

US to Permanently Station F-35 Jets in UK As It Sheds Bases in Europe

WASHINGTON - The United States will station two squadrons of F-35 fighter jets in the United Kingdom, the first European base selected for the advanced fighter jets, the Pentagon announced on Thursday. The US Department of Defense said it would permanently base the F-35s at the Royal Air Force Lakenheath in Suffolk, England starting in 2020. The F-35, made by Lockheed Martin, is a fifth generation fighter jet designed to perform ground at-

tacks, reconnaissance and air defense missions. "Today we announce that we will permanently place the F-35 in Europe," Derek Chollet, Assistant Secretary of Defense for international security affairs said at a press briefing at the Pentagon on Thursday. "The presence of the F-35 at Lakenheath will allow for greater training and wider support," he adds. The newly announced plan is part of a US military consolidation in Europe that will close

15 US military bases and return them to host nations due to shrinking budgets. Consolidation of American bases across Europe will save the Pentagon about \$500 million a year when it's completed in five or six years, even though it has to spend \$1.4 billion to move and close the facilities. The closures and infrastructure consolidations will affect 15 facilities in the United Kingdom, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy, and Portu-



gal, the Pentagon says. Some 2,000 US troops would be removed from Britain over the next

several years-- the biggest consolidation move in Europe in terms of personnel. The United States has more than 64,000 troops stationed in Europe, mostly in Germany, Italy and Britain. (Press TV)

UK Spy Chief Says West Faces Mass Casualty Attacks

LONDON - Islamist militants in Syria are planning "mass casualty attacks" on Western targets, the head of British spy agency MI5 has warned, saying the deadly shooting in Paris was only a reminder of an ongoing threat. Security Service chief Andrew Parker was referring in particular to a group of fighters known as Khorasan, sources said, who have been targeted by US warplanes in strikes in northwest Syria. He warned that intelligence agencies needed more powers, in particular to intercept communications, but added: "Although we and our partners try our utmost, we know that we cannot hope to stop everything," Parker, who has led Brit-



ain's domestic intelligence agency since 2013, was speaking late Thursday, a day after Islamist gunmen stormed the offices of French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo in Paris and killed 12 people. He said it was too early to judge the details or the origin of the attack, but it was a "terrible reminder of the intentions of those who wish us harm".

Speaking of the broader threats, he said the number of "crude but potentially deadly plots" had increased, citing last year's attacks in Canada and Australia, and were particularly hard to detect. Meanwhile the "complex and ambitious plots" carried out by Al-Qaeda in the past still existed, he told the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) defence and security think-

tank in London. These included "attempts to cause large scale loss of life, often by attacking transport systems or iconic targets". The Islamic State group in Syria and Iraq is a well-known threat, targeting Britain and seeking to radicalise Britons, with Parker saying an estimated 600 have gone there to fight. But the MI5 chief added: "We know, for example, that a group of core Al-Qaeda terrorists in Syria is planning mass casualty attacks against the West." He is understood to be referring to the Khorasan group, which had been an obscure cell until US intelligence officials called attention to it in September. (AFP)

French Police Close in on Suspected Killers, New Shoot-Out in Paris

DAMMARTIN-EN-GOELE, France - French forces sealed off a small northern town where police sources said gunmen had seized at least one hostage, and shooting broke out in Paris as the biggest security dragnet of modern times closed on chief suspects in an attack on a Paris journal. The attack has raised questions in France about policing, surveillance of radicals, far-right politics, religion and censorship - all in a country still struggling to integrate its five-million-head Muslim population, the EU's largest. On Friday, police vans, armored cars and ambulances ringed the town of Dammartin-en-Goele, set

in marsh and woodland, and helicopters hovered overhead. Residents were told to stay at home and schools near a printing works where two gunmen were holed up were evacuated. A second hostage-taking was reported at a Paris kosher supermarket. AFP news agency was cited by French media as saying at least two had been killed in a shoot-out there, but police said they could not confirm any deaths. The Interior Ministry said security forces surrounding a small print works in Dammartin-en-Goele were trying to make contact with the gunmen, who had earlier in the day evaded police



in a high-speed car chase on a highway to Paris. "This can take a long time, hours and sometimes days," Interior Minister spokesman Pierre-Henry Brandet said in a tweet. Yves Albarello, local MP for the Seine-et-Marne department and member of the crisis cell put in place by authorities, told iTELE the two suspects had let it be known that they wanted to die

"as martyrs". The gunmen had been on the run since they stormed the Paris offices of Charlie Hebdo, a satirical journal known for its ridicule of Islam and other religions as well as political figures. Western leaders condemned the attack as an assault on democracy. Al Qaeda's North Africa branch praised the gunmen as "knight(s) of truth". (Reuters)

