

# More Time Needed to Prepare Sanctions over Iran's Missile Program: US

WASHINGTON/TEHRAN - In what is widely interpreted as an attempt to de-escalate tension between Tehran and Washington, the White House said Saturday it needs more time before announcing any sanctions over Iran's ballistic missile program.

While stressing that the Iran nuclear deal will not impede future sanctions against Iran, Ben Rhodes, a deputy national security adviser, said the U.S. government has more diplomatic and technical work to do before making the final decision to slap punitive



measures against Iran. "The fact of the matter is we have additional work that needs to be done before we would announce additional designations, but this not something

that we would negotiate with the Iranian government," Rhodes said, "They don't get a say in who we impose sanctions on."

Rhodes made the remarks in Hawaii, where President Barack Obama is on vacation.

Rhodes denied that the additional work is a result of pressure from Tehran.

"We fully expect them to protest our sanctions. They do that when they know we're preparing them. They do that after we make announcements of designations," Rhodes said. (Xinhua)

## U.S. Militiamen Occupy Government Building, Urging "Patriots" to Arm

WASHINGTON - A group of U.S. militiamen took over the headquarters of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge on Saturday in the northwestern state of Oregon to protest the pending imprisonment of two ranchers accused of arson, local authorities said.

The building is located in a remote area some 80 km southeast of the city of Burns, where the militiamen hoped to create a "base" where "patriots" like them-

selves can come, with their guns.

Ammon Bundy, a rancher for the western state of Nevada, who appeared to be the leader of those occupiers, said on his Facebook that "ALL PATRIOTS ITS TIME TO STAND UP NOT STAND DOWN."

Bundy and his father Cliven Bundy became famous in 2014 during a standoff with federal agents over cattle grazing rights in Nevada. The militiamen told

OregonLive that there were about 150 of them, but a couple who delivered food to the refuge headquarters estimated that there were just 15.

The two Oregon ranchers -- Dwight Hammond, age 73, and his son Steven, age 46 -- are scheduled to report to federal prison on Monday.

The Hammonds were convicted of arson in 2012 for setting fire to public land adjacent to their ranch land. They have already served

prison sentences for their crimes, but they now must return for an additional term after federal appellate judges said they had been illegally sentenced the first time. Some 300 people marched through the town to protest against the prosecution of the Hammonds. Supporters of the Hammonds believe they were treated unconstitutionally because the federal government has no jurisdiction over this case. (Xinhua)

## Yemeni Govt. Forces Clash with Militants over Aden Port

CAIRO - Yemeni government forces clashed Sunday with militant groups for control over the strategic Port of Aden in the southern city with the same name, Yemeni government officials said.

The officials say the militants -- who are using the port to run lucrative smuggling operations -- have refused to hand over the port to the government. They accuse the militants of receiving support from al-Qaida.

A drive-by shooting on Thursday in Aden killed

Ahmed al-Idrisi, a top pro-government militia leader, and five of his companions, just hours after he reluctantly agreed to hand over control of the city's port to government troops.

Security officials claimed that al-Idrisi publicly backed the government but maintained secret deals with extremists and anti-government forces.

Residents in a neighborhood near the port described seeing militia ... (More on P4)...(14)

## 5th Gunman Killed as Indian Security Forces Hunt for Militants in Airbase Attack

NEW DELHI - Indian security forces continued on Sunday to engage with the remaining militants who stormed an airbase in the northern state of Punjab the previously day, killing one more gunman, said officials.

The renewed exchange of fire resulted in the killing of the militant at the Pathankot airbase, where fresh explosions and gunshots rang out again Sunday, said media reports.

However, officials failed to confirm the reports that at least two more gunmen were believed

to be still holed up at the airbase after four others were killed on Saturday. The casualties on the Indian side rose to seven on Sunday after an officer of the elite National Security Guards was killed when trying to defuse a bomb on the body of a killed attacker, and three more air force personnel succumbed to their injuries from the encounter a day earlier.

