

(1) Graham Warns...

a trillion dollars since 2001. President Trump announced a 4,000-troop increase in August 2017 as part of an effort to break the stalemate in the country. But he has been moving toward agreeing to a phased withdrawal of troops. The Washington Post reports that U.S. Special Envoy Zalmay Khalilzad is negotiating a deal to draw down troops from 14,000 to 8,600. The two sides have been discussing an agreement in which the U.S. withdraws from Afghanistan, in return for the Taliban promising to ensure that Afghanistan does not become a haven for terrorists and Al Qaeda. Trump met last week with his top security officials about the way forward in Afghanistan. "Just completed a very good meeting on Afghanistan," the president tweeted afterward. But Graham says that the Taliban don't have the capacity to remove the terror group, and said he had been briefed by General Austin "Scott" Miller that the Afghan version of ISIS, ISIS-K, is also trying to set up operations against America and are perhaps more lethal than Al Qaeda. "It would be insane to outsource our national security to the Taliban when it comes to ISIS," he said. Graham says that the U.S. could reduce safely to 8,600 but anything below that is a "high-risk strategy." He plans to introduce legislation to create a backstop measure to require the secretaries of state and defense to certify that dropping troop levels would not endanger U.S. national security. (Fox News)

(2) Senior Afghan Envoy ...

of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Iris Benom said in a meeting with head of Foreign Ministry's office in East and North of Iran in Mashhad city Gholam Abbas Arbab Khales on June 01.

Arbab Khales, for his part, said that some 600,000 Afghan nationals are residing in Khorassan Razavi province either having valid papers or without document.

Over one thousand Afghan nationals are entering Iran illegally daily, half of whom are arrested and deported to their country, he said.

An Iranian official said last year that over 900,000 legal Afghan refugees were living in Iran, adding that the number of Iraqis residing in Iran had declined as security has been restored to that country.

"From the 1.35 million Afghans about 900 thousand are refugees, and 450 thousand are passport holders; there are a number of illegal ones, whose number is not known," Deputy Director of the Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs, Mohammad Ali Salehi Najafabadi said.

He pointed to Afghanistan as part of the Muslim World and an important neighbor of Iran, and said, "Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei has ordered that all the Afghan children in Iran should be educated like the Iranians."

Salehi Najafabadi also said that the safer Iran's neighbor, the better for Iran, and added Iran was trying to raise a dynamic generation of Afghans to be able to return to their country.

He said once there were about 450,000 Iraqi refugees in Iran, but after the return of security to Iraq, most of them went back to their country, adding, "There are about 40,000 Iraqis in Iran now." (FNA)

(3) Daikundi Filmmakers ...

supported by any organ," she said. Mohammad Hussain Sirat, Daikundi information and culture director, acknowledged government's negligence in supporting cinema and artists.

He said 30 institutes of artists and filmmakers were registered in the province. He said artists faced many problems and even did not have a special office and budget for creating cinematic contents.

Sirat said they were trying to draw the government's attention toward improvement in film productions. (Pajhwok)

(4) Political Parties ...

troops out of Afghanistan would lead to "another 9/11", saying that America cannot "outsource" its national security to the Taliban.

Mr. Graham issued a similar warning ahead of US President Donald Trump meeting with his security advisors last month where they discussed issues around a possible peace deal with the Taliban - the militant group which is seeking the withdrawal of all US forces from Afghanistan in exchange

for ceasefire and intra-Afghan negotiations.

"If we left tomorrow, the Taliban cannot be trusted to take care of ISIS [Daesh] and al-Qaeda," Graham said in an interview with Fox News on Saturday. (Tolo news)

(5) Melon Production ...

This comes as almost 20 provinces, including Badghis, faced severe drought in 2018 which heavily damaged agricultural products in the provinces. (Tolo news)

(6) OIC Supports ...

Islamic counties in the peace process. Meanwhile, the 9th round of talks between the US and Taliban representatives is underway in Qatar amid a reported headway. The intra-Afghan talks will take place after this round of talks.

However, the Taliban have several times rejected talks with the Afghan government but the government has appointed a 15-member delegation to negotiate with the rebels.

