

Tough U.S. Demands for Burden-Sharing Dominate NATO Talks

BRUSSELS - Defense ministers of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) ended their two-day talks in Brussels on Thursday whose agenda was dominated by discussions about increasing defense spending. The issue became more consequential as U.S. President Donald Trump called for fair burden-sharing. Ahead of the talks, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg briefed the press Tuesday on the agenda, stating that burden-sharing would be a priority point of discussion and that the organization's "continuous adaptation requires responsibilities to be shared fairly among allies." During a 2014 summit in



Wales, NATO members made a commitment to gradually increase defense spending to reach a target of 2 percent of GDP expenditure on defense in a decade. In 2016, the defense spending increased by 3.8 percent, or roughly 10 billion U.S. dollars, among European NATO allies and Canada, which was "significantly higher than what we had originally foreseen," said Stoltenberg at the press briefing. "This makes a difference but it is absolutely vital that we keep up the momentum," he added. Currently, only five out of the 28-member organization have reached the 2-percent target, namely, ...*(More on P4)...(15)*

Pence Says U.S. will Stand Firm with Europe, NATO

MUNICH - U.S. Vice President Mike Pence on Saturday brought a message of support for Europe from Donald Trump but failed to wholly reassure allies worried about the new president's stance on Russia and the European Union. In Pence's first major foreign policy address for the Trump administration, the vice president told European leaders and ministers that he spoke for Trump when he promised "unwavering" commitment to the NATO military alliance. "Today, on behalf of President Trump, I bring you

this assurance: the United States of America strongly supports NATO and will be unwavering in our commitment to this transatlantic alliance," Pence told the Munich Security Conference. While Poland's defense minister praised Pence, many others, including France's foreign minister and U.S. lawmakers in Munich, remained skeptical that he had convinced allies that Trump, a former reality TV star, would stand by Europe. Trump's contradictory remarks on the value of the ...*(More on P4)...(16)*

Russian FM Calls for "Post-West" Order at Munich Security Conference

MUNICH - Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said on Saturday that his country wants pragmatic and mutually respectful relations with the United States, calling for a "post-West" order at the ongoing Munich Security Conference (MSC). His remarks came hours after the U.S. Vice President Mike Pence told MSC that his country will "continue to hold Russia accountable" for the Ukrainian issue, even as the U.S. President Donald Trump is searching for new com-

mon ground with Moscow. Lavrov said that Russia is not looking for conflicts with anyone but will protect its interests. He said Russia wants the Russian-U.S. relations to be based on "pragmatism, mutual respect and an understanding of special responsibility for global security." The Russian top diplomat called for a "post-West order," saying "post Western values" include post-democracy, justice,



tolerance, liberty, civil rights, human rights, freedom, open society and peace. He said that predictability and well-wishing towards the country's neighbors has always been a goal of Russian policy. Lavrov insisted that the expansion of NATO, a ...*(More on P4)...(17)*

British Ex-PM Blair Joins Fight to Keep Britain in EU

LONDON - Former British prime minister Tony Blair said Friday that the British people have a right to change their mind about leaving the European Union. "Our mission is to persuade them to do so," Blair told a pro-stay organization in his first major speech on the topic. His call flies in the face of British Prime Minister Theresa May's determination to carry out the will of the people in last June's referendum by taking Britain out of the EU. She is set to trigger the exit process by the end of March.

Addressing a meeting of the pro-European campaign group Open Britain, Blair said he recognized the British people voted to leave Europe, and he agreed the will of the people should prevail. "But the people voted without knowledge of the true terms of Brexit. As these terms become clear, it is their right to change their mind. Our mission is to persuade them to do so," he said. "The road we're going down is not simply hard Brexit. It is Brexit at any cost. Our challenge is to ...*(More on P4)...(18)*

German Chancellor Calls for Cooperative Efforts in Face of Challenges

MUNICH, Germany - German Chancellor Angela Merkel called here on Saturday during her speech at the 53rd Munich Security Conference (MSC) for cooperative efforts to face challenges of a world without fixed order. "The challenges of the world today can not be mastered by one state alone, it needs cooperative efforts," Merkel said, adding that multilateral institutions like UN, NATO and the EU must be strengthened. Meanwhile, Merkel said that the international

structures of the EU, for example, are not efficient enough. The structures must be made stronger and more resistant to crises. Merkel also said that the EU can not take up the fight against global terrorism alone, the cooperation with the United States is "very important". At the same time, Merkel called on Islamic religious authorities to speak "clear words on the demarcation of peaceful Islam and terrorism in the name of Islam." Mentioning relationship with Russia, Merkel called for a good



relationship with Moscow despite different opinions on many issues between the West and Russia. She believed both sides have "exactly the same interests" in the fight against terrorism, for example. Referring to European defense capacity, Merkel said it must not be seen as an alternative to NATO, but must be integrated into NATO. (Xinhua)