Three air force personnel were killed in the attack on Saturday. The airbase was attacked by a group ... (More on P4)...(15)

## Merkel's Bavarian Allies Reignite Refugee Row with Call for Cap

BERLIN - German Chancellor Angela Merkel's allies in Bavaria stepped up criticism of her open-door refugee policy on Sunday, with their leader demanding a cap of 200,000 migrants a year, about a fifth of last year's level.

Merkel faces splits in her conservative bloc and coalition with the Social Democrats (SPD) over her insistence that Germany can cope with the refugee crisis as towns struggle to house migrants, many having fled war in the Middle East and Africa.

Horst Seehofer, the com-



bative leader of the conservative Christian Social Union (CSU) in Bavaria, where most migrants arriving via the Balkans enter Germany, told Bild am Sonntag it was possible to integrate up to 200,000 asylum seekers and refugees a year. "Anything more than that, I think is too much," he told the paper. "The central goal for 2016 must be to limit the ... (More on P4)...(16)

## Turkish Coast Guard Rescues 57 Stranded on Tiny Island

ISTANBUL - The Turkish coast guard has rescued 57 people who were stranded on a tiny island in the Aegean Sea after attempting to reach Greece. The state-run Anadolu news agency says helicopters evacuated 12 people including three sick children from the islet near the Turkish coastal town of Dikili in Izmir province. Small fishing boats helped rescue the others, as coast guard vessels were unable to navigate the rocky area. There was no mention of fatalities or the nationalities of those rescued.

More than a million people reached Europe in 2015 in the continent's largest influx of refugees since the end of World War II. Nearly 3,800 migrants didn't make it, losing their lives in the Mediterranean after their overcrowded boats sunk. The Greek islands were a major entry point. (AP)

## British PM Announces 40 Mln Pounds for Flood Defences

LONDON - British Prime Minister David Cameron announced Sunday a package of more than 40 million pounds (59 million U.S. dollars) to improve flood defences and deal with the aftermath of Storm Eva.

About 10 million pounds of the new funding will be used to improve flood barrier in York, north England, which was overwhelmed by storms during the past weeks.

The other 30 million pounds will be spent repairing defences on several rivers in Yorkshire, including Wharfe, Calder, Aire, Ouse and Derwent. It will include repairs to pumping and barriers and clearing blockages in rivers. Cameron said he has seen the devastation... (More on P4)...(17)

## Turkish Parliament to Consider 'Lifting Kurdish Leaders' Immunity'

ISTANBUL - Turkey's parliament will set up a committee to consider lifting the immunity of two leaders of the main Kurdish party so they can be tried over their call for autonomy, the pro-government Sabah daily said Sunday.

The report came after President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Selahattin Demirtas and Figen Yuksekdag -- the co-leaders of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) -- should have their parliamentary immunity removed for committing a "constitutional crime".

Sabah said that the parliamentary justice commission would form a sub-committee to discuss the



issue before putting it to the general chamber. A simple majority to strip the two MPs of their immunity would suffice in parliament, where the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) holds more than half the seats, it added. Turkish prosecutors last week opened a criminal probe against Demirtas for his comments at a conference and then opened a similar investigation against Yuksekdag. Demirtas said last weekend that the Kurdish minority in Turkey had to decide whether to live in autonomy or "under one man's tyranny", in an apparent reference to Erdogan. (AFP)

## Syrian Rebel Group Says Exits Islamist Alliance to Refocus Fight

BEIRUT - A Syrian insurgent group said on Sunday it was pulling out of a coalition of Islamist factions operating in the northwest of the country, in order to re-deploy around Aleppo where pro-government forces have intensified assaults in recent months.

Since Russia's intervention in the Syria conflict in September with an air campaign to support President Bashar al-Assad, pro-government forces have stepped up offensives in the west and north of the country. Government forces backed

by Iranian troops and Russian air strikes have advanced in Aleppo province, edging closer to a major rebel-controlled highway.

