

Trump Tells Europe to 'Take Back' 800 ISIS Fighters or US 'Will Be Forced to Release Them'

WASHINGTON - US President Donald Trump has urged European nations to repatriate and prosecute jihadists from their countries who were captured in Syria. Otherwise, he warned, the US could release the terrorists to "permeate Europe."

"The Caliphate is ready to fall," Trump tweeted. "The alternative is not a good one in that we will be forced to release them..."

Trump tweeted that the US "does not want to watch" Islamic State (IS, formerly ISIS) "permeate Europe," which he believes is likely to happen if withdrawing US forces let them go while "pulling back after 100% Caliphate victory." The US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) say they are close to the "final defeat" of IS, having reduced their territory to a small final stronghold. Trump re-



cently announced that he would pull US troops out of Syria, but has not yet set any deadlines. With that, American officials have reportedly

warned European countries that they are running out of time to take back and put on trial jihadists who went from Europe to fight for IS.

Some 800 of them have reportedly been captured by the US-backed forces. (RT)

Neighbor News

Iran Points to Pakistan after Deadly Attack on Guard

TEHRAN, Iran - Iran's parliament speaker said Sunday that an attack that killed 27 members of Iran's elite Revolutionary Guard was "planned and carried out from inside Pakistan," which he said should answer for it.

Ali Larijani's remarks, carried by the state-run IRNA news agency, came after Iranian officials initially accused Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates of being behind the attack. The Gulf Arab states are deeply suspicious of Tehran and at war with Iran-aligned rebels in Yemen.

Iran's Foreign Ministry summoned Pakistan's ambassador on Sunday to protest the attack. Pakistan condemned

Wednesday's attack but has not commented on the allegations. The militant Sunni group Jaish al-Adl, which claimed responsibility, is believed to operate from havens in neighboring Pakistan. The head of Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guard, Maj. Gen. Mohammad Ali Jafari, on Saturday accused Pakistan's security forces of supporting the militants and said Iran expects it to "punish" them.

Iran's President Hassan Rouhani meanwhile vowed "revenge for the blood of these martyrs," in remarks broadcast Sunday on state TV. "They cannot escape God's and Iranian people's vengeance," Rouhani said. (AP)

Irish Backstop Can't Be Changed for Brexit Deal: Estonian President

MUNICH - There can be no changes to the Irish "backstop", an arrangement to avoid a hard border between European Union member Ireland and British-ruled Northern Ireland after Brexit, Estonian President Kersti Kaljulaid told Reuters.

Many British lawmakers, especially in Prime Minister Theresa May's governing Conservative Party, fear the backstop will trap the UK in a permanent customs union with the EU after Brexit. They are withholding

support for the Brexit deal negotiated between May and the EU, raising the prospect Britain will leave the bloc on March 29 without an orderly transition arrangement in place - something that could disrupt trade and other ties.

Ireland and the rest of the EU say there is no credible alternative to the backstop, which would prevent customs and other checks having to be conducted after Brexit on the border between the Irish republic and... (More on P4)... (16)

BEIJING - China saw fast expansion of rural financial institutions last year as the country channels more financial resources to serve the countryside.

China had 1,427 rural commercial banks by the end of 2018, up by 165 compared with the previous year, according to the China Banking and Insurance Regulatory Commission. Village banks grew from 1,562 in end-2017 to 1,616 in end-2018. There were 4,588 banking institutions in China

Rural Financial Institutions Expanding in China



in end-2018, up by 39 compared with end-2017.

China issued a guideline earlier this month to leverage more finan-

cial resources to facilitate rural vitalization. (Xinhua)

Malaysian Company May Build Robotics Plant in Uzbekistan

TASHKENT - The delegation of Malaysian company TXMR will visit Uzbekistan in April to discuss the creation of joint production of robotics in the country, Trend reports with reference to Uzbek Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Foreign Ministry states that Uzbek Ambassador to Malaysia, Ravshan Usmanov, visited the TXMR production facilities, where he met with the executive director of the company, Tengku Farid.