The OIC official assured President Ghani of sending observers to monitor the presidential election on September 28. About ulema's role, Ghani said: "Our ulema and their colleagues in Islamic countries should work jointly to deal with the extremist mindset and work for streamlining curriculum of seminaries." (Pajhwok)

(7) Afghanistan ...

Cricket Board said the ACB leadership and Human Resources officials decided to terminate the contracts of 43 employees whose presence was deemed as 'unnecessary'.

Zia-ul-Haq Zia, the head of the Human Resources Department of Afghanistan Cricket Board said it was necessary to terminate the contracts of certain employees in a bid to ensure quality of work amid shortage of budget.

Zia further added that the employees whose contracts were terminated were receiving a collective salary of up to 1 million Afghans per month.

However, he said the Cricket Board will spend the mentioned amount on technical and constructive affairs which will result in major changes.

Meanwhile, the Afghanistan Cricket Board said the 43 employees whose contracts were terminated will receive their salary for the month of September as well. (KP)

(8) Khost Organizes ...

is the first step to spread awareness among people. We have invited heads of some institutions so they include promotion of women handicrafts in their projects," she said.

Shafeia said the government was paying more attention to improving the lives of women and the Khost Women Affairs Department was committed to organizing different programs for the improvement of women lives in the province. (Pajhwok)

(9) Presidential Poll...

and pave the way for people to exercise their right to vote, he said.

Chimtal, Chahar Bolak, Dawlatabad, Shortepa, Shulgar and Zari are districts which are under high security threats, according to the IEC.

Bayani said materials for awareness and training of staff had reached the IEC's Balkh office and sensitive electoral materials would be transferred to the province and districts in next few days. In response to a question, he said holding election in unstable areas of the province in absence of observers would be a matter of concern.

Bayani asked candidates and electoral tickets to send their observers to polling stations which would be open on the Election Day.

About closure of polling stations due to security problems, Mohammad Hanif Rezayee, spokesman of the Shahin Military Corps in Balkh, said that they were trying to pave the ground for more people to participate in the election. He said senior security officials from Kabul visited the province on Saturday and discussed improving security in Balkh ahead of election.

People in the last Wolesi Jirga election also feared insecurity but Afghan forces launched clearing operations in insecure areas and there was high turnout of voters on the Election Day, he said. The IEC and the Ministry of Interior say 4,942 polling stations would be open for the presidential election across the country. (Pajhwok)

(10) Taliban's ...

Taliban would be underway until they were suppressed. Rahimullah, a resident of Kabutarkhan

area, said his home had been cleared for militants two months ago but he could not go there because landmines had been planted there. (Pajhwok)

(11) Trump Dampens...

nuclear deal could set ablaze the Middle East, met Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Friday. The aim was to discuss proposals that could ease the crisis, including the idea of reducing some U.S. sanctions or providing Iran with an economic compensation mechanism.

Macron appeared to backtrack on his own team's comments later, saying there was no formal mandate from the G7 leaders to pass a message to Iran. Highlighting just how difficult agreeing on concrete measures between allies is, Macron said the leaders' views had converged on not wanting Iran to acquire a nuclear bomb and ensuring peace and security in the Middle East. He was supposed to discuss those ideas with Trump on the sidelines of the G7, which also comprises Britain, Germany, Italy, Canada, Japan and the EU.

"Everyone wants to avoid a conflict, Donald Trump was extremely clear on that point," Macron told LCI.

"We have to continue to take initiatives and in the coming weeks that on the one hand there are no more Iranian decisions that contradict this objective and that we open new negotiations," Macron said without giving details.

In response to the tougher U.S. sanctions and what it says is the inability of European powers party to the deal - France, Britain and Germany, to compensate it for its lost oil revenue, Tehran has responded with a series of moves, including retreating from some of its commitments to limit its nuclear activity made under the deal.

The United States has made no indication it will ease any sanctions and it is unclear what kind of compensation mechanism Macron wants to offer Iran given at this stage a proposed trade channel for humanitarian and food exchanges with Iran is still not operational.

Macron has also said that in return for any concessions he would expect Iran to comply fully with the nuclear deal and for Iran to engage in new negotiations that would include its ballistic missile program and regional activities. (Reuters)

(12) Tens of Thousands...

operations". Myanmar denies those accusations and says they were conducting legitimate operations against Rohingya insurgents who attacked police posts.

