

Trump to Call on Pentagon, Diplomats to Play Bigger Role on Arms Sales

WASHINGTON - The Trump administration is nearing completion of a new "Buy American" plan that calls for U.S. military attaches and diplomats to help drum up billions of dollars more in business overseas for the American weapons industry, going beyond the assistance they currently provide, U.S. officials said.

President Donald Trump as early as February is expected to announce a "whole of government" effort to ease export rules on purchases by foreign countries of U.S.-made military equipment, from fighter jets and drones to warships and artillery, according to people familiar with the plan.



Trump is seeking to fulfill a 2016 election campaign promise to create jobs in the United States by selling more goods and services abroad to bring down the U.S. trade deficit from a six-year high of \$50 billion. The administration is also under pressure from U.S. defense contractors facing growing competition from foreign rivals such as China and Russia. But any loosening of the restrictions on weapons sales would be in defiance of human rights and arms control advocates who said there was too great a risk of fueling violence in regions such as the Middle East and South Asia or arms being diverted to be used in terrorist attacks. (Reuters)

Neighbor News

Xi Meets with Macron

BEIJING - Chinese President Xi Jinping met with visiting French President Emmanuel Macron at Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing Monday evening.

Xi said Macron's visit to China, as his first visit to Asia at the start of year, showed that he was "paying high attention to the China-France relationship."

France was the first Western power to establish diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China.

"Chairman Mao Zedong and General Charles de Gaulle made a historic decision with remarkable political foresight to forge diplomatic ties in 1964," Xi said. "The decision not only changed the world pattern at that time, but also has effects on the world development nowadays."

"In the new era, we should follow the spirit of being responsible for history, stick to the right path so as to move toward a bright future of China-France ties," Xi said.

Stressing that there are many uncertainties in today's world, Xi said China advocated the building of a community with a shared future for mankind, while France had similar views.

"The two countries can enhance political mutual trust and fully tap the potential of cooperation transcending differences on the social system, development stage and culture," he said.

China stands ready to work closely with France to enhance cooperation including that under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative, Xi said. (Xinhua)

Pakistan Cooperated With US in War against Terror: Aizaz

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan's Ambassador to United States (US) Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry Sunday said relations of Pakistan with China and United States had great importance and Pakistan had cooperated with US in war against terrorism. Talking to a private news channel, he said Pakistan had achieved immense success in war against terrorism. Instead of praising Pakistan's role US was blaming Pakistan for its failures in Afghanistan which was totally unfair, he added. He said Pakistan wanted a peaceful Afghanistan and US should cooperate with us in this regard. Aizaz said Pakistan and US had similar stance to eliminate terrorism and restore peace in Afghanistan. He said Pakistan had

been bearing burden of more than 35 lakh Afghan refugees for four decades and US should help us for their return to homeland.

Taliban leadership had shifted to Afghanistan and Pakistan armed forces had destroyed all terrorists nurseries and there was no safe haven for terrorists here now, he added.

He said US had never provided any evidences to Pakistan regarding Taliban presence in Pakistan, adding US should support Pakistan for its boarder management with Afghanistan. Regarding the tweet of US president Donald Trump, he said civil and military leadership were united one point agenda to protect the motherland in any situation. (Monitoring Desk)

Iran Warns World to Prepare for US Nuke Deal Withdrawal

TEHRAN - Iran warned the world on Monday to prepare for the possible withdrawal of the United States from the landmark nuclear deal agreed in 2015.

"The international community must be prepared for the US possibly pulling out of the JCPOA," said deputy foreign minister Abbas Araghchi, speaking at the Tehran Security Conference.

"We in Iran are prepared for any scenario. The international community and our region will be the biggest loser, since a successful experience in the international arena will be lost," he added.