The sides discussed prospects for the creation of modern high-tech enterprises with the attraction of foreign investment in Uzbekistan.

The plant will help to improve the efficiency and profitability of domestic production lines.

The Malaysian side highly appreciated the measures taken by Uzbekistan to modernize the industrial sector, expand the range of import-substituting products and stressed its interest in establishing mutually beneficial contacts.

TXMR is a leader in industrial automation and robot manufacturing, not only in Malaysia, but also in Southeast Asia.

TXMR Sdn Bhd was incorporated in Malaysia on 24th September 2010 and locates in Subang Jaya, Selangor. (Trend)

Merkel's Spokesman Backpedals on Her Suggestion That Russia is Behind Kids' Protest after Outrage



BERLIN - German Chancellor Angela Merkel enraged local activists after she appeared to suggest that the Kremlin was pulling

the strings behind student climate protests. But her spokesman later said that she supported the demonstrations.

Merkel's spokesman Stefan Seibert was left to do some urgent damage control after the chancellor appeared to pin the blame for schoolchildren-led environmental protests across Europe on the long arm of Moscow.

Speaking at the Munich Security Conference on Saturday, Merkel highlighted the threat of Russian "hybrid warfare" - a mix of cyberwar and cunning disinformation campaigns - that, according to the German PM, "can be felt every day in every European country."

Warning of the omnipotent threat to Europe's security from Russia, Merkel noted that such warfare is "hard to detect, because you suddenly have movements that you wouldn't have thought would appear." Seemingly citing an example of such an artificially concocted movement, Merkel mentioned the mass student demonstrations that see German schoolchildren skipping their lessons every Friday to protest against the government's lukewarm response... (More on P4)... (13)

Syrian's Assad: U.S. Will Sell out Those Relying on It

BEIRUT - Syrian President Bashar al-Assad warned on Sunday the United States would not protect those depending on it, in reference to Kurdish fighters who control much of the north.

"We say to those groups who are betting on the Americans, the Americans will not protect you," he said without naming them. "The Americans will put you in their pockets so you can be tools in the barter, and they have started with (it)." U.S. President Donald Trump declared in December

he would pull troops from Syria, raising more questions over the fate of Washington's Kurdish allies under the threat of Turkish attacks. U.S. forces have long supplied arms and training to the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), led by the Kurdish YPG militia, the main U.S. partner in the battle against Islamic State. The U.S. presence helped the SDF seize swathes of north and east Syria, and has also been widely seen as a deterrent against Turkey which has vowed... (More on P4)... (17)

World Bishops Head to Vatican for Sex Abuse Summit

VATICAN CITY - Pope Francis gathers bishops from around the world at the Vatican this week for a hotly-awaited summit on tackling the wave of child sex abuse scandals assailing the Catholic Church.

The heads of around 100 bishops' conferences from every continent will convene from Thursday to Sunday for the meeting on the protection of minors, with victims' groups demanding that a concrete action plan on fighting paedophilia be drawn up.

The pope, who asked the bishops to speak to victims of abuse in their respective countries before the Rome convention, has tried to dial down "inflated expectations" for a... (More on P4)... (18)

Lebanese Women Hail First Female Arab Interior Minister

BEIRUT - Lebanon has appointed the Arab world's first female interior minister in its new government, prising open a wider foothold for women in its overwhelmingly male political scene.

Raya al-Hassan is one of four women to take cabinet jobs in the new coalition, more than ever before in Lebanon and three more than in the last government, in which even the minister for women was a man.

Though Hassan has already held top jobs - including finance minister in 2009-2011 - her appointment to a portfolio managing security was hailed as a step forward for women in Lebanese politics.

