

UNSC Urges Joint Measures to Protect “Critical Infrastructure” from Terrorist Attacks

UNITED NATIONS - The UN Security Council on Monday unanimously adopted resolution 2341 (2017), calling upon member states to consider developing or further improving their strategies for reducing risks to critical infrastructure from terrorist attacks.

The 15-member Council reiterated “the need to strengthen efforts to improve security and protection of particularly vulnerable targets, such as infrastructure and public places, according to a UN press release posted on its website. Attacks against objects and sectors such as banking and finance, telecommunications, emergency services, air, maritime and rail transportation, and energy and water supply – perceived as “attractive



targets” for terrorist groups – can result not only in civilian casualties, but also damage property on a large scale, disrupt proper functioning of public services, and create chaos in societies, says the press release. Further in the resolution, the Security Council – the UN body with the responsibility for maintenance of international peace and security – also underscored the importance of partnerships at all levels and with public and private stakeholders, it says. The resolution was adopted at an open Security Council debate on vulnerabilities, interdependencies and capabilities and the cascading impacts of terrorist attacks on critical infrastructure, as well as measures... (More on P4)... (29)

NATO Should Boost Action to Adapt Growing Security Threats: Hollande

PARIS - The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) should improve its defense policy and boost action to better ensure security in a context of growing threats, French President Francois Hollande said on Monday.

At a telephone talks with NATO's Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, Hollande stressed France's “commitment to the de-

velopment of a more ambitious European defense policy.”

“NATO must continue to show its ability to adapt its missions to a context of growing menaces,” the French leader said in a statement released by his office.

“The coherence of the alliance's action is the best guarantee of its effectiveness,” he added. (Xinhua)

Trump National Security Aide Flynn Resigns over Russian Contacts

WASHINGTON - President Donald Trump's national security adviser, Michael Flynn, resigned late on Monday after coming under fire over whether he discussed the possibility of lifting US sanctions on Russia before Trump took office. Retired General Keith Kellogg, who has been chief of staff of the White House National Security Council, was named the acting national security adviser while Trump determines who should fill the position.

Kellogg, retired General David Petraeus, a former CIA director, and Robert Harward, a former deputy commander of US Central Command, are under con-

sideration for the position, a White House official said. Flynn submitted his resignation hours after Trump said through a spokesman that he was reviewing the situation and talking to Vice President Mike Pence.

Flynn had promised Pence he had not discussed US sanctions with the Russians, but transcripts of intercepted communications, described by US officials, showed that the subject had come up in conversations between him and the Russian ambassador to the United States, Sergey Kislyak. Such contacts could potentially be in violation of... (More on P4)... (30)

NATO Chief Seeks Bigger Defense Budgets Ahead of US Meeting

BRUSSELS - The NATO chief urged allies on Tuesday to step up their defense spending, a day ahead of the first meeting between new U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and his 27 NATO counterparts in Brussels.

U.S. President Donald Trump suggested during his campaign that he might not defend allies who refuse to contribute their fair share. His comments have alarmed European nations, particularly those near Russia's border, like Poland and the Baltic

states of Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia.

“Fair burden-sharing and increased defense spending underpins the trans-Atlantic alliance,” NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg told reporters. “If we reduce defense spending in times when tensions are going down, we have to be able to increase defense spending when tensions are going up, as they are now.”

While the Trump administration is weighing its defense commitments to Europe, NATO leaders



have already committed to halting spending cuts and raising their military budgets to 2 percent of gross domestic product. But apart from the United

States, only four other NATO member countries do so – Britain, Estonia, Poland and debt-ridden Greece, according to NATO figures. (AP)

Russia, U.S. “Natural Allies” in Anti-Terror Cooperation: Russian Diplomat

MOSCOW - Russia and the United States are “natural allies” in fighting terrorism, a Russian deputy foreign minister in charge of counter-terrorism said on Monday.

“We hope that, with (U.S. President) Donald Trump in power and a new administration in the White House, the West will change its approach to counter-terrorism,” deputy foreign minister Oleg Syromolotov said in an interview with Russia's Izvestiya newspaper.

The West should “finally realize that the combat

against terrorism does not tolerate double standards or hidden agendas, and that intergovernmental cooperation must involve lawful authorities of a country where the anti-terror operation is conducted,” Syromolotov said.