"Our region will not become a safer region without the JCPOA." A withdrawal by the US will lead to an "appropriate and heavy response," added foreign ministry spokesman Bahram Ghasemi. "The US administration will definitely regret it," he said on state television. (AFP)

Uzbek PM to Visit Tajikistan

DUSHANBE - Uzbek Prime Minister Abdulla Aripov will pay a working visit to Dushanbe city on Jan. 10-11, Tajik media reported quoting a source in the country's government. During the visit, Aripov will hold meetings with Tajik President Emomali Rahmon and Prime Minister Kokhir Rasulzoda. During the meetings in Dushanbe, the issues of preparation for the official visit of Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev to Dushanbe, which is expected in early spring,

will be discussed. In addition, issues of building up trade and economic cooperation between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, as well as accelerating demarcation and delimitation of disputed sections of the state border of the two countries will be discussed. The trade turnover between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan increased significantly in the past two years. In 2016, the trade turnover between the two countries hit \$70 million, which is almost 6 times more than in 2015. (Trend)

S. Korea's Top Nuke Envoy to Visit U.S. for Discussion on Korean Peninsula's Nuke Issue

SEOUL - South Korea's top nuclear envoy will visit the United States this week to discuss the Korean Peninsula's nuclear issue, Seoul's foreign ministry said Monday.

Lee Do-hoon, special representative for the Korean Peninsula peace and security affairs, will visit Washington from Wednesday to Friday.

During the visit, Lee will meet with his U.S. counterpart Joseph Yun, a chief negotiator at the six-party talks for the denuclearized Korean Peninsula. Lee will also meet with

key figures of the U.S. government in charge of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) affairs, according to the ministry. The South Korean envoy will make an in-depth discussion with U.S. officials on ways to peacefully resolve the peninsula's nuclear issue and improve inter-Korean relations. Lee's visit to Washington would come a day after the high-level talks between South Korea and the DPRK scheduled to be held Tuesday in the truce village of Panmunjom. (Xinhua)

Pope, in 'State of World' Speech, Urges Dialogue in Korea, Nuclear Ban

VATICAN CITY - Pope Francis, in his annual "state of the world" address called on Monday for all nations to support dialogue to ease tensions on the Korean peninsula and to work for a legally binding ban on nuclear weapons.

In the speech, Francis also repeated his call for a two-state-solution between Israelis and Palestinians and respect for the "status quo" of Jerusalem following U.S. President Donald Trump's decision to recognize the city as Israel's capital.

"It is of paramount importance to support every effort at dialogue on the Korean peninsula, in order to find new ways of overcoming the current disputes, increasing mutual trust and ensuring a peaceful future for the Korean people and the entire world," Francis said.

The pope addressed envoys from more than 180 countries a day before North Korea and South Korea are due to hold talks expected to address North Korea's participation in the Pyeongchang



Winter Olympics, which some diplomats see as a possible opening for discussions on other topics such as humanitarian issues and divided families. Earlier this month,

after North Korean leader Kim Jong Un asserted that he had a nuclear button at the ready, Trump tweeted that the U.S. button was bigger and more powerful. (Reuters)

Trump, Macron Talk over Phone on Korean Peninsula, Iran: White House



WASHINGTON - The White House said Sunday that U.S. President Donald Trump spoke with his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron over phone Saturday about the

issues of the Korean Peninsula and Iran. Trump updated Macron on the developments of the situation on the Peninsula, underscoring the "international resolve

to achieve the complete denuclearization" of the Peninsula, according to the White House.

The two presidents also talked about the demonstrations in Iran. Iran had earlier blasted back at the U.S. stance on the demonstrations inside Iran, with its ambassador to the United Nations Gholamali Khoshroo slamming the U.S. government's attempts to intervene in the domestic affairs of the Islamic Republic, Tasnim news agency reported Thursday.

Trump said Saturday that he is willing to talk with Kim Jong Un, top leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), and that he supports the talks between the two Koreas next week. The remarks have shelved his often-bellacose rhetoric on Kim.

Since he took office last January, the Trump administration has resorted to hawkish and threatening rhetoric against the DPRK, and has sent warships and conducted joint military drills with South Korea. (Xinhua)

UK's Northern Ireland Minister Quits as May Shuffles Cabinet

LONDON - British Prime Minister Theresa May is starting the new political year with a shake-up of her Cabinet. May is trying to bolster her authority ahead of a crucial new phase in Brexit negotiations on Britain's divorce from the European Union. As Parliament returned Monday from its Christmas break, May was summoning ministers to 10 Downing St. to be moved, promoted or demoted. Several senior ministers are expected to stay, in-

cluding Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson and Brexit Secretary David Davis.

In the first announcement, Northern Ireland Secretary James Brokenshire says he is resigning due to health reasons.

