interest, particularly with regard to areas witnessing conflict in the Middle East and international efforts to eradicate terrorism." (AFP)

EU Promises to Act over Migrant Crisis

LUXEMBOURG - EU foreign ministers promised on Monday to do more to stop migrant deaths in the Mediterranean by increasing rescues and catching traffickers, stung by a weekend tragedy that killed up to 700 people off the Libyan coast. Many European governments have long been reluctant to fund rescue operations in the Mediterranean for fear of encouraging more people to make the crossing in

search of a better life in Europe, but they now face outrage over the refugee deaths. "What's at stake is the reputation of the European Union," Italian Foreign Minister Paolo Gentiloni told reporters as he arrived for a meeting with EU peers in Luxembourg. "We can't have a European emergency and an Italian answer." The foreign ministers held a minute of silence at the start of their meet-

ing and are being joined by interior ministers later for an emergency discussion of the migration crisis. Northern European Union countries have so far largely left rescue operations to southern states such as Italy. In the week prior to the weekend's tragedy, the Italian coast guard rescued almost 8,000 migrants in the Mediterranean, according to the European Commission, the EU's executive. (Reuters)

Neighbour News

Muslims Must Take Action to End Yemen War: Larijani

TEHRAN - Iran's parliament (Majlis) speaker, Ali Larijani, says Muslim countries shoulder a heavy responsibility towards the ongoing crisis in Yemen, calling on them to work for putting and end to the war in the impoverished Arab country. In a telephone conversation with Iraqi parliament speaker, Salim al-Jabouri, on Monday, Larijani expressed regret over the ongoing military campaign in Yemen. "The escalation of the crisis in Yemen and the killing of innocent peo-

ple in the country would inflict damage on all Muslim countries," he said. Larijani urged Muslim nations to hold consultations on finding ways to end the crisis in Yemen. He called for an urgent meeting among parliament speakers of Muslim countries to discuss the developments in Yemen. The Iraqi parliament speaker, for his part, praised Iran's efforts to solve the Yemeni crisis and said his country attaches great importance to the settlement of the crisis. (Agencies)

Tajik President, Chinese Official Discuss Cooperation Issues

DUSHANBE - Tajik President Emomali Rahmon on Monday received Mr. Zhang Chunxian, the China Communist Party Secretary for the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR). According to the Tajik president's official website, the two sides discussed a broad range of issues related to cooperation between Tajikistan and China's XUAR. In the course of the talks, Mr. Zhang reportedly informed Tajik president of activities of Tajik-Chinese joint ventures that are successfully operating in the south and in the north of Tajikistan. They also discussed development of a new program of cooperation

between Tajikistan in XUAR in the coming years. Rahmon and Zhang highly appraised the work of the Kulma border crossing and discussed reconstruction of the Khorog-Kulma highway in the Gorno Badakhshan Autonomous Region (GBAO), the source said. Zhang Chunxian is a Chinese politician and a current member of the Politburo of the Communist Party of China. Since 2010 he has served as the Communist Party Secretary for the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. From 2005 to 2010 he was the Party Secretary of Hunan Province. (Asia-Plus)

China can Play Important Role in Asian-African Cooperation

JAKARTA - China can play a very important role in Asian-African countries' cooperation due to its good relations with many African countries, said a Tunisian senior diplomatic on Monday. "Africa is developing very fast, it is trying very much to learn achievements the Asia gets and China can play a very important role in cooperation and communication between the two continent," Elyes Kasri, Director General of America Asia affairs of Minister of Foreign Affairs, told Xinhua. He made the remarks on the sidelines of the Asian-African Ministerial Meeting held ahead of the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the Asian-Af-

rican Conference, also known as the Bandung Conference. He said that Tunisia and China share excellent relationship. "We are looking forward to strengthening this relationship," he said. "As a matter of fact, we are talking about new cooperation mechanism to strengthening political consultation, bilateral relations, political consultation on international issues, especially on cooperation between Africa and China," he stressed. Ministers from Asian and African countries met here on Monday, pledging to implement the Bandung Spirit, which highlights the South-South cooperation. (Xinhua)