According to him, the world today needs a broad coalition to fight international terrorism, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, international rights protection and decisions of the United Nations Security Council.



He said that during this fight some countries are supporting some terrorists, thinking wrongly that they can control them. The deputy minister stressed that despite the

existing differences, Russia and the United States remain natural allies in matters of counter-terrorism. And, moreover, it is in the interests of both... (More on P4)... (31)

Trump Vows to Deal with DPRK “Very Strongly” after Pyongyang’s Missile Launch

WASHINGTON - U.S. President Donald Trump on Monday vowed to deal with Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) “very strongly”, calling the Asian country a “big, big problem.”

Trump made the remark at a joint press conference with visiting Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, after the DPRK test-fired its ballistic missile on Sunday. But the U.S. president did not elaborate on what actions he



planned to take in relation to the DPRK. “We have problems all over the Middle East. We have problems just about every cor-

ner of the globe no matter where you look,” Trump said when asked about the most important national... (More on P4)... (32)

UK Says Trump State Visit Still on Despite Loud Opposition

LONDON - The British government says U.S. President Donald Trump's state visit is still on, despite a groundswell of public and political opposition. Thousands of people have demonstrated and more than 1.8 million have signed an online petition against the visit since Prime Minister Theresa May extended the invitation last month on behalf of Queen Elizabeth II. House of Commons Speaker John Bercow set aside his customary political neutrality to say that Trump should not be invited to address Parliament during the trip. Responding to the anti-Trump petition on Tuesday, the Foreign Office said it “recognized the strong views... but does not support this petition.” It said “we look forward to welcoming President Trump once dates and arrangements are finalized.” Lawmakers will hold a non-binding debate on the petition Monday. (AP)

United Nations Says Refugees on PNG’s Manus Island Should Stay

SYDNEY - The United Nations Refugee Agency says Australia and Papua New Guinea should not be deporting refugees, as both governments ramp up the process of shipping them out on Tuesday. Last week, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees released a statement after a man escaped from detention on Papua New Guinea to Fiji, and reaffirmed their stance that refugees should not be housed in the Manus Island holding center, due to poor conditions.

Ben Lomai, lawyer for many of the asylum seekers on the island, spoke to Xinhua on Tuesday saying 163 people on Manus Island are viewed as “non-refugees”, with either a “negative” or “double negative” rating, and are about to be deported.

“The imminent ones are the 60 (refugees) that they are trying to ask them to leave, at the moment they are trying to get them to leave voluntarily,” Lomai told Xinhua. “A lot of them have called me and messaged me and I said no, don't say yes to them, we are doing something to try and solve the deportation here.” Lomai also stressed that the PNG government has to produce a deportation risk assessment report for all refugees, and urged those there to keep fighting. “We are going into court tomorrow with a view to try and stop the deportation tomorrow, we are trying to get an interim order,” Lomai said. Lomai is also hopeful that the Australian Senate in their discussions on Tuesday, may have a favorable outcome for the asylum seekers that he represents. (Xinhua)

Syrian Army Retakes Key Gas Field from IS in Central Syria

DAMASCUS - Syrian army captured the Hayan gas field in central province of Homs, following battles with the Islamic State (IS) militants, pro-government al-Watan online newspaper said Tuesday. The capture of the gas field came automatically after the Syrian forces took the al-Muher area in the eastern countryside of Homs, where several oil and gas fields are located.

The IS seized Hayan and other fields in eastern Homs when they captured the ancient city of Palmyra in December of last year. The condition of Hayan is still unknown as the IS... (More on P4)... (33)

Iraqi Airstrikes Bomb Meeting of IS Commanders in Western Iraq

BAGHDAD - The Iraqi warplanes struck a house where Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the top leader of Islamic State (IS) group, was said to be holding a meeting with senior IS commanders in Iraq's western province of Anbar, killing some 13 of them with no word for the fate of Baghdadi himself, the Iraqi military said on Monday.

The Iraqi intelligence tracked the movement of Baghdadi's convoy of three-vehicles from neighboring Syria to a village near the town of Qaim, on the border between Iraq and Syria, where the meeting was believed to be held at a house in an orchard, the Joint Operations Command

(JOC) said in a statement. Baghdadi's presence in western Iraq was to meet the Iraqi and foreign senior IS commanders to discuss the collapse of the terrorist group in the eastern side of the city of Mosul in northern Iraq, and to choose his successor in case being killed, according to the statement.

