

# Russia's New Military Doctrine Names NATO as Key Risk

MOSCOW - Russian President Vladimir Putin has signed a new military doctrine, naming NATO expansion among key external risks, the Kremlin said on Friday, days after Ukraine made fresh steps to join the Atlantic military alliance.

Moscow's previous military doctrine, signed by Putin in 2010, also identified NATO expansion as a top risk to Russia, but the stakes have risen sharply over the past year. Russia said this week NATO was turning Ukraine into a "frontline of confrontation" and threatened to sever remaining ties if Ukraine's hopes of joining NATO were realized.



The Kiev parliament's renunciation of Ukraine's neutral status on Tuesday in pursuit of NATO membership has outraged Moscow and deepened the worst confrontation between Russia and the West since the end of the Cold War after

Russia's annexation of Ukraine's Crimea peninsula this year.

NATO has already boosted its military presence in Eastern Europe this year, saying it has evidence that Russia orchestrated and armed a pro-Russian rebellion

in eastern Ukraine that followed the overthrow of a Kremlin-backed president in Kiev.

Moscow denies supporting the rebellion, and is currently trying, along with Kiev and the rebels, to renew efforts to find a political solu-

tion to the crisis in eastern Ukraine.

It is likely to take years for Ukraine to meet the technical criteria for accession to NATO and, even then, there is no certainty that the alliance is ready to take such a decision.

A NATO official said on Friday the alliance respected the move by Ukraine's parliament, and so should Russia. "Should Ukraine decide to apply for NATO membership, NATO will assess its readiness to join the Alliance in the same way as with any candidate.

This is an issue between NATO and the individual countries aspiring to membership." (Reuters)

## Somalia's New Pm Promises to Fight Corruption

MOGADISHU -- Somali Prime Minister Omar Abdirashid Sharmarke on Friday promised that he will fight corruption, saying corruption is the main obstacle to development in Somalia. "My government will establish accountability and transparency among government financial departments," said Sharmarke via state media. Sharmarke added that he will form a united government that consists of 25 cabinet members that lead the country to free and fair election in Somalia. He noted that his priority will be to restore peace and stability of Somalia, adding that the Somali government will capture the remaining areas controlled by Somali rebel Al-shabaab soon. (Xinhua)

## Neighbor News

### Pakistani PM Forms Committee to Implement Anti-Terror Plan

ISLAMABAD - Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on Friday constituted a ministerial committee to ensure expeditious and effective implementation of decisions taken in a conference of mainstream political parties and senior military leaders, officials said.

The prime minister said he would himself oversee the enforcement of the "National Action Plan" to wipe out terrorism in the country, the PM office said.

The plan was devised following the Taliban attack on an army-run school in Peshawar that killed 150 school children and their teachers on Dec. 26.

The government won support of the political parties for the new anti-terror strategy that includes establishment of military-led special courts for the speedy trial of what the officials call "

hardcore terrorists". "As we assembled here to follow up the progress on our counter terrorism policy, let me remind each one of us that we shall not let the memory of Peshawar carnage fade away till we wipe terror out of Pakistan," the prime minister told a meeting of senior aides in Islamabad.

He said the historic national consensus would guide the roadmap. "Since we have a historic national consensus, let us proceed with our national duty," he said.

He said today's Pakistan was changed one and there was full resolve to weed out terror from the motherland. "To me zero tolerance is zero tolerance. Violence in any form against my people equals terror and our polity and our army is very clear on it. We shall come down heavy on it," Sharif said. (Xinhua)

## Int'l Envoys Concerned over Lebanon Stability, Security

BEIRUT - Lebanon has recently received a number of international envoys who held meetings with various political leaders to discuss means of preserving the country's stability and sparing it from the ongoing regional turmoil, especially in Syria.

UN Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhael Bogdanov, head of the Middle East and North Africa office at the French Foreign Ministry Jean Francois Gerault, U.S. Deputy Secretary of Defense Mathieu Spence and Iranian Speaker Parliament Ali Larijani all were in Lebanon in December.

The envoys mainly tackled the election of a new president, ways of supporting the Lebanese army in its fight against the Islamic State (IS)

group and helping Lebanon overcome burdens of the Syrian refugees, according to a well-placed diplomatic source in Beirut, who spoke to Xinhua on condition of anonymity.

The source said that they were deeply concerned over the abduction of Lebanese military personnel by the IS and al-Nusra Front.

In August, the Lebanese army engaged in five-day clashes with militants from the al-Qaeda-linked al-Nusra Front and the IS group, who overran the eastern border town of Aarsal following the arrest of the al-Nusra front leader, Imad Jomaa.

While withdrawing back to Syria, the gunmen abducted at least 28 soldiers and policemen. Al-Nusra later executed three of them, while the IS beheaded another one. The

Lebanese government is currently negotiating with the kidnappers to secure the safe release of the soldiers.

