

Trump Dampens Macron Optimism on Iran Talks

BIARRITZ, France - U.S. President Donald Trump appeared to brush aside French efforts to mediate with Iran on Sunday, saying that while he was happy for President Emmanuel Macron to reach out to Tehran to defuse tensions he would carry on with his own initiatives.

European leaders have struggled to tamp down the brewing confrontation between Iran and the United States since Trump pulled his country out of Iran's internationally-brokered 2015 nuclear deal and reimposed sanctions on the Iranian economy.

Macron, who has pushed mediation efforts in recent weeks to avoid a further de-



terioration in the region, had told LCI television that the G7 had agreed on joint action on Iran. The French presidency said G7 leaders had even

agreed that Macron should hold talks and pass over messages to Iran after they discussed the issue over dinner at a summit in southwestern France

on Saturday evening.

However, Trump, who has pushed a maximum pressure policy on Iran, pushed back.

Asked if he had signed off on a statement that Macron intends to give on behalf of the G7 on Iran, Trump said: "I haven't discussed this. No I haven't," he told reporters, adding that Macron and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe were free to talk to Iran.

"We'll do our own outreach, but, you know, I can't stop people from talking. If they want to talk, they can talk."

Macron, who has taken the lead to defuse tensions fearing that a collapse of the ...**(More on P4)...(11)**

Neighbor News

Warship US Sent to 'Deter' Iran 'Steers Clear' of Iran

TEHRAN - A large aircraft carrier strike force sent to the Middle East in May on an accelerated schedule to "deter" Iran has been "steering clear" of the country since arrival, staying as far away as the Arabian Sea for fear of Iranian military strikes in case of a potential conflict. The dispatch earlier this year of the USS Abraham Lincoln to the Middle East ahead of schedule was meant by the US "to send a clear and unmistakable message" to Iran. And even as Iranian military officials knew the deployment was not extraordinary - the US's Fifth Fleet is headquartered

in Bahrain - it ratcheted up tensions significantly at the time. Tensions first rose between Iran and the US in May 2018, when US President Donald Trump pulled America out of a multilateral deal with Iran and started attempting to drive Iran's oil sales presumably to zero. This handout picture, released by the US Navy on May 17, 2019, shows an MV-22 Osprey from Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron (VMM-264) preparing to land on the flight deck of the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln in the Arabian Sea. (Press TV)

NAB Recovers Rs71bn in Last 20 Months: Chairman

ISLAMABAD - National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Chairman Javed Iqbal on Sunday said that the bureau has recovered record Rs71 billion directly or indirectly from the corrupt elements during the last 20 months.

In a statement, he said NAB also filed 600 corruption references in different accountability courts over the said period.

He said the accountability watchdog recovered from billions of rupees from the owners of various fake housing societies and returned the money to the affected.

At present, at least 1,223 references, in-

volving Rs900bn, were being heard by various accountability courts.

"The NAB is a national institution and its officers were performing their national duties with utmost sincerity and dedication," he added.

He said that the bureau was striving hard to take the mega corruption cases to a logical conclusion and all possible resources were being utilized for the elimination of white-collar corruption cases on priority basis as the basic aim of NAB was the elimination of corruption from the society and recovery of looted money from the plunderers. (Agencies)

Turkmenistan to Host International Conference on Construction in Ashgabat

ASHGABAT - Turkmenistan will host the "Turkmengurlushyk-2019" international exhibition and conference dedicated to the development of the construction industry on August 29-31 in Ashgabat, Trend reports referring to the Turkmen Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The organizers also include the Ministry of Construction and Architecture of Turkmenistan and the Turkmenawtoyollary (Turkmen Highways) State Concern. About 140 companies from Russia, France, Germany, Austria, China, Turkey, South Korea and other countries are expected to participate. The main emphasis will be placed on the pro-

duction of new types of domestic products and their promotion on international markets, the report reads.

A large-scale construction of about 2,000 large industrial and social facilities with a total value of over \$30 billion is being carried out in the country.

Turkmenistan is located in a seismically dangerous zone. On the night of October 6, 1948, a magnitude 10 earthquake occurred in Ashgabat and claimed numerous lives. Monitoring compliance with the necessary building codes is carried out by a research institute subordinate to the Ministry of Construction and Architecture of Turkmenistan. (Trend)

No Iranian Targets Hit by Israeli Airstrikes in Syria, Former Revolutionary Guards Chief Says

TEHRAN - Tel Aviv's assertion that it attacked Iranian forces stationed near Damascus is untrue, the former head of Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards has said, warning that the airstrikes would be answered by Syria's "defenders."