The Iraqi F-16 jet fighters conducted the airstrike on the house during the meeting on Saturday, killing 13 of IS commanders, the JOC said.

The statement released a list of the names of the 13 IS commanders killed in the attack without mentioning the name of Baghdadi himself. ... (More on P4)... (34)

Nieghbor News

Chinese FM to Attend G20 Ministerial Meeting, Munich Security Conference

BEIJING - Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi will travel to Germany to attend the informal meeting of G20 foreign ministers and the annual Munich Security Conference from Feb. 15-18.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Geng Shuang made the remarks at a routine press briefing. Wang was invited by German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel and chairman of the Munich Security Conference Wolfgang Ischinger

China appreciates Germany's preparations for the G20 Hamburg summit in July, Geng said.

The foreign ministers' meeting will focus on the 2030 sustainable development agenda, peace and partnership with Africa,

he said.

China hopes the meeting will address major global challenges, and send a positive signal of support for multilateralism, global management and an innovative, open and inclusive world economy, said the spokesperson.

Calling the Munich Security Conference an important annual forum in global strategic and security field, Geng said Wang will expound on China's position on issues including the current international situation and security cooperation.

The Munich Security Conference brings together 500 participants including heads of state and government, as well as foreign and defence ministers. (Xinhua)

Pakistan Says Disappointed at U.S. Senate Deliberations

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan showed disappointment at some remarks made during the recent deliberations in the U.S. Senate about the presence of the terrorist sanctuaries in the country.

Some U.S. lawmakers and commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan General John Nicholson said at last week's Congressional hearing that the Afghan Taliban and the Haqqani Network still have safe havens in Pakistani cities.

Gen Nicholson had also pushed the Trump administration to conduct “holistic review” of relationship with Pakistan. However, the general and the U.S. senators acknowledged Pakistan's sacrifices in the war on terror and underlined the importance of relationship with Pakistan.

Pakistan Foreign Ministry welcomed the sentiments of those who have acknowledged Pakistan's commitment to supporting the realization of a stable and peaceful Afghanistan, and those who expressed a desire to work with Pakistan to eliminate terrorism.

But it was upset at the allegations of terrorist centers on Pakistani soil, the ministry said.

“We are, however, disappointed with some of the assertions and insinuations made in the recent discussions about terrorist safe havens in Pakistan that we feel are misplaced and not in sync with the current situation on the ground,” the Foreign Ministry spokesman said in response to the discussions in the U.S. on Afghanistan and Pakistan... (More on P4)... (35)

Head of U.N. Nuclear Watchdog Says Iran Continuing Commitment to Deal

DUBAI - Iran is implementing the deal on its nuclear program agreed with world powers, the head of the U.N. atomic energy watchdog said on Tuesday, amid concerns the United States will try to alter the terms.

The United States has taken a tougher stance on Iran since President Donald Trump took office on Jan. 20, including saying it had put the Islamic Republic “on notice” last month over carrying out a ballistic missile test.

Under the 2015 accord between Tehran and six world powers, Iran agreed to curb its nuclear program in exchange for relief from some U.S., European and U.N. economic sanctions. Iran has always said its program is

purely for peaceful purposes. Trump's administration is considering insisting the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) toughen its policing of Iran's compliance, including demanding access to military sites, sources have told Reuters.

The United States would need support from the 34 other countries who sit on the IAEA board of governors for military site inspections. But the new administration has so far not contacted the IAEA, the U.N. nuclear watchdog responsible for verifying Iran's adherence to the deal formally called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano said. (Reuters)

Presidents of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan Hold Phone Talks

ASHGABAT - Presidents of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan held telephone talks on cooperation issues on Tuesday, reported the press service of the Uzbek President.

The head of state Shavkat Mirziyoyev congratulated the re-elected President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov over the election win. During the talks, the sides discussed issues

of bilateral relations and exchanged views on the key areas of regional and international policy. The two leaders expressed mutual interest in development of constructive and open dialogue between the brotherly countries and vowed to use all potentials to build the fruitful cooperation in trade, economic, transport and communication, cultural and humanitarian areas. (AKI)