Foreign, Defense Ministers of Russia, Japan to Meet in Tokyo

MOSCOW - Russian and Japanese foreign and defense ministers will meet in Tokyo on March 20 for consultations, the Russian Foreign Ministry said Friday. The event was agreed on by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and his Japanese counterpart Fumio Kishida on the sidelines of a G20 ministerial meeting in Bonn, Germany, said a Foreign Ministry statement. It did not disclose purposes of the "2+2 format" consultations. Lavrov and Kishida also agreed that a new round



of strategic dialogue at the level of first deputy foreign ministers will be held in Tokyo on March 30, the statement said. The date of talks in Tokyo between Russian and Japanese deputy foreign minis-

ters on joint economic activities on disputed Pacific islands was set for March 18, it said. Russia and Japan both claim a group of islands off Japan's northern prefecture ...*(More on P4)...(19)*

Expect More Fake News From Russia: Top NATO General Says

MUNICH - Russia was behind a false report of a rape by German soldiers in Lithuania that was intended to undermine support for NATO's new eastern force, a senior NATO general said on Saturday, warning Europe to expect more such "fake news". Petr Pavel, who heads NATO's military committee, said he also hoped to hold the first telephone call in more than two years with Russia's military chiefs in coming weeks. There he will outline why NATO believes its biggest military build-up since the end of the Cold War is not a threat to the Kremlin. Pavel, a Czech army general, said a claim that German-speaking men raped a 15-year-old girl last week in a Lithuanian town close to a German army barracks "was not based on real events". An email making the claim was sent to the ...*(More on P4)...(20)*

Trump's Defense Chief Visits UAE in First Middle East Trip

ABU DHABI - U.S. President Donald Trump's defense secretary arrived in the United Arab Emirates on Saturday for talks with one of Washington's closest allies in the Middle East. Jim Mattis, on his debut trip to the region as Pentagon chief, was expected to meet Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahayan and U.S. embassy representatives. U.S. officials have not disclosed details about his agenda. In late January, Trump and the Crown Prince spoke by telephone and the White House said they had discussed a proposal for safe zones for Syrian refugees displaced by the conflict.

Mattis, a retired Marine general who is reviewing U.S. war plans against Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, is a familiar figure to Gulf Arab rulers. A former leader of Central Command, which oversees U.S. military operations in the region, Mattis said in his Senate confirmation hearings that Iran was "the biggest destabilizing force in the Middle East and its policies are contrary to our interests." Such views play well with Gulf Arabs, who hope Trump's administration will check what they see as a surge of Iranian support for paramilitary allies in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Lebanon and for fellow Shi'ite Muslims in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia's oil-producing Eastern Province. (Reuters)

China, U.S. Agree to Work for Greater Development of Relations

BONN, Germany - Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and his U.S. counterpart Rex Tillerson agreed here Friday that the two countries should work together for greater development of bilateral relations during the term of U.S. President Donald Trump. Wang and Tillerson met on the sidelines of the foreign ministers meeting of the Group of Twenty (G20) to exchange views on bilateral ties and issues of mutual concerns. The meeting is the first of its kind since Tillerson assumed office. Wang said the recent telephone conversation between Chinese President Xi Jinping and President Trump had been ...*(More on P4)...(21)*

Trump on Twitter Calls Five U.S. Major Media Organizations "Enemy of American People"

WASHINGTON - U.S. President Donald Trump on Friday slammed the country's five mainstream media organizations as "the enemy of the American people". "The FAKE NEWS media (failing @nytimes, @NBCNews, @ABC, @CBS, @CNN) is not my enemy, it is the enemy of the American People!" he tweeted shortly after arriving at his Mar-a-Lago home in Palm Beach, Florida Friday afternoon. He had posted and then quickly deleted a slightly different version of the tweet just a few minutes earlier, which omitted ABC and CBS. He also included the word

