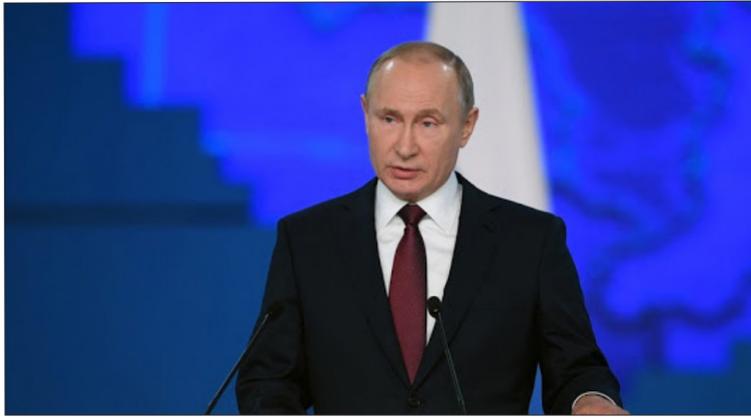


## Putin: If Mid-Range Missiles Deployed in Europe, Russia Will Station Arms to Strike Decision Centers

MOSCOW - If the US deploys intermediate-range missiles in Europe, Moscow will respond by stationing weapons aimed not only against missiles themselves, but also at command and control centers, from which a launch order would come.

The warning came from President Vladimir Putin, who announced Russia's planned actions after the US withdraws from the INF Treaty - a Cold War-era agreement between Washington and Moscow which banned both sides from having ground-based cruise and ballistic missiles and developing relevant technology. The US is set to unilaterally withdraw from the treaty in six months, which opens the possibility of once again de-



ploying these missiles in Europe. Russia would see that as a major threat and respond with its own deployments, Putin said. Intermediate-range missiles were banned and removed from Europe because they

would leave a very short window of opportunity for the other side to decide whether to fire in retaliation after detecting a launch - mere minutes. This poses the threat of an accidental nuclear exchange triggered by

a false launch warning, with the officer in charge having no time to double check.

"Russia will be forced to create and deploy weapon systems, which can be used not only against the territories from which this direct threat would be projected, but also against those territories where decision centers are located, from which an order to use those weapons against us may come." The Russian president, who was delivering a keynote address to the Russian parliament on Wednesday, did not elaborate on whether any counter-deployment would only target US command-and-control sites in Europe or would also include targets on American soil. (RT)

### Saudi Crown Prince Lauds Centuries-Old Ties with India

NEW DELHI - Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman says his visit to India will improve centuries-old ties, which he says are "in our DNA." In brief remarks at the president's palace where he was given a ceremonial welcome, the crown prince did not make any reference to rising tensions between India and Pakistan.

He arrived in India on Tuesday night after visiting Pakistan,

which New Delhi blames for a suicide bombing last week that killed at least 40 Indian soldiers in disputed Kashmir. Prince Mohammed is due to hold talks with India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the two sides are expected to sign agreements for promoting investment, tourism, housing and communications. The countries' two-way trade totaled \$27.5 billion last year. (Fox News)

BANGKOK - Stocks were mostly higher in Europe and Asia on Wednesday after U.S. President Donald Trump suggested trade talks with China do not face a hard March 1 deadline for a deal. Negotiators from both sides resumed talks Tuesday in Washington following discussions in Beijing last week that U.S. officials said had made some progress on difficult issues such as China's blueprint for making its industries world leaders in advanced technolo-

gies such as robotics and artificial intelligence. "They are very complex talks. They're going very well," Trump told reporters Tuesday. Trump has hiked tariffs on billions of dollars' worth of Chinese goods and the U.S. is due to increase them on March 2, following a 90-day truce to allow time for the negotiations now underway. But Trump indicated there might not be a hard deadline for striking a deal, saying that March 1 is "not a magical date." That lifted the mood of investors jit-

### World Shares Mostly Higher on Upbeat Talk on China-US Trade



tery over further potential disruptions to world markets and trade. Germany's DAX jumped 0.3 percent to 11,343 and the FTSE 100 in Britain added 0.3 percent to 7,199. The CAC 40 in France also picked up 0.3 percent to 5,174. (AP)

### Former Top Chinese General Sentenced to Life for Corruption



BEIJING - A former top Chinese general has been given a life sentence for taking and distributing bribes and possessing a

large amount of property whose origins he could not account for. Fang Fenghui, former chief of the People's Lib-

eration Army's joint staff department, is the latest military figure to fall in President Xi Jinping's crackdown on graft and

waste at all levels of the government and military. Fang was expelled from the Communist Party and stripped of his rank in October ahead of his court-martial, more than a year after dropping out of view. A brief report Wednesday by the official Xinhua News Agency gave no details of the accusations against him. Some top Chinese generals are reported to have accumulated vast fortunes, including golden statues of Mao Zedong. (Fox News)