UN Envoy Meets Libyan Stakeholders to Restart Peace Talks

TRIPOLI - The UN special envoy to Libya held discussions with Libyan stakeholders on Thursday over the ways to end the hostilities and convene a political dialogue, the UN mission in Libya said in a statement on Friday. UN envoy Bernardino Leon held meetings with Libyan parliament members in the eastern city of Tobruk and with former parliament members in the capital of Tripoli. He stressed the urgent need to convene the second round of political dialogue between the Libyan parties to stop the country's slide toward deeper conflicts and an economic collapse. "The majority of Libyan people want peace and should not be held hostage by a small minority which sees it can win this conflict militarily," Leon said, warning that the more delay in tackling the country's political and security crisis,



the more difficult it will be to reach a solution to end the fighting, restore political and state institutional unity, and revive the economy. Leon also proposed a freeze in hostilities for a short period of time to create a conducive environment for holding the dialogue, according to the statement. As part of the efforts to de-escalate the situation, Leon met with General Khalifa Haftar in the eastern city of Al-Marj and commanders of armed brigades from Misrata in Tripoli. Libya has been torn by rival governments and parliaments, as well as

battling powerful militias, since the Libya Dawn militants took over Tripoli last August. Two rival parliaments and governments have been fighting for legitimacy, dragging the country deeper into a crisis despite UN efforts to broker talks on ending the violence. The first round of the UN-brokered national dialogue was held in southwestern city of Ghadames on Sept. 29, 2014, during which most parties agreed on a truce, but no cease-fire was actually reached. The United Nations has indefinitely postponed the second dialogue between different political

parties in Libya, which was originally scheduled for Monday. (Xinhua)

DPRK Refuses to Accept Resolution on Inter-Korean Dialogue

SEOUL - The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) on Friday refused to accept the resolution calling for inter-Korean dialogue passed by South Korea's National Assembly, Seoul's Unification Ministry said on Friday. A ministry official told a press that Seoul has attempted to send the resolution through a communication line on Thursday afternoon and Friday morning, but the DPRK refused to accept it "according to instructions from authority." South Korea's National Assembly passed the resolution in late December, calling for preparations for unification with the South and North and talks between the two sides. (Xinhua)

At Least Six Killed, 15 Wounded in Eastern Ukraine Fighting

KIEV - At least six people were killed and 15 others wounded over the past day when fierce fighting erupted between government troops and independence-seeking insurgents in eastern Ukraine, authorities said Friday. Among the victims, two were civilians killed in the crossfire in Donetsk -- an industrial city on the Kalmius River. Seven other residents were wounded in artillery shelling in four districts of the city, according to a city council statement. Ukrainian military spokesman Andrei Lysenko told reporters that four Ukrainian soldiers were killed in clashes and eight others were injured over the last 24 hours. The situation in the conflict-hit regions in east-

ern Ukraine has turned complicated in recent days, Lysenko said, adding that the rebels were deploying heavy weapons and drones near the frontline, trying to capture government-controlled territories. The insurgents accused government troops of launching fresh offensives against them, saying that government troops used bombardment artillery and rocket launchers to retake the seized cities. The rebels have not made comments on their own casualties in the past day. More than 4,700 people have died since the Ukrainian government sent troops into eastern regions in mid-April to retake cities and towns captured by insurgents. (Xinhua)

US Reports 11 Air Strikes against IS in Syria, Iraq

WASHINGTON - U.S.-led forces launched five air strikes near Kobani, Syria, and six in Iraq since Thursday in their battle against Islamic State militants, the American military said. The strikes in Syria hit several Islamic State fighting positions, two tactical units and destroyed a building, according to a statement from the Combined Joint Task Force. The strikes in Iraq hit near al Qaim, al Asad, Sinjar and Mosul. (Reuters)

Extremists Harm Islam More than Cartoons: Hezbollah Chief



BEIRUT - The leader of the Lebanese Hezbollah group says Islamic extremists have insulted Islam and the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) more than those who published satirical cartoons mocking the religion. Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah did not directly mention the Paris attack on the offices of Charlie Hebdo that left 12 people dead, but he said Islamic extremists who behead and slaughter people -- a reference to the IS group's

rampages in Iraq and Syria -- have done more harm to Islam than anyone else in history. Nasrallah spoke Friday via video link to supporters gathered in southern Beirut. Nasrallah's Shiite group is fighting in Syria alongside President Bashar Assad. His remarks are in stark contrast to those of Sunni militants from the IS group and al-Qaida who have called for attacks on Western countries. (AP)

