

75% of ISIS Fighters Killed: US

WASHINGTON - At least 75% of ISIS fighters have been killed during the campaign of US-led airstrikes, according to US officials.

The US anti-ISIS envoy said the campaign has winnowed ISIS' ranks to between 12,000 and 15,000 "battle ready" fighters, a top US official said on Tuesday.

The figures mean the US and its coalition partners have taken out vastly more ISIS fighters in Iraq and Syria than currently remain on the battlefield, two years since the bombing campaign began. Last week a US official said the coalition had killed 50,000 militants since 2014.

But it's also clear Obama will depart office without fully quashing the



terror group, leaving a still-significant battle for Donald Trump when he becomes commander in chief in January. Speaking at the White House Tuesday, Brett McGurk, the US special envoy to the anti-ISIS coalition, said the terror group is no longer able to replenish its ranks, predicting the number of fighters would continue to dwindle. "The number of battle-ready fighters inside Iraq and Syria is now at its lowest point that it's ever been," McGurk said, describing the update he gave the President to reporters after the meeting. He noted that the flow of foreign fighters to ISIS had been stemmed by tighter surveillance and border controls. (CNN)

Talks with U.S. Over Syria "Fruitless": Russia

MOSCOW - Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Wednesday blasted the United States for "inefficient" cooperation over Syria, saying talks between the two countries have been "fruitless."

Moscow still maintained contacts with Washington, but every time the two sides meet for agreement, Washington backtracked, Lavrov told Russian 24 TV. Meanwhile, the Russian diplomat gave credit to Russia's interaction with Turkey over Syria.

"This channel (with Turkey) may prove to be more

efficient than our fruitless small talks with our American colleagues over many months," he said. Moreover, Lavrov blamed the United States for contributing to the formation of the Islamic State (IS) terrorist group. "It was the United States, which liberated the current IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi from an Iraqi prison in 2006," he said. The United States suspended talks with Russia over Syria in early October, followed by rising tensions between the two ... (More on P4)...(17)

Poland Says Ready to Implement NATO Summit Decisions

WARSAW - NATO, the United States and Poland are ready to implement the decisions of NATO's July summit, Polish Defense Minister Antoni Macierewicz said on Wednesday. "We are effectively carrying out what we have committed ourselves to do," he said in Zagan, west Poland, according to the Polish Press Agency. Macierewicz, who is also the government's representative for coordinating the stay of allied troops in Poland, spoke after meeting Gen. Ben Hodges, commander of the U.S. Army in Europe.

According to decisions made by NATO leaders at their Warsaw summit, a U.S. Armored Brigade Combat Team is set to arrive in Poland in January, followed by a multinational battalion-sized battle group, composed primarily of U.S. soldiers, in April. Macierewicz said on Wednesday he was happy that the United States has decided to accelerate the deployment of its troops to Poland, especially the heavy brigade. (Xinhua)

EU's Proposed Tougher Trade Rules Open Dangerous Road toward Protectionism

BEIJING - The European Union's proposed anti-dumping rules that would allow the bloc to impose higher tariffs, if approved, will open a dangerous road toward protectionism.

EU member states on Tuesday agreed to change the "lesser duty rule," which limits EU anti-dumping tariffs and makes EU measures less severe than U.S. duties in many cases. The new EU position threatens its trade with China.



The proposal is simply another way of extending the surrogate-country approach practices in anti-dumping investigations. In accordance with Article

Iraqi Troops Enter another IS-Held Neighborhood in Mosul

BAGHDAD - The Iraqi army says troops have entered another neighborhood held by the Islamic State group in the southeastern part of Mosul.

The commander of a joint operations center that oversees the Mosul campaign, Lt. Gen. Abdul-Amir Yarellah, says that soldiers from the 9th Division took over the hospital building in the al-Salam neighborhood on Tuesday. He did not provide more details but said the troops "continue clearing" the neighborhood from IS militants. Iraqi forces, backed the U.S.-led international coalition, launched a campaign in October to retake ... (More on P4)...(21)

Panel Recommends Transparency Measures on Climate Change

LONDON - An international task force has recommended a raft of voluntary financial disclosures designed to help investors and industry manage the risks posed by rising global temperatures and develop the technologies needed to combat climate change.

