

US Rejects Russian Proposal to Share Intelligence on Daesh Positions

TEHRAN- The United States does not plan to cooperate with Russia in the fight against Daesh radicals in Syria and will not exchange information on the terrorist targets until Moscow changes its position with regard to Syrian President Bashar Assad, a Pentagon spokesperson said on Saturday. The head of the Russian General Staff's operations department Lt.-Gen. Sergei Rudskoi said Russia is prepared to share information with the US-led coalition against the Daesh terrorist group on the location of militants in Syria and is expecting the same in return. "We are not going



to cooperate with Russia on Syria until they change their strategy of support-

ing Assad and instead focus on ISIL [IS], US Defense Department

Spokesperson Lt. Col. Michelle Balanza told Sputnik on Friday. Accord-

ing to the Russian News Agency (Sputnik) Syria has been in a state of civil

war since 2011, with the army loyal to Assad fighting several opposition factions and militant groups, including Daesh, which is banned in a range of countries including Russia. The West and several Middle Eastern countries do not consider Assad to be the legitimate authority of Syria. A US-led international coalition has been launching airstrikes against Daesh targets in Syria since September 2014, without the permission of Damascus or the United Nations. Russia started carrying out precision airstrikes against Daesh in Syria in September 2015, at the request of Assad. (IRNA)

Evacuation of Syrian IS Fighters from Damascus Delayed

BEIRUT - A U.N.-sponsored deal to evacuate more than 2,000 Islamic State fighters and other militants from rebel-held parts of south Damascus has been delayed, a monitor of the war said on Saturday, after a rebel commander was killed. Coaches has been due to give the fighters safe passage to Raqqa, the de facto capital of Islamic State in northern Syria, Lebanese Hezbollah's TV station said. But the deal fell through after Zahran Alloush,

through whose territory the convoy was due to pass, was killed in an air strike on Friday, the broadcaster - Manar - said. The UK Observatory for Human Rights, an independent monitor that tracks violence across Syria, said in a statement the evacuation had been expected on Saturday but was delayed as there was now no secure territory for the militants to pass through. The TV report said coaches that had arrived on Friday to pick up the fighters and at least



1,500 family members had turned back. If it went ahead, the evacuation would be a success for the government of President Bashar al-As-

sad, increasing its chances of reasserting control over a strategic area just 4 km (2.5 miles) south of the centre of the capital. (Reuters)

Nigerian Leader Says to Persuade Boko Haram to End Attacks

ABUJA - Nigerian leader Muhammadu Buhari on Friday said efforts are underway to persuade militant group Boko Haram to end its attacks and embrace peace in the interest of the nation. He said the West African country, though blessed with plentiful natural resources, has suffered setback in terms of development due to the security challenges. "There can be no development without security, we have to continue to pray," the Nigerian

leader said in Abuja. "We appreciate that the security agencies are doing their best and their best is showing and we have to continue praying for them," he added. He noted there is a weighty burden on the government to ensure infrastructural development to address the situation caused by more than two million internally displaced persons, 70 percent of them being women and children. "As leaders, we ... (More on P4)... (14)

Burundi Holds Demonstrations Against Deployment of AU Troops

BUJUMBURA - Several Burundian citizens Saturday participated in nationwide demonstrations against the deployment of African Union (AU) troops into Burundi to prevent genocide or massive killings. The east African country's top authorities joined citizens in various provinces in the demonstrations that took place at chief towns of the country's 18 provinces. In the capital Bujumbura, Burundian First Vice-President Gaston Sindimwo who joined

hundreds of people in the demonstration said, "No foreign soldier will step his foot on the Burundian territory without the authorization of the government." He indicated that the demonstration was held to respond to the call by the Burundian Parliament that urged the government to reject the deployment of AU troops into Burundi. "We held this demonstration to react to the call by the Parliament that rejected the ... (More on P4)... (15)

Russia-Turkey Row Against Region Interests: Leader Aide

TEHRAN - A senior Iranian official says the ongoing tensions between Moscow and Ankara will not serve the interests of regional countries, urging all-out efforts to help end the row. Both Turkey and Russia "are our neighbors and we do not want to see any tension between [our] neighboring countries, with whom we have friendly relations," Ali-Akbar Velayati, a top adviser to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali



Khamenei, said in Tehran on Saturday. Velayati, who was speaking to reporters following a meeting

with senior Turkish Shia cleric, Sheikh Salahuddin Ozgunduz, added that the tensions between Russia and Turkey will serve the interests of neither of the two countries nor those of other regional states. ... (More on P4)... (16)

Turkish PM Cancels Meeting with Pro-Kurdish HDP

ANKARA - Turkey's prime minister on Saturday canceled a planned meeting with the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party, saying its politics was rooted in violence, as government forces pursued a major security operation in the country's mainly Kurdish southeast. Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu was due to meet the leaders of all three opposition parties in parliament to discuss planned constitutional reform. "Recent statements by HDP officials reflect a politics that benefits from violence and tension. There is no longer any point in sharing the same table with this attitude," the prime minister's office said in a statement. (Reuters)

US Behind All Wars in Last 37 Years: Iran Commander

TEHRAN - A senior Iranian commander says the United States provoked all the wars that the world has seen in the past four decades. "Today, we live in the world of bitter and harsh realities," Brigadier General Hossein Salami, the second-in-command of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), said on Saturday. "We have seen [how] the powerful world sees peace [as an opportunity] to generate the capacity for war. "Should we review the bitter realities of recent history, we would come to the conclusion that all the wars of the past 37 years have taken place in this region and the Islamic World, with the US having been the one to provoke all of them," he added. The world knows that a new center of power is in the making to create a new civilization based on divine concepts, Salami said. (PressTV)

Yemen Fighting Persists Outside Rebel-Held Capital Sanaa

ADEN - Yemeni loyalists killed at least 20 Iran-backed rebels on Saturday in a pushback against insurgents seeking to retake positions to the northeast of the capital they control, military sources said. "The Huthis (rebels) on Friday launched an offensive in the direction of Jabal al-Salb in Nihm" district of Sanaa province, "but were repelled on Saturday morning", a loyalist commander told AFP. "At least 20 Huthis were killed" since Friday night, another military source said. He added that loyalists also died, but he did not give a death toll. Last week, pro-govern-



ment forces captured the Jabal al-Salb area 40 kilometres (25 miles) outside Sanaa. Loyalists and the Saudi-led military coalition supporting them have sent troops, armoured vehicles and tanks to reinforce the district. Meanwhile, coalition fighter jets led dawn raids on rebel positions in Majzar area in neighbouring Jawf province to the north, which is mostly under loyalist control, a spokesman for the pro-

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Philippine Gov't Pledges to Pursue BIFF Militants

MANILA - The Philippine government vowed Saturday to go after the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) who made separate attacks and killed nine civilians on Christmas Eve in three Mindanao provinces. Miriam Coronel-Ferrer, government peace panel head negotiating with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the largest Muslim rebel group in the Philippines, said the nine civilians were "summarily executed." "The BIFF's

sporadic attacks across the three provinces of Maguindanao, Sultan Kudarat, and North Cotabato -- including the firing of grenades at a local chapel and an army detachment, hostage-taking, and planting of improvised explosives, indicate an attempt to gain momentum for their bid to destabilize the situation in these areas and garner attention for themselves and their flagging cause," she said. Presidential Communications Operations Office ... (More on P4)... (18)

Iraqi Forces Push Deeper in IS-Held Ramadi

BAGHDAD - Iraqi security forces on Saturday moved deeper into the heart of the city of Ramadi, where they have been fighting for five days in fierce clashes against the Islamic State (IS) militants, a local security source said. The security forces with paramilitary Sunni tribal fighters, backed by Iraqi and U.S.-led coalition aircraft, have liberated the Houz district after heavy clashes with IS militants, bringing the troops closer to the adjacent government complex in central Ramadi, some 110 km north of Iraqi capital Baghdad, the source told Xinhua. The latest troops' advance was substantial for the Iraqi security forces and allied paramilitary units, as it gives them control over the key city of Ramadi, despite the fact that the surrounding neighborhoods are still captured by IS militants and dotted with roadside bombs and booby-trapped buildings, the source said. "The air strikes were very powerful and accurate, and were instrumental in regaining ground, as they helped detonate bombs and killing large number of IS militants," the source said.

