

# Obama Orders 'Full Review' of 2016 Election Hacking

WASHINGTON - US President Obama has ordered the U.S. intelligence community to conduct a "full review" of the cyberattacks during the 2016 election and to prepare a report on the subject - including to Congress - before he leaves office, White House homeland security adviser Lisa Monaco said Thursday.

"We may have crossed into a new threshold," Monaco said at a breakfast meeting with reporters, referring to the "malicious" election-related cyberattacks, which U.S. intelligence officials have said publicly they are



"confident" were directed by the Russian government. "And it's incumbent upon us to take a stock of that, to review, to conduct some after-action, to understand what this means and what has happened and to impart lessons learned."

Deputy White House press secretary Eric Schultz later told reporters that Obama ordered the review earlier this week, describing it as a "deep dive" by U.S. intelligence agencies - working with the FBI and the State Department - into malicious cyberattacks that...*(More on P4)...(19)*

## Trump Calls 'Ridiculous' Reports Russia Helped Him in U.S. Election

WASHINGTON - U.S. President-elect Donald Trump said he did not believe reports that intelligence agencies concluded Russia intervened in the presidential election on his behalf, according to an interview broadcast on "Fox News Sunday."

"I think it's ridiculous. I think it's just another excuse. I don't believe it," Trump said in the interview, taped on Saturday. He blamed Democrats for putting out the media reports and said he did not

believe they came from the Central Intelligence Agency. A senior U.S. intelligence official told Reuters intelligence agencies have concluded with "high confidence" that not only did their Russian counterparts direct the hacking of Democratic Party organizations and leaders, but they did so to undermine Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton. The Republican president-elect questioned whether the...*(More on P4)...(20)*

## Syria, Russian Airstrikes Push IS Back from Palmyra

DAMASCUS - The Islamic State (IS) group has retreated from points it reached in the ancient city of Palmyra in central Syria as a result of intense airstrikes by Russia and Syria on Saturday, pan-Arab al-Mayadeen TV reported.

The airstrikes targeted several areas near Palmyra in a bid to push back IS, which attempted to attack the city and has reportedly re-entered it after losing it to the Syrian government forces in nine months ago. Meanwhile, a military source told Xinhua that the

Syrian forces have thwarted an infiltration attempt by IS to enter the eastern part of Palmyra. Earlier, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the IS entered that oasis city on Saturday. "The IS is in the city of Palmyra for the first time after losing it to the Syrian army, whose forces are collapsing in the city," said the Observatory. The UK-based watchdog group said the IS group succeeded to advance and reach the vicinity of the...*(More on P4)...(21)*

## Turkey Declares Day of National Mourning after Terror Attacks

ANKARA - Turkey announced on Sunday a day of national mourning after attacks in Istanbul, Dogan News Agency reported.

Late on Saturday, two explosions rocked central Istanbul near Besiktas's Vodafone Arena Stadium, leaving 38 people killed and 155 others wounded. Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu said seven civilians are among the dead, while 30 others are police officers and one of the victims hasn't yet to be identified. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan postponed a visit to Kazakh-



stan, which was scheduled to take place on Sunday, due to the terror attack. On his twitter account, Erdogan vowed to "continue our struggle" despite more blood to be shed. Istanbul,

## Paris Meeting on Syria Agrees on Need to Facilitate Humanitarian Aid

PARIS - France on Saturday convened a new round of talks on the situation in Syrian city of Aleppo, during which participants stressed the vital necessity to stop bombing and facilitate humanitarian aid before a genuine political transition. French Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault and his counterparts of the U.S., Germany, Britain, Turkey, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, discussed steps to be taken to end the civilian war. However, the Paris meeting ended without a

breakthrough.

"We need to tie down the conditions for a genuine political transition, and negotiations must resume on a clear basis within the framework of the UN resolution 2254," Ayrault said. At a joint press conference, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry asked Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to "show a little grace" to save lives



and to "do their utmost to bring it to a close".