The panel, chaired by former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, developed the recommendations over the last year based on the idea that markets need more and better information to



respond to the challenge of climate change. Bloomberg and Bank

England Governor Mark Carney said in comments published Wednesday in

the Guardian newspaper that "the challenge is that ... (More on P4)...(18)

British Government Keeping Options Open in EU Talks: Brexit Minister

LONDON - Brexit minister David Davis said on Wednesday the British government was keeping its options open before beginning talks with the European Union over its divorce.

Asked whether he stood by his earlier statement that Britain could consider paying into the EU budget to maintain preferential trade access into the single market, Davis said those comments had been "slightly over-interpreted".

"At this stage, three months short of the start



of negotiation, I'm going to hold every option open that I can. I'm not going to shut something

off unnecessarily. So to not count it out is also not count it in," he told lawmakers in a question-

and-answer session. "I'm not ruling it in either, therefore I'm not envisaging it." (Reuters)

Russian Envoy to UNSC: Fighting in Eastern Aleppo "Has Stopped"

UNITED NATIONS - During a dramatic emergency UN Security Council meeting on Syria, the Russian UN ambassador announced that the fighting has ended in eastern Aleppo and that the Syrian government was back in control.

"The removal of the fighters was achieved a few hours ago," Ambassador Vitaly Churkin told the 15-nation UN body on Tuesday. "The fighters together with their families ... are going out in the direction they have chosen, including in the direction of Idlib," he said, referring to an opposition enclave. "In the last hour we have received information that the military activity in eastern Aleppo has stopped," he said. "It has stopped. So there is no question about cessation of hostilities or humanitarian operations." The council session opened with ... (More on P4)...(20)

EU Leaders Seek More Vessels for Libyan Coastguard

BRUSSELS - European Union leaders will on Thursday call for more vessels for the Libyan coastguard to help it prevent migrants leaving its shores for Europe, sources said.

Migrant arrivals from Libya to EU member state Italy are higher this year than last at more than 175,000 people. Curbing immigration is the bloc's top priority after about 1.4 million refugees and migrants reached it in 2015-2016. The EU's naval operation in the Mediterranean, Sophia, which is targeting arms traffickers and training the Libyan coastguard, is obliged to pluck out of the sea people who leave Libya in unreliable boats provided by people smugglers, meaning most of those who reach Italy arrive on EU vessels.

One EU official said the bloc is increasingly worried that Sophia "has become a taxi service".

At their summit in Brussels on Thursday, EU leaders will agree on "the need to enhance support for the Libyan coastguard", according to a draft joint statement. An EU diplomat said the bloc needed to find a way to finance the Libyan coastguard or provide it with vessels directly. "The idea would be to make it more effective in preventing migrants from leaving Libya rather than just having our search and rescue operations." Diplomats said that has so far proven difficult to agree among member states and Brussels, and can carry risks because of the breakdown of law and order in Libya, which has allowed the smuggler gangs to operate freely. (Reuters)



reverse a dramatic fall in income. Russia was among the 11 non-OPEC producers, but the United States, where some shale oil producers are expected to come back on stream as their production becomes profitable again, was not. OPEC said, however, ... (More on P4)...(22)

Non-OPEC Supply to Rise But End of Glut in Sight: OPEC

PARIS - OPEC said Wednesday it expects some non-cartel producers to ramp up production next year, encouraged by oil prices which OPEC has fought to drive higher with a recent output cut deal.

Brazil and Canada - who did not sign the reduction agreement - and Kazakhstan are expected to be the main contributors to the non-OPEC supply growth, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries said in its December oil market report.