"We miss our home, our relatives, our beloved ones who were killed in Myanmar," said Chekufa, the leader of the Rohingya Women's Empowerment and Advocacy Network, which organized one of the demonstrations. "We miss them very much today."

Efforts to begin repatriating 3,450 Rohingya cleared by Myanmar failed on Thursday after none agreed to go.

In Myanmar, Rohingya are denigrated as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh, denied citizenship, and subjected to tight restrictions on freedom of movement.

Despite squalid conditions in the Bangladesh camps, refugees are fearful of returning home without assurances of citizenship and security.

"We are very grateful to the Bangladesh government, but we are living here not like humans but like animals, just eating and sleeping," Chekufa said. (Reuters)

(13) Israel Says...

Conricus said the drones, accompanied by "Iranian operatives", had arrived at Damascus airport from Iran several weeks ago and were taken to a Quds-controlled compound in a village southeast of the city.

Israel carried out Saturday's attack, Conricus said, after learning that another attempt to launch drones was imminent.

Writing on Twitter after Saturday's Israeli strike, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said: "Iran has no immunity anywhere. Our forces operate in every sector against the Iranian aggression. If someone rises up to kill you, kill him first."

A war monitor said on Sunday that two members of Tehran-backed Lebanese militia Hezbollah and one Iranian were killed in the attack.

Syrian state media said Syrian air defenses intercepted "hostile targets" over Damascus, the capital, on Saturday night. Witnesses in Damascus said they heard and saw explosions in the sky.

The Syrian army said in a statement that "the majority of the Israeli missiles were destroyed before reaching their targets." (Reuters)

(14) North Korea Tests...

called the drills an invasion rehearsal and conducted a slew of missile and rocket tests in response.

Some experts said North Korea aims to show off its weapons to try to get an upper hand ahead of a possible restart of nuclear negotiations, which have been largely stalemated since the second summit between President Donald Trump and Kim in Vietnam in February fell apart due to squabbling over U.S.-led sanctions on North Korea. The two leaders met again at the inter-Korean border in late June and agreed to resume talks.

Trump downplayed the latest launch, saying, "Kim Jong Un has been, you know, pretty straight with me. ... He likes testing missiles but we never restricted short-range missiles. We'll see what happens."

South Korea's military said North Korea fired two suspected short-range ballistic missiles off its east coast on Saturday morning, and that they flew about 380 kilometers (236 miles) at a maximum altitude of 97 kilometers (60 miles). It was the seventh known weapons test by North Korea in about a month.

North Korea has been pushing to develop powerful multiple rocket launch systems, whose projectiles resemble short-range missiles, some experts said. On Aug. 1, North Korea said it tested a large-caliber multiple rocket guided system, a day after South Korea said the North fired two short-range ballistic missiles.

Most of the North Korean weapons tested in recent weeks have shown short-range flight distances. This suggests that North Korea still doesn't intend to lift its self-imposed moratorium on nuclear and long-range missile tests, which would certainly derail the negotiations with Washington.

The latest North Korean launches came two days after South Korea said it would terminate its intelligence-sharing deal with Japan amid trade disputes between the U.S. allies. Washington expressed its disappointment at South Korea's decision.

In a development that could possibly further complicate ties between Seoul and Tokyo, South Korea's navy on Sunday began two-day exercises on and around a group of islets controlled by South Korea but also claimed by Japan. Japan's Foreign Ministry issued a statement saying the islets belong to Japan and called the drills "unacceptable."

South Korean navy officers said the drills are the first of two regular exercises held every year near the islets, called Dokdo in Korean and Takeshima in Japanese. They said the drills involve aircraft landing on the islets and warships maneuvering nearby. Local media said South Korea originally planned the first drills in June, but delayed them in consideration of relations with Japan. (AP)

(15) Extinction Bites...

hugs after the tallies. Opponents variously included China, Iceland, Japan, Malaysia and New Zealand. The U.S. voted against the mako shark measure, but supported the other two.