"This is a point of pride for all women and all the people who believe in women's capabilities," Hassan said... (More on P4)... (19)

Hundreds Stranded as British Airline Flybmi Collapses

Flight	Destination	Time	Status
BM1827	Frankfurt	16:25	Check-in Desks 44-48
EZY6007	Faro	16:35	Cancelled
EZY6035	Madrid	16:35	Check-in Desks 1-12
FR7226	Krakow	16:40	Check-in Desks 1-12
FR509	Dublin	17:00	Check-in Desks 44-48
EZY6265	Prague	17:10	Check-in Desks 44-48
BM1847	Munich	17:15	Check-in Desks 1-12
KL1054	Amsterdam	17:20	Cancelled
BM2007	Brussels	17:30	Check-in Desks 1-12
EZY6029	Barcelona	17:35	Check-in Desks 1-12
BM1837	Hamburg	17:40	Cancelled
BM1867	Dusseldorf	17:40	Cancelled
EZY6450	Geneva	17:55	Cancelled

LONDON - Hundreds of passengers throughout Europe have been stranded by the abrupt collapse of the British regional airline Flybmi. British Midland Regional Limited, which operates as Flybmi, said it's filing for administration - a British version

of bankruptcy - because of higher fuel costs and uncertainty caused by Britain's upcoming departure from the European Union. "Current trading and future prospects have also been seriously affected by the uncertainty created by the Brexit process,

which has led to our inability to secure valuable flying contracts in Europe and a lack of confidence around bmi's ability to continue flying between destinations in Europe," the airline said on its website late Saturday... (More on P4)... (14)

55th Munich Security Conference Closes in 'Broken Int'l Order'

MUNICH - The 55th Munich Security Conference (MSC) closed on Sunday as majority of participants shared the conviction that international order faces serious problems.

In his closing remarks, MSC Chairman Wolfgang Ischinger said that during the three-day security forum, it's widely shared that the international order is "in bad shape".

Focusing on global order reshuffle, the MSC, a major annual gathering for international security issues, has attracted over 500 participants, including heads of state and government and other prestigious figures in world politics and security.

Ischinger noted, last year when the MSC's 2018 report said the world was on the brink of significant conflict and predicted a new era of uncertainty, many still doubted it. But this year, as the MSC asked in its new report "The Great Puzzle: Who Will Pick Up the Pieces?", referring to the broken global order, majority of participants shared its conviction.

At the 55th MSC, an array of global security issues, such as competition and cooperation between the great powers, the EU's future, and the already tainted transatlantic relations, were discussed. The Munich Security Conference was first held in 1963. Its original aim was to shore up commitments and help coordinate western defense policies. It has since grown to involve representatives from around the world and has served as a platform for debates on global security issues. (Xinhua)

Miner Vale Evacuates 200 People Near Brazilian Dam on Fears of Instability

SAO PAULO - Around 200 residents were evacuated from an area near a tailings dam in Brazil operated by Vale SA late on Saturday, amid fears that it was structurally weak and could burst like a similar barrier failure last month that killed 300 people.

Vale said in a statement that it had evacuated people living near the inactive B3/B4 dam of the Mar Azul mine about 25

kilometers south of Belo Horizonte, the capital of Minas Gerais state, after revising security data on the structure. Those forced to flee were taken to a community center and would then be put in hotels, the company said.

The evacuation comes little more than a week after two communities located close to nearby dams were forced to leave their homes... (More on P4)... (15)

Royal Court: HRH Crown Prince Leaves to Pakistan, India and China

RIYADH - The Royal Court issued the following statement: "Upon directives of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and based on keenness of communicating and consolidating relations between the Kingdom and the brotherly and friendly countries in all fields as well as in response to invitations extended to His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz

Al Saud, Crown Prince, Vice President of the Council of Ministers, Minister of Defense, HRH the Crown Prince left today 17/02/2019 to visit: the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Republic of India and the People's Republic of China. HRH the Crown Prince will meet with their leaders and a number of senior officials to review bilateral relations and discuss issues of common interest." (Agencies)