World oil prices have surged since 11 countries agreed on Saturday to cut their oil output, teaming up with the OPEC cartel in a bid to end a global oil glut and

Nieghbor News

China Concludes Half-Year "Space" Survival Experiment

SHENZHEN - Four Chinese volunteers on Wednesday concluded their 180-day stay in a sealed space capsule in south China's Shenzhen City, testing technology intended for space exploration.

The project's technical chief Li Yinghui said the experiment was "a complete success."

The volunteers have grown 25 kinds of plants and tested 635 pieces of equipment.

One experiment recycled

supply all of the oxygen and water in the capsule and part of the food for the four volunteers, while other tests with regard to nutrition, hygiene, work and rest in space have also been completed.

The project also shed light on the physiological effects of a hermetic environment and changes to biological rhythms.

The volunteers - three men and one woman - were selected from 2,110 candidates after the ... (More on P4)...(23)

Pakistan, Russia Hold 'First-Ever' Consultation on Regional Issues

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan and Russia held their first-ever consultation on regional issues on Wednesday at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) in Islamabad, the Foreign Office (FO) Spokesman Nafees Zarkaria said in a statement.

The delegation from Moscow was led by Alexander V. Sternik, Third CIS Department head at the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, whereas the Pakistani side was led by MOFA Director-

General (West Asia) Ahmad Hussain Dayo. During the consultations, a wide range of regional issues as well as key areas of mutual interest, including economic cooperation and connectivity, were discussed.

The two sides also exchanged views on important global and regional developments.

The next round of consultations will be convened in Moscow in 2017, the FO spokesman ... (More on P4)...(24)

Iran, Indonesia Hold Talks on Security, Economic Ties

TEHRAN - Iran and Indonesia held talks here on Wednesday to boost cooperation on security of the world and their mutual economic ties.

"I am in no doubt that this cooperation will benefit stability and security in the region and the Muslim world," said Iran's President Hassan Rouhani at a joint press conference with his visiting Indonesian counterpart Joko Widodo.

Widodo arrived in Tehran on Tuesday leading a high ranking delegation, including Indonesian

politico-economic senior officials.

The bilateral ties have witnessed improvements since his visit to Indonesia in 2015 which was followed by a nuclear agreement between Tehran and six world powers, the Iranian president said.

"We value relations with Indonesia, an important Muslim country in Asia," he said. Iran plans to provide Indonesia with crude oil, liquid gas and petrochemicals among other products, he added. (Xinhua)

President's Book Included in School Curriculum: Turkmenistan

ASHGABAT - Turkmenistan's education ministry has revived a practice from the days of the late President Saparmurat Niyazov to make the current leader's written work a mandatory text in schools. Passages and quotations from "The Fount of Wisdom" by Gurbanguly Berdimukhmedov are now to be included in the school curriculum, according to a report by the foreign-based Chronicles of Turkmenistan.

Niyazov's own two-volume Rukhnama, which was described in state media as a holy text, has

been gradually phased out of the classroom. But the Fount of Wisdom is not a wholly dissimilar work. The book is a compendium of proverbs and sayings that, as state media puts in, "reflect the people's spiritual universe, world view, philosophy, moral principles and beliefs." This is far from Berdimukhmedov's only contribution to school curriculum, as the Chronicles of Turkmenistan points out. Pupils in the seventh grade also have to study a novel by the president. (Monitoring Desk)

Uzbekistan's New Leader Promises Major Government Reshuffle

TASHKENT - Uzbekistan's new president, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, took the oath of office on Wednesday pledging to protect the legacy of his veteran predecessor Islam Karimov but also signaled plans for a big shake-up of the government.

Karimov, who died of a stroke in September, ruled the Central Asian nation of 32 million people for 27 years with a firm hand, brooking no dissent, keeping tight state control of the econ-

omy and steering an isolationist foreign policy. Mirziyoyev, who served as Karimov's prime minister for 13 years and then from September as interim president, won a Soviet-style 89 percent of the vote in the Dec. 4 election. "I will continue the work of my dear teacher, the great statesman Islam Karimov," Mirziyoyev said after an inauguration ceremony in parliament in which he placed his hand on the Koran and on the constitution. (Reuters)