His resignation comes amid a continuing political crisis in Northern Ireland, whose power-sharing administration has been suspended for a year amid a stalemate between the main Irish nationalist and British unionist parties. (AP)

European Commission Calls to Speed up Efforts to Remove Illegal Content Online

BRUSSELS - Five European Commissioners will meet with representatives of online platforms to discuss progress made in tackling the spread of illegal content online and the breaches of intellectual property rights on Tuesday, the EU's executive arm said Monday. Illegal content online includes online terrorist propaganda and xenophobic, racist or hate speech. Commissioners said before the meeting that terrorist propaganda and content online is a serious threat to security, safety and fundamental rights, and demands a collective response from all actors. They called for the online platforms to step up and speed up their efforts to tackle these threats quickly and comprehensively, including closer cooperation with national and enforcement authorities, increased sharing of know-how between online players and further action against the reappearance of illegal content. (Xinhua)

Jerusalem Should be Shared Capital, UK's Johnson Tells Palestinian Foreign Minister

LONDON - Jerusalem should ultimately be the shared capital of Israeli and Palestinian states, British foreign minister Boris Johnson told his Palestinian counterpart Riyad al-Malki on Monday, a statement from Britain's foreign office said.

"I reiterated the UK's commitment to supporting the Palestinian people and the two-state solution, the urgent need for renewed peace negotiations, and the UK's clear and longstanding



position on the status of Jerusalem," Johnson said. "It should be determined in a negotiated settlement between the Israel-

is and the Palestinians, and Jerusalem should ultimately be the shared capital of the Israeli and Palestinian states." (Reuters)

Agreement on Tax Cuts Raises Prospects for German Coalition

BERLIN - German Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservatives and the centre-left Social Democrats (SPD) have agreed to provide income tax relief for high earners, a source said on Monday, signaling progress in their talks on forming a coalition government. Tax relief was an election promise by Merkel's conservatives, and the initial agreement to raise the bar for a top income tax rate to an annual income of 60,000 euros indicates that the SPD are willing to compromise. Sealing a deal with the SPD on renewing the coalition with the conservatives that has governed Germany since 2013 is Merkel's best chance at securing a fourth term in office after an election in September that weakened both parties.

The compromise on taxation is only a small step in the talks between the would-be partners who have to bridge major differences on immigration, the future of the European Union and the economy.

The source said the SPD, Merkel's Christian Democrats (CDU) and their Christian Social Union (CSU) Bavarian allies want to raise a top tax rate of 42 percent that at the moment applies for those who earn 53,700 euros and above (\$64,375.56) annually.

Merkel, who in November failed to form a coalition with the Greens and the pro-business Free Democrats (FDP), said on Sunday at the start of five days of talks with the SPD that the negotiations could succeed. (Reuters)

Egypt to Hold 2018 Presidential Elections in March

CAIRO - Egypt will hold its 2018 presidential elections from March 26-28, National Election Authority (NEA) announced on Monday. "Elections of Egyptian expatriates will be held on March 16-18," NEA Chief Lashin Ibrahim said in a press conference. Ibrahim said that candidate registration will start on Jan. 20 and close on Jan. 29, noting that electoral campaigns will kick off on Feb. 22. Results of the first round will be announced on April 2, Ibrahim said. In case of runoff, he added, polls will be held from April 19-21 for expatriates and on April 24-26 in Egypt. (Xinhua)

The Kuwaiti Emir Calls for Cooperation to Address Challenges in Region

KUWAIT CITY - The Kuwaiti Emir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah called for cooperation between Gulf nations to face the growing challenges in region on Monday. He made the remarks at the opening ceremony of the 11th meeting of chairpersons and speakers of Shura, representatives councils and national assemblies of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), to be held in Kuwait on Monday.

In his speech the emir stressed the need for cooperation, consultation and meeting at all levels in order to face the dete-

riorating situation in the region and the growing challenges for the GCC. Noting that these challenges cannot be faced individually, the emir said that collective action is the only way to address these challenges and maintain the gains and achievements accomplished by the GCC nations and peoples.

He highlighted the important role of the legislative bodies as representatives of the GCC countries in drawing the path of development, construction and communication under these delicate circumstances which require all to realize the dimensions and risks. (Xinhua)