Major General Mohsen Rezaei dismissed allegations that the cross-border strikes had targeted Iranian military personnel who were planning to launch drone attacks aimed at targets inside Israel. "This is a lie and not true. Israel and the United States do not have the power to attack Iran's various centers, and our (military

advisory centers have not been harmed," Rezaei told the semi-official ILNA news agency.

Earlier this week, Israeli airstrikes targeted an alleged Iranian weapons depot in Iraq - a move which was also strongly condemned by Rezaei. "The actions carried out jointly by Israel and the United States in Syria and Iraq are in breach of international law and will soon be answered by Syria and Iraq's defenders," he said.

Israel has carried out countless airstrikes inside Syria, claiming that the attacks target Iranian and Hezbollah forces. (RT)

Pope, Urging Prayers, Says Amazon Forest Vital for Our Earth

VATICAN CITY - Pope Francis said Sunday that the Amazon forest is vital for our Earth and is urging prayers that fires there are quickly controlled.

Francis added his voice to the chorus of international concern that the blazes in Brazil will have grave repercussions on the world's environmental health.

The pontiff, who is from the neighboring South American nation of Argentina, told the public in St. Peter's Square that "we're all worried"

about the vast Amazon forest. He warned that that green "lung of forest is vital for our planet."

Francis said "let us pray so that, with the efforts of all, they are controlled as quickly as possible."

The blazes have sparked anti-government protests in Brazil and became a pressing issue for leaders at the Group of Seven summit in France. Backed by military aircraft, Brazilian troops on ...**(More on P4)...(16)**

Tens of Thousands of Rohingya Mark 'Genocide Day' Amid Tensions in Bangladesh Camps

COX'S BAZAR, Bangladesh - At least 100,000 Rohingya refugees rallied in camps in Bangladesh on Sunday, marking two years since the start of a brutal military crackdown in Myanmar that forced more than 730,000 to flee across the border.

Massive crowds gathered in the morning on a hillside for memorial prayers for relatives killed in the violence.

Others marched under the sweltering sun chanting, "We want justice" and "No more gen-

ocide", some wearing white shirts bearing the words 'Rohingya Genocide Remembrance'.

The commemorations took place amid heightened tensions in parts of the camps after security forces shot dead two Rohingya on Saturday, saying they were involved in the murder of a ruling party official. More than one million people live in the camps in southern Bangladesh in the world's largest refugee settlement. The majority having fled violence in 2017 that the



United Nations says was executed with "genocidal intent".

Refugees say Myanmar's security forces and Buddhist civilians carried out mass killings and gang rapes during weeks of "clearance ...**(More on P4)...(12)**

Israel Says Air Strike in Syria Sent 'No Immunity' Message to Iran



JERUSALEM/DAMASCUS - Israel said on Sunday an air strike against an arm of Iran's Revolutionary Guards in Syria that it accused of plan-

ning "killer drone attacks" showed Tehran that its forces were vulnerable anywhere.

A senior Revolutionary Guards commander de-

nied that Iranian targets had been hit late on Saturday and said its military "advisory centers have not been harmed", the semi-official ILNA news agency reported.

The Israeli military said its aircraft struck "Iranian Quds Force operatives and Shiite militias which were preparing to advance attack plans targeting sites in Israel from within Syria over the last number of days". The elite Quds Force is the overseas arm of Iran's Revolutionary Guards (IRGC).

Lieutenant-Colonel Jonathan Conricus, an Israeli military spokesman, told reporters "a number of attack drones", each armed with several kilograms of explosives, were to have been launched simultaneously at targets in northern Israel on Thursday but the plan was thwarted.

He did not disclose what measures Israel took that day. He described the "killer drones" - designed to slam into targets - as highly accurate. ...**(More on P4)...(13)**

Expanded South Korean Military Drills Around Disputed Island Draw Japanese Protest

SEOUL - South Korean forces began two days of expanded drills on Sunday around an island also claimed by Japan, prompting a protest from Tokyo only days after Seoul said it would scrap an intelligence-sharing pact with its neighbor amid worsening relations.

Tokyo and Seoul have long been at loggerheads over the sovereignty of the group of islets called Takeshima in Japanese and Dokdo in Korean, which lie

about halfway between the East Asian neighbors in the Sea of Japan, also known as the East Sea.