"SICK!" at the end of the original post. "Mr. Trump's tweet was a striking escalation in his attacks on the news media," a New York Times report commented. Hours earlier, U.S. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said at a press conference on Friday that "I've been pretty candid with him and all of you that I'm not a fan of the daily tweets." Trump's latest tweet came one day after Trump's first solo press conference in White House, in which he criticized the U.S. media as "very fake news" and "out of control", while ...*(More on P4)...(22)*

Nieghbor News

Chinese FM Meets Mexican Counterpart in Germany, Eyeing Cooperation

BONN, Germany - Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Friday met his Mexican counterpart Luis Videgaray Caso to discuss further cooperation between the two countries. The meeting took place on the sidelines of the G20 ministerial meeting in Germany's western city of Bonn. Wang said that Mexico is an emerging market country with world influence and that the relationship between China and Mexico has entered a fast lane and achieved new results through cooperation. China-Mexico cooperation has great potential, Wang said, add-

ing that China is willing to implement the consensus achieved by the leaders of the two countries and to expand cooperation in investment, trade and direct flights with Mexico. Both sides should strengthen communication on international affairs, safeguard the common interests of both countries and developing countries and lift South-South cooperation to a new level, Wang said. Videgaray said that his country cherishes the friendship between Mexico and China and that Mexico is happy to see China's growing investment in Mexico and the ...*(More on P4)...(23)*

Iran Says Troops Deployment to Syria by U.S. to Help Extremism

TEHRAN - Deployment of troops by the United States to Syria to fight the terrorist groups in the country would adversely fan flames of extremism in the Middle East, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Friday. "I believe that the presence of foreign troops in Arab territory is a recipe for those extremists to rally behind and gain new fighters from disenfranchised youth," Zarif was

quoted as saying. The remarks by Zarif followed the recent suggestion by a U.S. official who said that the White House may authorize sending combat troops to Syria. "It's possible that you may see conventional forces hit the ground in Syria for some period of time," CNN quoted the unnamed U.S. official as saying. The nationwide ceasefire in Syria, which was brokered by Russia ...*(More on P4)...(24)*

People Who Spill Innocent Blood Would be Brought to Justice: Nisar

ISLAMABAD - Interior Minister Chaudhary Nisar Ali Khan on Saturday said that it is heartening to see that the country's Civil and Military top brass is dedicated towards the eradication of terrorism even in the face of the recent rise in terrorist activities. "We need the same spirit and valour today as we showed at the time of the Army Public School attack," he said in an informal conversation with journalists. The people who spill innocent blood, be it people inside or outside the country, would be brought to justice at any

cost, he added. The interior minister said our national spirit and unity against terrorism is the means to our victory and our means to defeat terrorism in the country. We should convey the message to terrorists that we are unafraid in the face of their violent attempts and rather each new attempt makes us more determined to defeat them. He mentioned the time in 2013 when five or six incidents of terrorism and then it passed and said, "just like that time this too shall pass with the nation's prayers." (Monitoring Desk)

Presidential Inauguration Held in Turkmenistan

ASHGABAT - Inauguration of Turkmenistan's president has been held in Rukhiet Palace in Ashgabat, said an official source from Turkmenistan Feb. 17. A presidential election was held on Feb. 12 in Turkmenistan. Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, who has been president since 2007, was re-elected for a third term with 97.69 percent of votes. Nine candidates took part in the

presidential campaign. The inauguration has been held with participation of MPs, members of the Cabinet of Ministers, the Central Election Commission, local state authorities, local self-government, etc. Berdimuhamedov has earlier outlined the priorities and prospects of Turkmenistan's further development. "The head of state stressed ...*(More on P4)...(25)*

Tajikistan, Turkey Discuss Cooperation

DUSHANBEH - Tajik President Emomali Rahmon met Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Tugrul Turkes, the Tajik president's press service reported. Rahmon and Turkes discussed on February 17 the current state and prospects of bilateral cooperation between Tajikistan and Turkey. The meeting was called a logical continuation of bilateral interest in the further development and

expansion of relations, the statement said. It was pointed out that this year marks 25 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations between Tajikistan and Turkey, and now this process is regulated by more than 60 interstate, intergovernmental and inter-agency documents in the fields of politics, economy, trade, science, culture, etc. The volume of trade between the two countries, ...*(More on P4)...(26)*