Kerry will meet his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov later in the day

in Geneva to try to reach a ceasefire deal to allow civilians and fighters to leave to safer areas. *(Xinhua)*

## Iraqi PM Meets Visiting U.S. Defense Chief over Battle for Mosul

BAGHDAD - Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi met with U.S. Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter on Sunday in Baghdad to discuss Iraqi forces' efforts in driving out Islamic State (IS) militants from their stronghold in Iraq's northern city of Mosul. A statement issued by Abadi's office said that Abadi met with Carter in his office in Baghdad's Green Zone. The two discussed the battle in Mosul, and reviewed the training and arming of Iraqi forces. Abadi also confirmed that "the mili-

tary operations in Mosul are going on as planned, and victory over Daesh gangs (IS group) is coming soon," the statement said. Carter reaffirmed his country's support along with that of the international community's to Iraq in its fight against terrorism, according to the statement. The Pentagon chief is scheduled to fly to northern Iraq to meet with Masoud Barzani,



President of the semi-autonomous region of Kurdistan. Carter arrived in Baghdad for an unannounced visit to meet

with top Iraqi officials and military commanders to discuss the Iraqi offensive against IS militants in Mosul. *(Xinhua)*

## Over 1,500 Suspects Arrested under EAW Brought to Poland: Report

WARSAW - More than 1,500 suspects arrested under the European Arrest Warrant (EAW) in the EU were transported to Poland in the first 11 months of 2016, the Polish Press Agency (PAP) reported Saturday.

In the first 11 months, 947 suspects arrested under the EAW in EU countries were transported to Poland by plane, and 650 were returned to Poland by means of road transport, PAP has been told by spokesperson of Poland's police chief Mariusz Ciarka. Burglary, robbery and murder were among the most common offences to trigger an EAW for those wanted in Poland. According to Ciarka, convoys of suspects by military planes make it possible to transport more people at a time and reduce transport costs. *(Xinhua)*

## Syrian Activists Say IS Has Recaptured Palmyra



BEIRUT - Islamic State militants seized the ancient Syrian city of Palmyra on Sunday from government troops despite a wave of Russian airstrikes, opposition activists and the group reported, a major advance after a year of setbacks in Syria and neighboring Iraq. The group's new push came hours after government troops and Russian air raids pushed the group out the city. IS militants regrouped and attacked the city from multiple fronts, forcing government troops to retreat. Palmyra opposition activists said the militants were going door to door in the city, looking for remnants of government forces.

State news agency SANA quoting an unnamed military official saying that the militant group received reinforcements from its de-facto capital in Raqqa, enabling it to attack with "large numbers" against military checkpoints around the city. Backed by Russian air power, the Syrian government had recaptured Palmyra, home to towering 2,000-year-old ruins, amid great fanfare in March. But the militants have been steadily advancing in recent days while the government has been focused on a major offensive against rebels in the northern city of Aleppo. *(AP)*

## British FM's 'Proxy War' Comment Misconstrued: Saudi Arabia

RIYADH - The press took out of context comments by Britain's foreign minister Boris Johnson about "proxy wars" waged by longtime ally Saudi Arabia, the Saudi foreign minister said Sunday, deeming the matter closed.

In a video reported last week, Johnson at a conference in Rome, accused Saudi Arabia and its regional rival Iran of "puppeteering" and "playing proxy wars". A video of his comments was posted on the Guardian website. "I have no doubt that his comments as reported in the press were misconstrued," Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir...*(More on P4)...(22)*

## Italy's FM Gentiloni Expected to be Named as New PM: Reports

ROME - Italian outgoing Foreign Minister Paolo Gentiloni was expected to be asked to try and form a new government on Sunday, media reports said. Italian President Sergio Mattarella officially summoned Gentiloni to the presidential palace at 12:30 p.m., the president's office said. It was a strong signal that the Italian head of state would ask him to replace outgoing Prime Minister Matteo Renzi. The call came at the end of three days of political consultations Mattarella run with all party leaders, in order to find a new prime minister after Renzi tendered his resignation on Dec. 7.