German Factory Production, Exports Slip in November

BERLIN - German industrial production slipped unexpectedly in November and exports fell more sharply than predicted as Europe's largest economy weakened near the end of 2014, official data showed Friday. Exports dropped 2.1 percent in November compared with the previous month to 95.2 billion euros (\$113 billion), the Federal Statistical Office said. Experts had been predicting a 0.15 percent drop. Imports rose 1.5 percent to

77.6 billion euros, narrowing the country's trade surplus to 17.7 billion euros. The statistical office also reported that factory production dropped 0.1 percent in November from the previous month in seasonally adjusted terms. Economists had been predicting a 0.3 percent rise. However, the office revised its October production figure upward to a 0.6 percent month-on-month increase from the original reading of 0.2 percent. (AP)

Nieghbor News

China, CELAC Deepens Cooperation with Major Documents

BEIJING - China and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) agreed on with three major documents on the last day of the first China-CELAC forum ministerial meeting. The two-day meeting, co-chaired by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and his Costa Rican counterpart, Manuel Gonzalez Sanz, passed a five-year cooperation plan, regulations for the forum and the Beijing Declaration. Calling the forum a first, Wang said that China and CELAC were embracing opportunities for their all-round cooperation partnership. Wang noted that the forum had given a strong "China-CELAC message" to the world. China will work for both sides to reap early harvests from the forum and build a new model of South-South cooperation, Wang said. "We will be especially thorough in basic infrastructure. Chi-

na has great strength in this field including production, techniques and equipment." China-CELAC cooperation is "open, inclusive and balanced" and excludes no third party, Wang added. "In cooperation with developing countries, China will consider their need for self-development... instead of simply trade and investment or mere one-off sales of resources and energy," he said. Co-chair Gonzalez described the meeting as "very practical" with an outcome defining concrete areas of cooperation. Key areas include political dialogue, trade, investment, infrastructure, tourism as well as agriculture, industry and science and technology. The meeting will build a closer CELAC-China relationship and benefit people from both sides, Gonzalez said. The forum's next meeting will be held in Chile in 2018. (Xinhua)

Pak Army Announces Establishment of Military Courts



ISLAMABAD - Following the passage of the 21st Constitutional Amendment, the Pakistani Army on Friday announced that the process of establishing military courts has been initiated across the country. An Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) statement issued said that,

"initially nine military courts are being established across the country... three courts each will be established in KP [Khyber Pakhtunkhwa] and Punjab, two in Sindh and one in Balochistan". "These courts will start functioning soon," the statement added. (Monitoring Desk)

Iran, U.S. FMs to Meet on Nuclear Issue: Negotiator

TEHRAN - The Iranian foreign minister and the U.S. secretary of state will meet in Geneva next week to discuss the Iranian nuclear issue, a senior Iranian nuclear negotiator said on Friday. Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad-Javad Zarif and his U.S. counterpart John Kerry will travel to the Swiss city next Wednesday for the meeting prior to bilateral talks of their deputies, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi was quoted as saying. Iran will first hold bilateral negotiations with the United States in Geneva from Jan. 15 to 17, and

then talks at the deputy foreign ministerial level on Jan. 18 with the P5+1 group, namely China, France, Russia, Britain and the United States, plus Germany, Araqchi said. Talks between Iran and the world powers resumed on Dec. 17, 2014, just weeks after failing to meet a Nov. 24 deadline for a comprehensive nuclear deal due to significant gaps over Iran's uranium enrichment abilities and how the sanctions should be removed. Tehran and the world powers later agreed to extend their talks to July this year. (Xinhua)

Ukrainian Company to Invest in Building Oil Refinery in Tajikistan

DUSHANBE - An oil refinery with annual production capacity of 300,000 tons will be built in Tajikistan, Avesta news agency reported citing the First Deputy Chairman of the Tajik State Committee of Investment and State Property Management, Lochin Fayzulloev. The investment agreement between the Tajik government and the KKN-Regar company on the construction of an oil refinery in the city of Tursunzade was ratified by the lower house of the Tajik Parliament, Fayzulloev said yesterday. In his words, the total cost of the project is \$21 million. The Ukrainian company Ukrneftemash will invest \$14 million in

the construction of the refinery and \$7 million will be allocated by the Tajik side. Yusuf Zuvaydov, the director of KKN-Regar company, said that the construction is expected to be completed in 2017. The refinery will use the latest technologies and will produce AI-92 and AI-95 gasoline and Euro-4 diesel fuel. It was earlier reported that in October 2014, Tajikistan's parliament ratified an investment agreement between Tajikistan and China's Dong Ying Heli Investment and Development Co. Ltd on the construction of an oil refinery in the Danghara Free Economic Zone (FEZ) in Tajikistan. (TCA)