

# Turkey, Russia Agree on Nationwide Ceasefire Plan in Syria

ANKARA - Turkey and Russia on Wednesday agreed on the framework of a nationwide ceasefire plan in Syria, Anadolu Agency reported.

The two sides have reached agreement on a draft plan for the implementation of a nationwide ceasefire in Syria, aiming to extend the ceasefire deal in Aleppo to the whole country.

The ceasefire will take effect from Wednesday night, according to the report. Terrorist organizations will be excluded from the ceasefire.

If the ceasefire succeeds, the Assad regime and the opposition are expected to start peace talks in Astana, Kazakhstan brokered by Turkey and Russia, which is likely to take place in mid-January, 2017. (Xinhua)



## US Embassy in Turkey Denies Accusation of Backing Terrorist Groups

ANKARA - The United States embassy in Ankara has denied accusations that the U.S. supported terrorist groups fighting in Syria, the embassy said in a statement on Wednesday. The statement came a day after Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said he has evidence that U.S.-led coalition forces have given support to terrorist groups, including the Islamic State (IS) and Syrian Kurdish forces.

“The United States government is not supporting DAESH. The USG did not create or support DAESH in the past. Assertions the United States government is supporting DAESH are not true,” said the statement, using an Arabic acronym for the jihadist group. Turkish President Erdogan said at a press conference on Tuesday that Turkey in the past was accused of supporting IS. “They (anti-IS coalition forces) were accusing us of supporting Daesh,” he said. “Now they’ve all vanished and they’re... (More on P4)...(23)”

## Russia FM Voices Concerns over U.S. Attempt to Arm Syrian Rebels

MOSCOW - Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov voiced his concerns over possible U.S. arms deliveries to Syrian rebels in a phone conversation with U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, Russian Foreign Ministry said Tuesday.

In a discussion over prospects of the Syrian peace process, Lavrov told his U.S. counterpart that the U.S. decision to ease some restrictions on arming Syrian rebels may further escalate tensions and lead to more causal-

ties in the war-torn country, the ministry said in a statement. Last week, the outgoing U.S. President Barack Obama signed an annual defense spending bill into law, which allows providing “man-portable air defense systems to the vetted Syrian opposition.”

Earlier this month, Obama lifted restrictions on military aid to foreign forces in Syria in the Arms Export Con-



control Act. Lavrov said the moves by the Obama administration were aimed at undermining the foundation for the normalization of Moscow’s ties with the upcoming U.S. administration under Donald Trump, the ministry said. (Xinhua)

## Ukrainian Army Gets over 1,300 Units of Military Equipment in 2016

KIEV - The Ukrainian Armed Forces have received more than 1,300 units of new and modernized military equipment since the start of 2016, the Defence Ministry said on Tuesday.

“Only in the past week, the state enterprises have handed over 858 units of the main armament to the Defence Ministry. They include modernized armored vehicles, new cargo vehicles, thermal imaging cameras, sniper rifles and complexes of crypto-

graphic protection,” Olexiy Chernobay, the ministry’s spokesman, told reporters during a media briefing. Besides, the Ukrainian army received some 100,000 items of ammunition this year, Chernobay added. The figures marked the notable decrease from 2015, when the East European country purchased a total of 3,756 units of armaments and military equipment and nearly 402,500 items of... (More on P4)...(24)

## Oil Prices Climb up Ahead of OPEC Cuts

NEW YORK - Oil prices climbed higher on Tuesday as the market anticipates that output cuts from oil producers will help ease the global supply glut.

Oil prices were lingering around the highest level since mid-2015, bolstered by a deal made between the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and non-OPEC members to cut output by almost 1.8 million barrels per day from Jan. 1, 2017.

However, analysts said oil prices may struggle to rally further before evidence is available of OPEC’s compliance with the cuts.

The West Texas Intermediate for February Delivery increased 0.88 U.S. dollars to settle at 53.90 dollars a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange, while Brent



crude for February delivery added 0.93 dollars a barrel on the London ICE Futures Exchange to close at 56.09 dollars (Xinhua)

## Number of Migrants Leaving Germany Voluntarily Rises in 2016

BERLIN - Nearly 55,000 migrants who were not eligible for or were likely to be denied asylum left Germany voluntarily in 2016, up by 20,000 from the number who left of their own volition in 2015, the government said on Wednesday.