Renzi stepped down after losing a crucial referendum on a constitutional reform backed by his cabinet on Dec. 4. Gentiloni, 62, is considered a staunch ally of Renzi within center-left Democratic Party (PD), which is the largest force in parliament. He was...*(More on P4)...(23)*

## Nieghbor News

### China, Japan Agree on Early Launch of Air, Maritime Contact System

HAIKOU - China and Japan have agreed to work for the creation of an air and maritime contact system between their defense ministries as early as possible. The agreement was reached during the sixth round of high-level consultations on maritime affairs between the two countries' various departments, held from Wednesday to Friday in China's southern city of Haikou.

They also agreed to hold the first meeting of expert discussions on marine pollution before March 2017, and expand information exchanges to jointly crack down on transnational crimes such as smuggling and drug trafficking. The two sides pledged to beef up cooperation on fisheries management and sign a marine search and rescue agreement as early as possible. *(Xinhua)*

### PTI Wants New Panamagate Bench to Retain four Members

LAHORE - The Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) wants the new chief justice of the Supreme Court to include four judges of the incumbent bench in the new one to hear the Panamagate case, "as they understand the case details", PTI vice-chairman Shah Mehmood Qureshi said at a press conference on Saturday. However, the party would not protest or boycott proceedings if the incumbent judges were not included in the

new bench, he clarified. The PTI had, instead, decided to hold public meetings ahead of the next hearing to inform the masses about the progress in the case, he said. "We will hold at least two mass public meetings... to present our case in the court of people," he told journalists. He claimed that the Panamagate case had paralysed the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz...*(More on P4)...(24)*

### Religious Diversity Promotes National Unity: Iran President

TEHRAN - Meeting with Sunni scholars from across the country, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani has praised religious diversity in the country as a good opportunity to strengthen national unity. The Iranian chief executive made the remarks on Sunday, addressing the scholars in the run-up to the Islamic Unity Week. As per a call made by the late Founder of the Islamic Republic Imam Khomeini, the week is marked each year as a period of convergence among Muslims. Religious and ethnic diversity in the country,

Rouhani asserted, should not be viewed as a threat, but a great chance to promote national unity and development. "The government plans to maximally use [the capacities of] ethnicities and religions towards convergence and reinforcement of cultural and national unity," he noted. "The Islamic Republic has, from the beginning, been based on tolerance towards religious, ethnic, and cultural diversity," Rouhani added. The scholars, for their part, laid emphasis on the need for unity between Shia and Sunni Muslims. *(Presstv)*

### Turkmenistan Reveals Volume of Potential Hydrocarbon Reserves

ASHGABAT - As of today, potential hydrocarbon resources of Turkmenistan amount to 71.2 billion tons of oil equivalent, 53 billion of which account for land and 18.2 billion tons - for marine areas, according to a report of Turkmen State Concern's Head Ashirgul Begliyev. The report was read out during the international conference Oil and Gas of Turkmenistan (OGT 2016), held on Dec. 7-9 in Ashgabat. Turkmen gas carries out the development of gas fields, production, pro-

cessing and transportation of natural gas and gas condensate, sale of gas and its processing products for domestic consumers, as well as for export. Being the main supplier of "blue fuel" in Central Asia, Turkmenistan has all the opportunities to increase production and processing of natural gas in the near future, noted Begliyev. The world's second biggest gas field Galkynysh is located in eastern Turkmenistan. According to the audit held by the...*(More on P4)...(25)*

### Tajikistan President to Visit Sri Lanka on Monday

DUSHANBEH - President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon will commence a state visit to Sri Lanka on Monday, December 12, state broadcasting service reported. Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena will welcome the Tajikistan head of state at an official ceremony to be held at the Presidential Secre-

tariat on Tuesday evening. Bilateral discussions between the two leaders will follow after the official welcome ceremony. Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe held bilateral discussions with President Emomali Rahmon at the 12th World Islamic Economic Forum held in Jakarta, Indonesia in August this year. *(Monitoring Desk)*