In an interview with Xinhua, Eliasson, who visited Beirut earlier this month, said that the "security of Lebanon and its stability are a priority for the region and the international community and we are ready to do whatever is needed to prevent the repercussions of the Syrian crisis from reaching the Lebanese society."

U.S. Deputy Secretary of Defense Spence's visit to Lebanon indicated U.S. reliance on the Lebanese army in the fight against terrorism. The U.S. government has increased its aid to the Lebanese army to more than 800 million U.S. dollars.

As for French envoy Jean Francois Gerault's mission to Lebanon, the

source revealed that it was in an effort to "ease the political atmosphere and prepare for the election of a new president, particularly that Girault visited Teheran and Beirut for this purpose."

Lebanon has been without a president since the tenure of President Michel Suleiman ended on May 25. The parliament has failed for 16 times to convene because of the lack of the constitutionally required quorum.

According to the constitution and the power-sharing pact, the president should be a Christian Maronite elected by two thirds of the parliament's 128 members in the first round of voting, and by a simple majority in the following rounds that would only convene in the presence of two thirds of its members. (Xinhua)

## US-Led Strikes Kill 40 IS Fighters in Syria: Activists



DAMASCUS - At least 40 fighters of the Islamic State (IS) militants were killed over the weekend by the strikes of the U.S.-led anti-terror coalition on Syria's northern province of al-Raqqah, the de facto capital of the IS, a monitoring group reported Friday.

The strikes at dawn Wednesday targeted housing compounds of the IS in al-Raqqah and a place for manufacturing explosive devices in the eastern part of the city as well as a training camp in the al-Manakhir area in the countryside of al-Raqqah, said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

Thirteen of those killed were Syrians while the rebels were from different nationalities, said

the Observatory, adding that there is information about the killing of family members of the IS fighters.

The U.S.-led anti-terror coalition has been pounding the IS positions in Syria since late last September, killing over 1,000 IS fighters so far. On Wednesday, a Jordanian F16 was downed over al-Raqqah and its pilot was captured by the IS. The incident marks the first downing of a foreign war jet by the IS over Syria.

Separately, the Observatory said it had documented 474 airstrikes carried out by the Syrian air force over the past three days on different rebel-held areas across Syria. It said at least 115 civilians were killed. (Xinhua)

## Kiev and Rebels to Exchange Hundreds of Prisoners Soon: Security Service

KIEV - Kiev and pro-Russian separatists will exchange hundreds of prisoners soon, an aide to the head of Ukraine's SBU state security service said on Friday, as the military reported a slight increase in rebel attacks.

The agreement to swap 125 Ukrainian servicemen for 225 rebels held by Kiev followed peace talks between envoys of Ukraine, Russia, the separatists and European security watchdog OSCE on Wednesday.

"We've prepared 225 people, which we will hand over. The main thing is for this not to fall through now," the SBU's Markiyanyuk Lubkyvsky told Reuters.

The uprising by separatists began a month after Russia annexed the Black Sea peninsula of Crimea from Ukraine in March, following the popular overthrow of Ukraine's Moscow-backed presi-



dent. The conflict has killed more than 4,700 people. The pro-Western government in Kiev accuses Russia of orchestrating the rebellion in Ukraine's east, a charge denied by Moscow.

Exchanging prisoners is one of the criteria of a 12-point peace protocol, which also includes a ceasefire, agreed by Kiev and rebels in September. But most of the plan has not yet been implemented due to repeated violations of the

ceasefire and because separatists defied Kiev by holding leadership elections.

Ukraine's Interfax news agency quoted a rebel representative as saying the prisoners would be swapped by Dec. 30. Lubkyvsky did not confirm this date, but said the exchange would happen "soon".

It is not known exactly how many prisoners are currently held by the two sides, but Ukraine's military said this month

around 600 Ukrainians were in rebel hands.

Around 1,300 people have been killed since the ceasefire was agreed in September, according to the United Nations, but the fighting has lessened significantly in December.

On Friday, however, the military said rebels had slightly stepped up their attacks on Ukrainian positions in the east of the country and reported that one Ukrainian servicemen had been killed in the past 24 hours.

"In the past two days, (rebel) fighters started using artillery and GRAD rocket launchers. Attacks have intensified to a minor extent," military spokesman Andriy Lysenko told Reuters.

"Rebels are using the ceasefire to regroup their forces," he said later in a televised briefing. (Reuters)

## Hamas to Stick to August Truce with Israel: Official



GAZA - The Islamic Hamas movement informed Egypt and other parties on Friday that it is committed to the cease-fire agreement reached with Israel in August, a senior official said.

Hamas deputy Chief Ismail Haneya told reporters in Gaza that "We held contacts with Egypt and other parties and informed them that Hamas is committed to the cease-fire agreement reached in Cairo in Aug. 26."

He added that Hamas will be committed to the agreement reached in Cairo "as long as and as much as the occupation is committed to it."