### 'Extraordinary Breakthrough': Scientists Make 'Holy Grail' Universal Flu Vaccine Discovery

CANBERRA - Australian scientists have discovered immune cells that can fight all known flu viruses and mutations in what has already been branded an "extraordinary breakthrough" which could lead to the creation of a universal vaccine. Scientists at the Doherty Institute and Monash University studied 67,000 viral sequences and narrowed them down to three sequences which are common across all strains of the influenza virus, which haven't mutated for the past century. They then identified so-called "killer T cells" found in over half the world's population, which act like the body's own private security, identifying abnormalities and infections and killing them. Harvesting and replicating these cells could lead to the production of an all-in-one flu shot which would only be administered once a decade or possibly once in a lifetime. (RT)

### Building Avangard Hypersonic Glider Was Like Launching World's 1st Artificial Satellite - Putin

MOSCOW - Vladimir Putin has likened development of Russia's cutting-edge Avangard hypersonic glider to the 1957 launch of Sputnik-1, the world's first artificial satellite built by the Soviet Union. The secretive top-notch weapon has demonstrated Russia's technological capabilities, Putin said in his annual address to the Federal Assembly. "It seemed until recently that Russia can't make a breakthrough in defense technologies, but we made it," the president noted. Little is verifiably known about the glider that was successfully test-launched by the Russian military earlier this year. Top Russian officials threw some light on the secretive project, telling the media that the latest test proved it can travel a whopping 27 Mach, which is equal to over 30,000 km/h or 20,000 mph. (RT)

### Indian Court Orders Top Industrialist to Pay Ericsson \$77M

NEW DELHI - India's Supreme Court on Wednesday found Anil Ambani, the chairman of Reliance Communications, and two of his directors guilty of contempt of court and ordered them to pay 5.5 billion rupees (\$77.29 million) owed to Swedish telecom equipment maker Ericsson. Justices R.F. Nariman and Vineet Saran said the three will be jailed for three months if they fail to pay 4.5 billion rupees of that amount within four weeks. The judges said Ambani, who is also chairman of Reliance Group, and the two directors had violated the court's earlier order to pay Ericsson. (AP)

### Australian Pilot Spells Out 'I'm Bored' During Test Flight



CANBERRA - An Australian pilot, unenthused with the task of a 2-hour test flight, spelled out the words, "I'm Bored," on his tracking device Tuesday morning. The message, which was reportedly "dozens of kilometers" long and

flown over Adelaide in South Australia, was seen by aviation followers, but not visible to anyone on the ground. FlightAware captured an image of the pilot's message which was "drawn" between approximately 9:00 a.m. and noon. (Fox News)

The pilot, who has only been identified in local media as a "young pilot," was reportedly tasked with testing out a single propeller aircraft at a single speed for two hours in preparation for its sale, Adelaide Now reported. (Fox News)

### EU, US Call on Albania Opposition to Avoid Violence in Rally

TIRANA, Albania - The European Union and the United States have warned Albania's opposition against violence and its lawmakers not to boycott parliament over the government's alleged corruption. Albania's opposition lawmakers, led by the center-right Democratic Party of Lulzim Basha, have said they plan to resign from parliament to protest the Socialist government. The Socialists hold 74 seats in the 140-seat parliament.

EU Ambassador to Albania Luigi Soreca on Wednesday met with Basha telling him they expect no violence at a protest Thursday. A day earlier the U.S. embassy in Tirana issued a statement urging opposition lawmakers not to abandon their mandates which would "undermine the basic principles of democracy and subvert the important progress Albania has achieved on rule of law and responsible governance." (Fox News)

### North Korea's Kim Shuffles Nuclear Talks Team after Defections, Spying Allegations

SEOUL - Veteran North Korean diplomats are being sidelined from nuclear talks ahead of a second summit with the United States as recent defections and allegations of spying undermine the trust of leader Kim Jong Un, South Korean officials and experts say. Kim has purged and replaced many top diplomats and officials who served his father and grandfather with new, younger advisors as he gears up to meet U.S. President Donald Trump in Vietnam next week. Among the most significant changes, Kim has appointed little-known Kim Hyok Chol to spearhead working-level talks with U.S. nuclear envoy Stephen Biegun. A former ambassador to Spain who was expelled in 2017 after North Korean nuclear and missile tests, Kim Hyok Chol has been working at the State Affairs Commission, a top governing body chaired by the young leader, a South Korean official said. He replaced Vice Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui, who led negotiations in the run up to the first Trump-Kim summit in Singapore in June. "It's a big boys' game and many diplomats are being neglected, as they face fierce inter-agency rivalry and questions about their ideological faithfulness given their experience in richer, capitalist nations," the South Korean official said, asking to remain anonymous due to the sensitivity of the issue. (Reuters)

