

## Land Mines Will be Hidden Killer in Yemen Decades after War

ADEN, Yemen — They lurk under shifting desert sands, amid the debris of urban roadsides and inside abandoned schools, some set to go off at the lightest touch.

Land mines scattered by Yemen's Houthi rebels are largely unmapped and will remain a threat even if the latest push for peace succeeds in halting the conflict, those involved in their eradication say.

While the Houthis' use of Scud and other retrofitted ballistic missiles has drawn attention for striking deep inside Saudi Arabia, their widespread use of mines represents a risk for generations to come in the Arab world's poorest country.

"Mines today exist in every single area of Yemen," Ousama al-Gosaibi, the program manager for the Saudi-funded Masam demining project, told The Associated Press during a trip to the southern city of Aden organized by the Saudi military. "It's not being used as a defensive (or) offensive mechanism. It's being used to terrorize the local population across Yemen."

A Houthi official acknowledged the rebels widely use mines, but said Saudi-led airstrikes have left behind ordinance that is just as deadly.

Yemen's war pits the Iran-aligned Houthis against the internationally recognized government, which is backed by a coalition led by Saudi Arabia and supported on the ground by the United Arab Emirates.

More than 60,000 people have been killed in the war since 2016, according to the U.S.-based Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, or ACLED, which tracks the conflict. (AP)

## China Accuses Britain, EU of Hypocrisy Over Canada Detention Concerns

BEIJING - China accused Britain and the European Union of hypocrisy on Monday for expressing concern about China's detention of two Canadian citizens, saying they had double standards for not mentioning a senior Chinese executive arrested in Canada.

Canadian Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland said on Saturday Canada will maintain a high-level campaign in the coming days to seek support from allies as it pressures China to free the two detained Canadians, who China says are suspected of endangering state security.

Freeland spoke a day after the United States joined Canada in calling on Beijing to release the pair, who were held after Canadian authorities arrested a senior Chinese executive on a U.S. extradition warrant. Britain and the European Union have also expressed support for



Canada.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said Beijing expressed "strong dissatisfaction and resolute opposition" to comments by Canada, the United States and others on the detained Canadians. The two, Michael Kovrig, a former diplomat and an adviser with the International Crisis Group

(ICG) think-tank, and businessman Michael Spavor, are suspected of endangering state security so they are "of course" being detained, Hua said.

"We urge relevant countries to earnestly respect China's judicial sovereignty," she told a daily news briefing, reiterating their lawful rights have been guaranteed. (Reuters)

## Support for Palestine, Iran's Principled Policy: FM Zarif

TEHRAN - Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has once again reiterated the Islamic Republic's principled policy to support Palestine, urging all countries in the Muslim world to boost their unity to defend the Palestinian cause. "We hope that some Muslim countries that have pinned their hopes on the support of the Zionists and the US will return to the Muslim world and realize that the Zionists are not a trustworthy friend or partner for anybody," Zarif said in a meeting with a Palestinian parliamentary delegation led by senior Palestinian lawmaker, Mahmoud al-Zahar, in Tehran on Sunday. The Iranian foreign minister added that efforts to counter the Palestin-



ian resistance are unfortunately being made from inside the Muslim world, saying that all countries and Islamic movements are also under such pressure.

Back in May, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said resistance is the sole way to save the oppressed Palestinian nation. (Press TV)

## Vietnam, Russia Boost Legislative Ties

HANOI - Vietnamese top legislator Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan and Chairman of the Russian State Duma Vyacheslav Volodin agreed here on Monday that the two sides will strengthen cooperative ties in various fields, including legislation, economy, trade and investment, Vietnam News Agency reported.

Right after their talks on Monday in Vietnam's capital Hanoi, the Chairwoman of the National Assembly of Vietnam and Volodin signed an agreement establishing an inter-parliamentary cooperation committee, whose first meeting will be held in Vietnam in 2019.

Volodin said the committee's establishment helps intensify cooperative mechanism between the two legislatures, while strengthening the bilateral ties in economy, trade, culture and education. (Xinhua)

## Uzbekistan's Soum Continues to Fall Against US Dollar

TASHKENT - The Central Bank of Uzbekistan has published new exchange rates, which will be effective from Dec. 25, Trend reports Dec 24, referring to Uzbek media.

The US dollar continues to grow slowly. This week, the US currency has increased by 13.96 soums. From tomorrow one dollar will cost 8,339.55 soums.

Euro has also risen. The European currency rose to 9,479.57 soums, increasing by 65.83 soums compared to the last week.

The Russian ruble fell slightly. Its value dropped by 3.79 soums and amounted to 120.91 soums. (Trend)

### (1) Qureshi Had...

"I've had productive meetings with the Afghan leadership this morning. The peace process is making positive headway. Next stop is Iran. Regional connectivity and a collective outlook is essential for progress," Qureshi tweeted.

Qureshi arrived in Kabul on Monday morning.

Pakistani media reported that Qureshi left Pakistan for a four-nation tour as part of Islamabad's policy of outreach in the neighborhood.

The Pakistani delegation consists of the foreign secretary and senior officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who will visit Afghanistan, Iran, China and Russia from December 24-26, 2018, a statement issued by the Foreign Office of Pakistan said on Sunday. (Tolo news)

### (2) Ghani Orders Authorities...

recommendation for the prevention of the smuggling and export of reusable papers, and plan and policy of for wheat production. (KP)

### (3) Political Parties...

"Fraud is a crime. Those who commit fraud or are accused of committing fraud should be sent to judicial institutions as soon as possible," said Assadullah Saadati, member of the political committee of the political parties.

Meanwhile, the Independent Election Commission (IEC) said it will use all available resources to hold the elections.

According to the IEC, 40 people have received information packages for running as president in the next year's presidential elections.