China, Pakistan Launch Economic Corridor Plan Worth \$46 Billion

ISLAMABAD - China and Pakistan launched a plan on Monday for energy and infrastructure projects in Pakistan worth \$46 billion, linking their economies and underscoring China's economic ambitions in Asia and beyond. China's President Xi Jinping arrived in Pakistan to oversee the signing of agreements aimed at establishing a Pakistan-China Economic Corridor between Pakistan's southern Gwadar port on the Arabian Sea and China's western Xinjiang region. The plan, which would eclipse U.S. spending in Pakistan over the last decade or so, is part of China's aim to forge

"Silk Road" land and sea ties to markets in the Middle East and Europe. Xi, whose visit to Pakistan winds up on Tuesday, said it cemented an "all-weather strategic cooperative partnership" between the neighbors. Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said the corridor would transform Pakistan into a regional hub and enable China to create a shorter and cheaper route for trade and investment with south, central and west Asia and the Middle East and Africa. "Friendship with China is the cornerstone of Pakistan's foreign policy," Sharif said in a speech. (Reuters)

د افغانستان اسلامي جمهوریت
د اقتصاد وزارت
د افغانستان د بیارغونې او پرمختیایي خدماتو دفتر



جمهوری اسلامی افغانستان
وزارت اقتصاد
دفتر خدمات بازسازی و انکشافی افغانستان

Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
Ministry of Economy
Afghanistan Reconstruction & Development Services

A R D S

Invitation for Bids (IFB)

Procurement Entities	ARDS on behalf of Ministry of Finance		
Item Description	Supply, Installation and Operation of ELECTRONIC CARGO TRACKING AND SEALING SYSTEM for the Afghan Customs Department		
Ref. No	MOF/1972/ICB		
Bid Security	No.	Bid Security (Afghanis) or an equivalent amount in a freely convertible currency.	Valid as per below
	1	1,200,000.00 AFN or an equivalent	Valid up to 4 October, 2015
Deadline for Bid Submission	June 06, 2015 at 14:00 Hrs (Local Kabul Time), Electronic submission of Bid is not allowed. Late bid will be rejected.		
Address for Bid Submission	Afghanistan Reconstruction & Development Services (ARDS) 4th Floors, Ministry of Economy Building Malik Asghar Square, Kabul - Afghanistan. Telephone: + 00-93 -782651020.		
Bid Document is available at	A complete set of Bidding documents in English may be obtained by interested bidders free of cost by downloading from the ARDS website www.ards.gov.af or may obtain in CD from the ARDS Office (Address given above). In case of any difficulty in downloading from website, interested bidders may contact at e-mail address ards.procurement@ards.org.af copied to Abdullah.khalid@ards.org.af		

'Logistical Issues' Appear to Delay Australian Refugee Flights to Cambodia

SYDNEY - The Australian government appeared to have delayed on Monday a planned first flight to transfer refugees held in one of its offshore detention centers to Cambodia amid reports people are shunning the voluntary program. Australia has been criticized widely for its tough immigration policies, including sending asylum seekers to camps in impoverished Papua New Guinea and the tiny Pacific island nation of Nauru, where they face long periods of detention. In September, Cambodia agreed to resettle potentially hundreds of refugees held on Nauru in exchange for an extra A\$40 million (\$31.16 million) in aid from Canberra. The agreement applies only to refugees willing to go to Cambodia. Immigration Minister Peter Dutton said plans for the transfer were on track. Documents seen by Reuters said the chartered flights from Nauru to Phnom Penh were due to begin on Monday. However, Dutton said logistical issues with Cambodian officials could take a few days to sort out. He said a number of refugees were interested in the transfer, although he acknowledged there was pressure being applied by others for them to shun the offer. "There are some within the community at the moment trying to pressure people not to take up the offer, but that is just prolonging their period on Nauru," Dutton told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation Radio on Monday. Australian media and refugee advocates have reported that acceptance of the offer had been poor. (Reuters)