Failaq al-Sham said in a statement that it was withdrawing from the Army of Conquest, which includes the al Qaeda-linked Nusra Front and powerful Islamist group Ahrar al-Sham, and which captured most of neighboring Idlib province in 2015.

"As enemies from inside and abroad, the regime and its Shabiha (militias), Shi'ites and Russians... (More on P4)...(18)

## Netherlands Takes over EU Presidency in Challenging Time

THE HAGUE - In a time when the European Union is being severely put to the test, the Netherlands took over the Presidency of the Council of the European Union in an attempt to focus on the essentials, create growth and jobs through innovation, and to connect with civil society.

The four priority areas the Netherlands will be focusing on are migration and international security, sound finances and a robust euro zone, Europe as an innovator and job creator, and a forward-looking climate and energy policy.

After the terrorist attacks in Paris and due to the influx of refugees, the pressure is on in the European Union, a situation acknowledged by Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs Bert Koenders in his State of the European Union letter to the European Parliament late in 2015. "As holder of the Presidency we will have a key role to play over the coming six months in keeping the EU on course," he stated.

The Netherlands has been in the forefront of European unity for a long time, aiming for a federal Europe. It had been among the founding fathers of EU's predecessor, the European Community of Coal and Steel in 1952. For the 12th time in history the Netherlands holds the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, with the last time being in 2004.

In recent years, there has been a growing anti-Europe sentiment in The Netherlands, as in ... (More on P4)...(19)

## Neighbor News

### Chinese Steel Mills in 82 Mln Yuan Deals to Curb Pollution

JINAN - Three steel manufacturers in the eastern province of Shandong inked deals earlier this week with Republic of Korea (ROK) environment technology firms to address air pollution.

Taishan Steel, Weifang Special Steel Group and Jinan Steel have retained environment technology firms KC Cottrell, POSCO ICT, J-E Tech in respective deals totalling 81.99 million yuan (12.6 million U.S. dollars) to reduce dust from their steel mills.

Industrial goods manufacturing has been a major contributor to the choking smog that often covers much of China during winter. Protection measures were poorly enforced

### Israel Benefits Most from Regional Conflicts: Iran



TEHRAN - The Israeli regime is benefiting the most from the conflicts in the region, Iran's Foreign Ministry says.

In a Saturday meeting with Palestinian Ambassador to Tehran Salah al-Zawawi, Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Hossein-Jaberi Ansari said the issue of Palestine is of prime significance to the Muslim world.

He called on Muslim countries to make use of their utmost capacities to resolve the existing conflicts in the region.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran follows up on the principle of dialog to end the problems and supports negotiations among various groups in regional countries with the purpose of putting an end to the existing crises," Jaberi Ansari said.

Zawawi, for his part, said the current situation of the Arab and Muslim world is harmful to the Palestinian cause and added that the Zionist enemy aims to undermine the strengths of the Muslim world in its resistance against the Israeli regime.

He added that religious conflicts in the region are detrimental to Palestine and only benefit the Israeli regime. (PressTV)

### Saudi FM to Visit Pakistan on Anti-Terror Cooperation



ISLAMABAD - Saudi Arabia Foreign Minister Adel Bin Ahmed al-Jubeir will visit Pakistan on Jan. 7 for talks focusing on anti-terror cooperation, the Pakistani Foreign Ministry said on Sunday.

The Saudi minister was scheduled to visit Pakistan on Jan. 3-4, however, the visit was postponed. No reason was given for the postponement.

The Pakistani Foreign Ministry said the visit "has been postponed at the request of the authorities of Saudi Arabia."

The ministry had invited the media for a joint press conference by the Saudi foreign minister and Pakistan Foreign Affairs adviser Sartaj Aziz Sunday night. Journalists were later informed about the cancellation of the event. Sources said the Saudi minister had to stay at home due to the on-going tension between the kingdom and Iran over the execution of a Shiite cleric in Saudi Arabia.

Al-Jubeir's visit comes weeks after Saudi Arabia announced an international coalition to fight terrorism. A Saudi announcement said Pakistan is also part of the alliance. (Xinhua)