Rima Jabado, a shark expert and lead scientist of the Gulf Elasmobranch project, said many of the species included in the CITES proposals are classified as "critically endangered." Jabado said there has been an 80% decline in the number of wedgefishes, based on available data. Like giant guitarfishes, the enigmatic wedgefish has an elongated triangle-shaped head and can be found in oceans in Southeast Asia, the Arabian Sea and East Africa.

Makos are the world's fastest sharks, reaching speeds of up to 80 mph (nearly 130 kph). But they often get caught up in the nets of fishing trawlers hunting for tuna.

Several countries with large fishing fleets, including Japan, opposed the measure to protect mako sharks.

"Japan has been highly dependent on (live) marine resources from the ancient times," said Hideki Moronuki, director of fisheries negotiations at the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. "It's very, very important for us in Japan to sustainably use all those marine riches," he said, noting that even the CITES secretariat had recommended rejecting the mako shark proposal.

CITES concluded that "with the possible but uncertain exception of the Mediterranean, the population of (mako

sharks) does not seem to have declined below the 30% threshold in different ocean regions" and that "it is currently not projected that declines would continue."

Still, Jabado said some species of sharks and rays are becoming so difficult to find in the wild that scientists only often see them when they are on sale at local fish markets.

"How are we ever going to save these species if we only see them when fishermen bring them in?" she said, adding that even if actions are taken now, it will be decades before shark populations start to recover. Losing more sharks and rays could also have other unintended consequences since they are top ocean predators and help to balance the ecosystems, Jabado said.

Scientists warn that although warming oceans and climate change are also hurting sharks, it is the demand for shark fin soup that is threatening to drive some species to extinction. The Pew Trust estimates that between 63 million and 273 million sharks are killed every year, mostly to feed the shark fin trade centered in Hong Kong.

Dried shark fin can draw up to \$1,000 per kilogram. The fins are often turned into shark fin soup, a Chinese delicacy that symbolizes good fortune, in which the gelatinous fin is served in a broth whose recipe dates back to the 10th-century Song Dynasty. Fishermen often slice off a shark's fin while the animal is still alive before tossing the writhing carcass back into the ocean.

While Chinese celebrities like retired basketball star Yao Ming are trying to persuade diners to abandon the soup, many aren't convinced.

"Shark fin soup is a Chinese tradition so why should I stop eating it?" Wilson Kwan said outside a seafood restaurant in London's Chinatown. "I know some people say it's cruel to sharks, but sharks are killers too."

Last year, there were an estimated 66 unprovoked shark attacks on humans globally, including four fatalities, according to the Florida Museum, which tracks such incidents. It is exceedingly rare for sharks to bite humans - and when they do, it's often because they have mistaken them for seals or other prey. (AP)

(16) Pope, Urging...

Saturday deployed in the Amazon to fight the fires.

Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro also tried to temper global concern, saying that previously deforested areas had burned and that intact rainforest was spared.

Even so, the fires were an issue of top concern at the G-7 summit.

French President Emmanuel Macron said Sunday that leaders of major democracies are nearing an agreement on how to help fight the fires and repair the damage. He said agreement would involve both technical and financial mechanisms "so that we can help them in the most effective way possible."

It's not clear, however, whether Brazil would welcome the help.

The Brazilian military operations came after widespread criticism of Bolsonaro's handling of the crisis. On Friday, the president authorized the armed forces to put out fires, saying he is committed to protecting the Amazon region.

About 44,000 troops will be available for "unprecedented" operations to put out the fires, and forces are heading to six Brazilian states that asked for federal help, Defense Minister Fernando Azevedo said. The states are Roraima, Rondonia, Tocantins, Para, Acre and Mato Grosso.

France's president thrust the Amazon fires to the top of the agenda of the G-7 summit after declaring it a global emergency and threatening to torpedo a European Union trade deal with Brazil and other South American countries. France claims a small part of the Amazon in its overseas department of French Guiana.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel, also at the summit, came down against blocking the EU-Mercosur trade accord, but said she was in favor of treating the Amazon fires as an urgent threat. (AP)

(17) Iranian FM ...

agreed to task Macron with delivering a joint statement to Iran, US President Trump told reporters on Sunday that he hadn't "discussed that."

Divided in their approach to doing so, the G7 leaders could only agree jointly that they wanted to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear bomb and ensure peace and stability in the Middle East. (RT)