“That’s a considerable increase from last year,” Interior Ministry spokesman Harald Neumanns told a news conference, saying the 2016 figure had climbed to 54,123 through Dec. 27. “The increase is welcome. It’s always preferable when people leave the country voluntarily in-



stead of being deported.” A Finance Ministry spokesman said the government would boost funding slightly to 150 million euros in 2017 to support efforts to encourage people to leave Germany. Germany has toughened

its stance on immigration in recent months, prompted by concerns about security and integration after admitting more than 1.1 million migrants from the Middle East, Africa and elsewhere since early 2015. Last... (More on P4)...(25)

## Turkish Troops Push on to Recapture Al-Bab from IS

ANKARA - About 44 Islamic State (IS) militants have been “neutralized” in northern Syria’s al-Bab city, stated Turkish General Staff on Wednesday, adding that 117 others were wounded.

Turkish authorities often use the term “neutralized” to denote captured or killed militants. Authorities added that a bomb-laden vehicle belonging to the militants was also destroyed.

Furthermore, about 154 IS targets were destroyed in the operation, including sanctuaries, defense posts, command centers, weapons and vehicles used by the militants. Turkish troops and Free Syrian Army (FSA) fighters have been battling to recapture al-Bab from IS for over a month, with clashes intensifying last week. On Tuesday, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said he has evidence that the U.S.-led coalition... (More on P4)...(26)

## S. Korean Main Opposition Party Vows to Annul Comfort Women Agreement with Japan

SEOUL - South Korea’s main opposition Minjoo Party vowed Wednesday to annul an agreement with Japan on the victims of so-called “comfort women” if the party succeeds in regaining a presidential power in the expected early election.

Minjoo Party floor leader Woo Sang-ho said at a party meeting that Wednesday marks the first anniversary of the “humiliating” South Korea-Japan agreement on comfort women, pledging to annul it if the presidential power is transferred to his party.

The word “comfort women” is a euphemism for Korean women who were lured or forced into sexual slavery for Japanese military brothels during World War Two. The Korean Peninsula was colonized by the Imperial Japan from 1910 to 1945.

On Dec. 28 last year, the Park Geun-hye administration reached a “final and irreversible” agreement with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe-led cabinet on the comfort women victims. A handful of aged, surviving South Korean victims have opposed the agreement, saying Abe has yet to sincerely apologize for past atrocities and admit legal responsibility of the Japanese government for forcible recruitment of the teenage victims during the colonization.

The Minjoo Party floor leader said the Park administration’s unilateral push for the agreement in defiance of the aged victims will be recorded as a humiliation in South Korea’s diplomatic history. (Xinhua)

## EU Provides Additional Support for UNICEF Nutrition Interventions in Sudan

KHARTOUM - The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) said Tuesday it received additional support from the European Union (EU) for its life-saving nutrition interventions in Sudan which targets two million children.

“The UNICEF is receiving increased support for its life-saving nutrition interventions in Sudan from the European Commission 600,000 euros, bringing the Commission’s overall contribution to 4.1 million euros in 2016,” the UNICEF said in a press release. ... (More on P4)...(27)

## Kerry Touts 11th-Hour Vision of Middle East Peace

WASHINGTON - With fewer than four weeks left in office, US Secretary of State John Kerry will on Wednesday lay out a vision for peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

The goal of a two-state solution, with Israel and a future Palestine living side-by-side within agreed borders has eluded generations of US diplomats.

But in the final days of President Barack Obama’s administration, and with Israel’s government openly hostile to outside pressure, Kerry wants to leave his mark. “He feels it’s his duty in his waning weeks and days as secretary to lay out what he believes is a way to-

wards a peaceful two-state solution,” his spokesman said.

“It’s always important to try to keep the process moving forward, to lay out constructive visions for the future,” spokesman Mark Toner told reporters.

Negotiations between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s government and Palestinian leader Mahmud Abbas’s administration are already a dead letter.