The recapture of Houz district, which stretches from the southern part of Ramadi to central city, came after two days of clashes and heavy air strikes against IS militants. Meanwhile, the security forces and allied Sunni tribal units, backed by artillery, tanks and aircraft, made a significant advance in Albu Farraj area, which lies across Euphrates River in northern Ramadi, when the troops pushed deeper toward the city center, the source said. (Xinhua)

Nieghbor News

US Oil Ban Reversal Not to Harm Iran: NIOC Chief

TEHRAN - Iran says it will suffer the least among oil producers from the US decision to lift a 40-year ban on exporting crude oil. "With the liberation of crude oil and even gas condensate exports in the US, Iran will experience the least harm," the chief executive of National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), Rokneddin Javadi, was quoted by Mehr news agency as saying. He said that oil-rich regions like North Sea, Mexico deepwaters, Asia deepwaters and even such regions in Africa are set to be harmed

by the US oil decision. "But naturally, the market will be oversupplied and at least the US and Far East markets will be affected immediately," he added. Javadi also said that US's future oil supply on the market will force countries selling oil at high prices to "limit their oil production and supply." Earlier this month, Congress voted to repeal the 40-year-old ban on US crude oil exports, imposed after the Arab oil embargo of the early 1970s that sent petrol prices soaring and gave rise to runaway inflation. (PressTV)

Azerbaijan to Send Humanitarian Aid to Tajikistan



BAKU - Tajikistani government has appealed to the Azerbaijani government for humanitarian aid in connection with a strong earthquake that hit Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Province of Tajikistan on December 7. The ministry of emergency situations told APA that under the instruction of the Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, the ministry

is doing preparations to send humanitarian aid in valued at AZN 800,000 to the natural disaster zone on behalf of the Azerbaijani government. A strong earthquake has hit a sparsely populated area in the Gorno Badakhshan Autonomous Province of Tajikistan. The quake caused casualties and destruction and also damaged infrastructure. (APA)

China's Annual Audit to Cover All Government Funds, Officials: Top Auditor

BEIJING - China's top auditor Liu Jiayi on Saturday said auditors will seek to include all public funds, state-owned assets and resources as well as government officials in their annual budget, fiscal revenue and expenditure reports. Liu, head of the National Audit Office (NAO), was speaking at a joint inquiry session on a rectification report about problems found in an audit of the central government's 2014 budget, fiscal revenue and expenditure. His comments came in response to a question raised by lawmakers over how to expand the subjects of NAO's annual audits. The NAO submits the reports to China's top legislature in June every year, but it only covers 44 gov-

ernment departments. Liu said innovation was key to what he called an "all-inclusive" audit, adding that auditing resources should be unified and "social services at proper levels" should be purchased in order to do so. The Q&A-style inquiry on Saturday is part of a bi-monthly meeting of the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee, the top legislature. This is the first time that a top legislature inquiry was held to discuss problems listed in the audit reports. In previous years, only written reports were submitted to lawmakers. The change this year, experts say, could signal the government's resolve to curb widespread malpractice. (Xinhua)

2 Militants Killed, 5 Injured as Security Forces Repulse Attack in NW Pakistan

ISLAMABAD - At least two militants were killed in a shootout with security forces in Pakistan's northwest tribal area of Kurram Agency on Saturday, local media reported. Urdu TV channel Dawn News said the militants attacked a check post of the security forces with sophisticated weapons, but the troops repulsed the attack in which two of them got killed, five injured and others fled the scene. Kurram Agency is a semi-autonomous tribal area which borders Af-

ghanistan from its three provinces. The attackers, whose identities have not been revealed yet, reportedly came from Afghanistan by crossing the porous border. Terrorist attacks frequently happened in Kurram Agency till the security forces launched an operation two years ago to curb the extremist elements in the area. The operation basically broke the backbone of the militants, but they still carry out sporadic attacks on security forces. (Xinhua)