"So far, no one has officially filled nomination papers," said Mirza Mohammad Haqparast, deputy spokesman for IEC. (Tolo news)

### (4) Most Vulnerable...

displacement are pursued," said Fathia Abdalla, UNHCR's Representative for Afghanistan.

From 1 November, UNHCR and

MoRR and partners jointly identified the most vulnerable to winter conditions, including female heads of household and families without income.

It is expected that some 30,000 individuals in the central region, including Kabul, will receive support to help them get through the harsh winter months.

A total of 620,000 people are estimated countrywide to be in need of assistance this winter.

But humanitarian agencies and the Afghan government will be able to provide over 420,000 individuals (60,000 families) with winterization assistance, leaving a gap of at least 28,000 families in need.

Within this program, UNHCR and its partners will support some 60,000 refugees from Pakistan along with the communities hosting them in Khost and Paktika provinces to ensure they are prepared for the winter.

Over 15,000 tents are also being given to drought-affected IDPs as part of a coordinated humanitarian response.

The distribution of family tents to some 480 displaced families in Herat province is ongoing while it is expected to begin in Badghis province this week.

More than 21,000 drought affected families are currently displaced through out the western region.

Most of the displaced families currently live in displacement sites in Herat City and in sites scattered in and around the provincial capital of Badghis, Qala-i-Naw.

So far this year, a total of 316,470 people have been verified as being displaced by conflict in 2018, according to OCHA's Displacement Tracking System (DTS).

Overall, the number of people displaced so far this year is nearly 35 percent less than the same period last year (485,310). (Pajhwok)

### (5) Justice...

ministers. If the explanations given are not satisfactory, the house shall

consider a no-confidence vote.

Based on the Wolesi Jirga's panel heads committee decision, the house would summon ministers of transport and IT and telecommunication on Wednesday. (Pajhwok)

### (6) National Budget

provinces that they would implement 10 projects in the provinces without passing them through procurement processes.

Ali Dost Shahab, a member of the advocacy group for national budget, called the budget plan for 1398 fiscal year as imbalanced and said that 30 percent of the budget had been allocated for imaginary and unknown projects.

He said transparency in the budget making could be not ensured until imaginary and unknown projects were removed from the fiscal year plan.

Shahab asked the Wolesi Jirga not to approve the budget until serious reforms were brought to the financial documents.

The IWA said shortcomings and problems in the budget plan for 1398 fiscal year should be addressed.

Shamariz Khan Masjedi, spokesman for the Ministry of Finance, said the 1398 budget plan had been prepared based on the requirements of people and in consideration of international standards and suggestions of civil society institutes, economic experts and people.

In a voice message he sent to Pajhwok, Masjedi said officials of the Ministry of Finance traveled to five major provinces of the country to understand people's main needs and hear their suggestions before preparing the budget plan. (Pajhwok)

### (7) In 3 Days, No...

A preliminary list of presidential runners will be announced on January 8. Each wannabe is required to be a Muslim citizen of Afghanistan and have attained the age of 40 years.

Every candidate should have

100,000 stickers, should not have a criminal record, or involvement in human rights violations, civil rights. The payment of a million afghanis is among the conditions. (Pajhwok)

### (8) Pentagon

increased pressure on the Taliban," defense officials wrote in the report and submitted to Congress on Thursday.

Trump's decision last year to send an additional 3,000 US troops in to Afghanistan as part of his South Asia strategy "stabilized the situation in Afghanistan, slowing the momentum of a Taliban march that had capitalized on US drawdowns between 2011 and 2016," the analysts wrote, adding that "the key to success remains sustained military pressure against the Taliban" by Afghan forces backed by the nearly 14,000 US services members still in country.

"Convincing the Taliban that they cannot win on the battlefield, and credibly committing to a conditions-based strategy" under the South Asia plan, Kabul and Washington "have greatly increased the odds of concluding a settlement" to bring America's longest war to an end, they said.

On Sunday, the US and NATO Forces Commander in Afghanistan Gen. Scott Miller in a meeting with Nangarhar governor on Sunday assured that they will continue to support the Afghan forces even if they get an order about troop withdrawal - an issue which Miller says is rumors by "newspapers".

"I have seen the same rumors I have from the newspapers but all I would assure you is first of all I have no orders, so nothing changed," he said in the meeting.

Miller said their support to Afghan forces will continue in the same level.

"But if I do get orders, I think it is important for you to know that we are still with the security forces. Even if I have get a little bit smaller,

we will be okay," he said.

Meanwhile, Miller insisted on a political solution for Afghanistan and said that "political settlement will only happen through Afghans talking to Afghans".

The US general said much has been said about Afghan forces casualties but "Taliban casualties have been very dire as well".

"What I think is important is -- I have talked often about -- a political solution, not a military solution to this conflict. It is time for the hostilities to end and it will only happen through Afghans talking to Afghans," Miller said. "It is the time to end those hostilities to start talking to one another."

There are at least 14,000 forces in Afghanistan who are engaged in counterterrorism as well as train and advise mission for their Afghan counterparts. (Tolo news)

### (9) Women Among...

during the recent months.

This comes despite the security authorities have stepped up to counter-drugs production and smuggling which is considered as main source of financial support to the anti-government armed militant groups. (KP)

### (10) Many IEC...

The source did not explain how many provincial IEC heads are being dismissed and investigated, but said provincial IEC chiefs who performed well and worked effectively would be appreciated.

The official said work on preliminary elections results of Paktia, Kabul and Baghlan provinces was underway and would be announced in four days.

The Wolesi Jirga elections were conducted on October 20 in 32 provinces of the country. (Pajhwok)

### (11) Ministry Rounds...

said Waheed, a drug addict in Kabul.

Reports indicate that there are at least three million drug addicts in the country. (Tolo news)