## Neighbor News

### Xi Meets Chang'e-4 Mission Representatives

BEIJING - Chinese President Xi Jinping met representatives of space scientists and engineers who participated in the research and development of the Chang'e-4 mission at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing Wednesday afternoon. Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, noted that there is no end for space exploration.

Xi called on science and technology workers and space engineers in China to ride on the wave of the Chang'e-4 mission to achieve the general goal of China's lunar project, make more efforts to push forward international aerospace cause and bring more Chinese wisdom, solutions and force to the peaceful use of space and the building of a community with a shared future for humanity. (Xinhua)

### Iran Slams US 'Hypocrisy' over Potential Sale of Nuclear Secrets to Saudi Arabia

TEHRAN - Iran's Twitter-savvy FM Javid Zarif took to his favored medium to call out US hypocrisy, noting how Washington's ostensible concerns over human rights and nuclear proliferation disappear when it comes to Saudi Arabia. House Democrats aren't the only ones up in arms over the White House's alleged attempt to fast-track 'sensitive' US nuclear technologies to Saudi Arabia, as Iran's Foreign Minister made clear in his Tweet on Wednesday.

"Day by day it becomes clearer to the world what was always clear to us," Zarif wrote. Trump heavily criticized and eventually canceled the Iran nuclear deal (known as the JCPOA) last year. Yet, members of his administration have reportedly been all too eager to bypass necessary congressional review and potentially provide Saudi Arabia with the information it needs to build a nuclear weapon, flagrantly violating the Atomic

Energy Act in the process. Zarif's Tweet also references how, despite endlessly accusing its enemies of human rights violations, the administration was quick to look the other way when it came to its Saudi ally's likely role in the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi last October. Khashoggi, an outspoken critic of the Saudi ruling family, was killed and dismembered in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul on October 2. Turkish authorities and the UN have concluded that the murder was perpetrated by Saudi officials. Responding to calls to punish Riyadh in the wake of the murder, Trump reminded critics that the Saudi kingdom is "a very good ally of ours" who has "been funding a lot of things." Despite voicing outrage over the killing, Trump announced that the US, alongside a number of other states, would continue providing the Saudis with arms as planned. (RT)

### WB May Provide Uzbekistan with More Funds to Support Budget

TASHKENT - The World Bank (WB) plans to provide Uzbek Government with an additional \$500 million to support the budget, Trend reports via RIA Novosti. WB Board of Directors intends to consider the issue of providing a new loan in May this year. Uzbek Senate in December 2018 approved the state budget for 2019 with a deficit of 1.1 percent of GDP, or 4.5 trillion soums (about \$540 million). The revenue part of the budget is planned to provide 24.2 percent of GDP, or 102.6 trillion soums (about \$12.4 billion); expenses are planned to be 25.3 percent of GDP, or 107.4 trillion soums (\$12.9 billion). Uzbek Ministry of Fi-

nance reports state that to cover the state budget deficit, in addition to domestic sources, loans of the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank will be attracted for the first time. The ministry's forecasts underline that the budget deficit is planned to be reduced to 0.1 percent of GDP in 2020-2021. In July 2018, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance of Uzbekistan Jamshid Kuchkarov told reporters that the World Bank and ADB provided the country with \$800 million in budget support to prevent its deficit from growing in the short term. In particular, the WB allocated \$500 million and ADB provided \$300 million. (Trend)

### Turkmenistan, Spain Mull Business Partnership Prospects

ASHGABAT - A Turkmen delegation is on a working visit to Madrid, Spain, to study business partnership prospects, Trend reports with reference to the Turkmen Foreign Ministry Feb. 19. As part of the visit, meetings with secretary general for agriculture and food industry of Spain, heads of the

companies TYPISA, Cobra and Amiantit took place. The partnership in agriculture and industry was discussed. Such areas as construction, energy, gas processing, creation of industrial, transport and social infrastructure were earlier called promising directions of the Turkmen-Spanish partnership. (Trend)