On Wednesday, a Hamas militant was killed in a short gun-battle with an Israeli army ground force near the borders between southeast Gaza Strip and Israel, after a Hamas sniper shot and wounded an Israeli soldier. Israel sent a warning to Hamas through Egypt and other mediators that the Israeli army would strongly strike the move-

ment in case Hamas militants carry more attacks or fire rockets into Israel. On Thursday, Hamas leaders met representatives of political factions and powers, and agreed that they all are committed to the cease-fire.

On July 8, the Israeli army launched a large-scale air and ground military operation that lasted for 50 days, aiming at destroying tunnels that Hamas militants dug from Gaza into Israel.

The offensive ended after Egypt brokered a truce between the two sides. The war left 2,200 Palestinians and 70 Israelis killed and more than 11,000 injured, while also destroyed large numbers of housing and infrastructure in Gaza.

Meanwhile, Haneya called on Egypt to permanently open Rafah crossing point between the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip and Egypt, and allow access of construction materials into Gaza for the rebuilding process. (Xinhua)

## Close to Deal with South Korea and U.S. on North Korea Defense: Japan

TOKYO - Japan, the United States and South Korea are close to reaching a deal on sharing and safeguarding sensitive information on North Korea's missile and nuclear programs, Japan's Defence Ministry said on Friday.

As Japan lies well within the range of North Korea's mid-range missiles, acquiring military intelligence on North Korea in

a timely manner is vital for its security.

"Ever since defense ministers of Japan, the United States and South Korea agreed on the importance of information sharing in May, discussion has taken place at various levels," a Japanese Defence Ministry official told a media briefing.

"And now we are in the final stages toward sign-

ing."

Under the framework, South Korea would pass relevant information to the United States, with which Seoul already has a legally-binding pact to share and safeguard intelligence called General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA), and then the U.S. would pass the information onto Japan.

It would also work the

other way around as the United States has signed a GSOMIA with Japan as well. Some South Koreans have voiced concerns about signing a security pact with Japan, a one-time colonial ruler. Besides Japan's annexation of Korean peninsula that ended in 1945, bilateral ties have been plagued by a prolonged territorial dispute over a group of tiny islets. (Reuters)

## Xi Urges Advancing "One Country, Two Systems" in Macao

BEIJING - Chinese President Xi Jinping on Friday commended "one country, two systems" as practiced in Macao.

Xi made the remarks at a meeting with Macao Special Administrative Region Chief Executive Chui Sai On, who was in Beijing to report on his work to the central government.

Xi listened to Chui's report and expressed the central government's recognition to the work of Chui and his administration in Macao.

"When I visited Macao several days ago, I saw

the development and changes in Macao at first hand and witnessed the great achievements the region has made in the practice of 'one country, two systems'," Xi said.

Xi said the central government and Macao society had great hopes for Chui and the current SAR government, calling for greater initiatives and vigilance in governing risks.

Also present at the meeting were top Chinese legislator Zhang Dejiang, Vice President Li Yuan-chao and some senior officials. (Xinhua)

## Iranian President Asks for Broadening of Ties with Japan

TEHRAN - Iranian President Hassan Rouhani underlined the necessity for the further development of relations with Japan in all fields.

In a message on Wednesday to Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Rouhani felicitated the Japanese people nad government on the country's national day, and said the two countries boast of invaluable capacities for economic cooperation and promoting bilateral ties.

The age-old friendly and cordial ties between the two nations have paved the way for the further deepening of relations and constructive talks and diplomatic visits have contributed to expansion of regional

and international cooperation between Iran and Japan, the message added. President Rouhani also wished the Japanese government's dignity and prosperity.

Diplomatic relations between Iran and Japan were formally established in 1926 and throughout history, the two countries have maintained a friendly and strongly cooperation in various arenas.

The two countries' officials have held talks in different economic, trade, political and cultural fields in recent years to explore new ways of expanding bilateral ties. Iran is one of the main oil suppliers to Japan. (FNA)

## Uzbekistna's Oliy Majlis Election Held

TASHKENT - The elections to the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis of Uzbekistan, regional, district and city Kengashes (Councils) of people's deputies were held in Uzbekistan.

In a press statement released by Uzbekistan's Embassy in Kabul stated that there is good reason to believe that the elections to the Legislative Chamber of Oliy Majlis of Uzbekistan became an important stage in the deepening of reforms on further democratization, renewal and modernization of the country.

In order to conduct the elections of 2014 in full compliance with the requirements of the law, on the high democratic level the Central Election Commission adopted a Program of preparation

and holding of elections to the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan, regional, district and city Kengashes (Councils) of people's deputies. Standards and requirements defined by laws and the concept that are compulsory and equal for all, during the election campaign have been fully complied.

In the elections to the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis, regional, district and city councils of people's deputies participate more than 18.4 million voters, it's equal to 89% of the total number of voters included in the lists, the statement added. It further added that the 8311 voters used their right to early voting. According to the preliminary results of the ... (More on P4)... (16)