And if Kerry wants the sides to pay attention to his “comprehensive vision” of a settlement, he faces two stark challenges that even his ill-fated predecessors did not. (AFP)

## Neighbor News

### China Stresses Political Solution, Unity after Proposal on Chemical Weapons in Syria

BEIJING - A Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson on Wednesday stressed that any action by the UN Security Council must help form a political solution on the Syrian issue and reflect the unity of the Security Council.

Spokesperson Hua Chunying’s remarks came after Britain and France drafted a UN security council resolution to sanction some Syrians and Syrian organizations for chemical weapons attacks. “I want to stress that any action by the UN

Security Council must be conducive to driving a political solution to the Syrian issue, and the unity of the Security Council,” Hua said at a daily press briefing.

China opposes the use of chemical weapons by any person, for any purposes and in any circumstances, she said, adding that the position was clear and consistent.

Hua called on the international community to focus on constructively pushing forward political solutions on the Syrian issue. (Xinhua)

### Pakistan’s Fourth Nuclear Power Plant, Built with China’s Assistance, Goes Online

ISLAMABAD - Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on Wednesday inaugurated power production from 340 megawatt Chashma-III nuclear power plant ‘C-III’ near Mianwali, Radio Pakistan reported.

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony, the prime minister slammed the opposition, calling on them to refrain from ‘sabotaging’ Pakistan’s national interests.

“We shouldn’t waste our time launching unnecessary protests,” he said.

“Ending load-shedding is one of our top priorities,” he said, reiterating his government’s commitment to end load-shed-

ding by 2018.

The power project is a joint collaboration between the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) and China National Nuclear Corporation. It was executed by the PAEC under the guidelines of the International Atomic Energy Agency. PM Nawaz said the Chashma-III nuclear power plant will add 600MW to the national grid, adding that it will also help PAEC in achieving the overall target of 8,000MW. He also directed the PAEC to accelerate the production of nuclear power plants.

The premier congratulated... (More on P4)...(28)

### Iran Flexes Muscle by Firing Long-Range Missiles in Drill

TEHRAN - Iran on Wednesday successfully test-fired its long-range surface-to-air S-200 missile system in the ongoing military exercise in southern Persian Gulf region, Press TV reported.

Besides, various other medium-range missile systems, including Mer-sad (Ambush), were deployed to annihilate mock aggressive aircraft. On Wednesday, the Iranian forces carried out the first operational test of Sayyad-3 (Hunter-3) missiles by Talash (Struggle) homegrown system to hit high-altitude targets, Tasnim

news agency reported. Capable of intercepting targets within a range of 150 km in high altitudes, Sayyad-3 has been paired with Talash missile system which also launches Sayyad-2 missiles against targets at medium altitudes.

The paired air defense system is also equipped with locally-manufactured fire control radar, dubbed Ofoq (Horizon), Tasnim said.

It was also announced here on Wednesday that since Monday when the drills began, the Iranian air defense warned several fighter jets and... (More on P4)...(29)

### Tajikistan, Uzbekistan Vow to Boost Trade Cooperation

DUSHANBEH - The Chamber and Commerce Industry of Tajikistan met with representatives of a number of Uzbek companies participating in the International Universal Exhibition-Fair “Tajikistan - 2016”, which was held in Dushanbe on December 24-26, reports the press service of the Chamber and Commerce and Industry.

“We have a mutual interest in boosting trade

and economic, scientific and cultural ties between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan,” said Sharif Said, the Chairman of the Tajik Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Uzbek businessmen, in turn, thanked the leadership of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Tajikistan for reception and organization of the Exhibition-Fair, on the sidelines of which the... (More on P4)...(30)

### Turkmenistan Joins ICAO Public Key Directory

ASHGABAT - President of Turkmenistan, Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, signed the order, tasking the State Customs Service to make arrangements necessary for Turkmenistan’s inclusion into the Public Key Directory of the International Civil Aviation Organization.

The State Migration Service will serve as representative of Turkmenistan for cooperation with the Public Key Directory of the International Civil

Aviation Organization, the state news agency of Turkmenistan said.

The International Civil Aviation Organization Public Key Directory (ICAO PKD) is a database maintained by the International Civil Aviation Organization holding national cryptographic keys related to the authentication of e-passport information.

The United Nations became the first non-state... (More on P4)...(31)