The latest military drills began on Sunday and included naval, air, and army forces, as well as marines, a South Korean ministry of defense official said.

The Japanese foreign ministry called the drills unacceptable and said it had lodged a protest with South Korea calling for them to end. (Reuters)

Trump Dangles 'Very Big' Trade Deal in Front of Brexit Britain

BIARRITZ, France - British Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Sunday said he and President Donald Trump were "gung-ho" about a post-Brexit trade deal but cautioned the United States would be tough negotiators and that he would not rush talks.

Trump promised a big trade deal for Britain after it leaves the European Union, which he said had been a drag on Britain's ability to cut a good deal.

Facing a delicate task of assuaging European allies while not angering Trump at a G7 summit in France, Johnson said there were huge opportunities for British businesses in the U.S. market, but hinted at differences between the two sides on the scope of a deal. (Reuters)

Two 'Israeli Suicide Drones' Crash & Explode in Beirut

JERUSALEM - An explosion rocked the Lebanese capital just as Israel was bombing 'Iranian targets' in Syria. The blast was the result of an 'Israeli drone attack' in which one UAV crashed and another prematurely exploded, Hezbollah claims.

A small drone failed to detonate and crashed in the southern suburb of Beirut, while a second drone exploded near the militant group's media center, damaging the building, a Hezbollah spokesperson told news agencies. No casualties were reported from the incidents, which the organization immediately blamed on Israel. Unverified pictures surfaced online showing debris resembling a quad-copter similar to drones used by Israel for surveillance and the deployment of tear gas in Gaza border clashes. (RT)

North Korea Tests New 'Super-Large' Rocket Launcher

SEOUL, South Korea - North Korea said Sunday that leader Kim Jong Un supervised the test-firing of a "newly developed super-large multiple rocket launcher," another demonstration of the North's expanding weapons arsenal apparently aimed at increasing its leverage ahead of a possible resumption of nuclear talks with the U.S.

The North's official Korean Central News Agency, or KCNA, said that Saturday's weapons test was successful and cited Kim as saying the rocket launcher is "indeed a great weap-



on." Kim underscored the need to "continue to step up the development of Korean-style strategic and tactical weapons for resolutely frustrating the ever-mounting military threats and pressure offensive of the

hostile forces," according to KCNA. The "hostile forces" likely referred to the United States and South Korea, whose recently ended regular military drills infuriated North Korea. The North has ...**(More on P4)...(14)**

Extinction Bites: Countries Agree to Protect Sharks and Rays

GENEVA - Countries have agreed to protect more than a dozen shark species at risk of extinction, in a move aimed at conserving some of the ocean's most awe-inspiring creatures who have themselves become prey to commercial fishing and the Chinese appetite for shark fin soup.

Three proposals covering the international trade of 18 types of mako sharks, wedgefishes and guitarfishes each passed with a needed two-thirds majority in a committee of the World Wildlife Conference known as CITES

on Sunday. "Today we are one step closer to protecting the fastest shark in the ocean, as well as the most threatened," said Jen Sawada, who directs The Pew Charitable Trusts' shark conservation work. The measures don't ban fishing these sharks and rays, but any trade must be sustainable. The move isn't final but is a key sign before an official decision at its plenary this week.

Conservationists applauded and exchanged ...**(More on P4)...(15)**

Iranian FM Arrives to Biarritz Where G7 Leaders Discuss Fate of Nuclear Deal

BIARRITZ, France - Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif has touched down in Biarritz, France, where G7 leaders are discussing a plan to restart the floundering nuclear deal. His surprise visit came at the invitation of his French counterpart.

The unscheduled visit at the invitation of Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian comes after Zarif met President Emmanuel Marcon earlier this week to discuss the fate of the agreement. The spokesman said Zarif would not be meeting US President Donald Trump or any of his delegation while in France.

The 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA, or Iran Deal) all but collapsed after the US withdrew unilaterally last May, leaving Washington's European allies struggling to maintain trade with Tehran in the face of multiple rounds of US sanctions, and with military tensions between Iran and the US flaring in the Persian Gulf.

President Macron has made restarting negotiations with Tehran a priority at this weekend's G7 summit. Whereas Macron presented his peace plan to Trump - which involved an agreement to allow Iran sell its oil, Trump arrived with hawkish national security adviser John Bolton, and insisted that his "maximum pressure" campaign of economic sanctions against the Islamic Republic was working.

Though it was reported that the G7 leaders had ...**(More on P4)...(17)**