

Trump Agrees Russia Responsible for Election Hacking: Transition Team

WASHINGTON - U.S. President-elect Donald Trump has accepted U.S. intelligence community's findings that Russia was behind the cyber attacks targeting the 2016 U.S. presidential election, Trump's team said on Sunday. "He's not denying that entities in Russia were behind this particular campaign," said incoming White House Chief of Staff Reince Priebus in an interview with FOX News. "He accepts the fact that this particular case was entities in Russia. So, that's not the issue." Priebus did not clarify whether Trump agreed that the Russian



hacking was intended to help him win. It is the first time for any senior official from Trump's transition team to acknowledge that after months of denial and sometimes even disparagement of the U.S. intelligence community, Trump had agreed that Russians were responsible for the hacking that led to the leaking of damaging material which dogged Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton till the Election Day. The U.S. intelligence released a report on Friday, making public its assessment...*(More on P4)...(23)*

Trump Has Taken Few Steps to Disentangle from Private Empire

WASHINGTON - President-elect Donald Trump pledged to step away from his family-owned international real estate development, property management and licensing business before taking office Jan. 20. With less than two weeks until his inauguration, he hasn't stepped very far. Trump has canceled a handful of international deals and dissolved a few shell companies created for prospective investments. Still, he continues to own or control some

500 companies that make up the Trump Organization, creating a tangle of potential conflicts of interest without precedent in modern U.S. history. The president-elect is expected to give an update on his effort to distance himself from his business at a Wednesday news conference. He told The Associated Press on Friday that he would be announcing a "very simple solution." Ethics experts have called for Trump to sell off his...*(More on P4)...(24)*

British PM Close to Spelling out Her Plans for Brexit

LONDON - British Prime Minister Theresa May said Sunday she will set out her plans for Britain's exit strategy from the European Union over the coming weeks. May has faced continuous criticism from pro-Europe politicians and remain supporters over her failure to discuss her Brexit strategy, insisting she will not show her negotiating hand in advance. In her first major television interview of the new year, May also said

her government was not suffering from muddled thinking over Brexit. She was responding to a letter to staff sent by the former British Ambassador to the EU, Sir Ivan Rogers, in which he was critical of the way the government was handling its exit plans. Rogers' letter was revealed after he announced his resignation in Brussels. In her interview on Sky news in London, May gave what was interpreted as her strongest hint



yet that Britain will leave the EU's single market. May said: "I'm ambitious for what we can get for the UK in terms of our relationship with the European Union because I also think that's going to be good for the European Union. We're leaving, we're coming out, we're not...*(More on P4)...(25)*

Iraqi Forces Advance in Mosul, Reach Tigris River for First Time

MOSUL, Iraq - Iraqi security forces on Sunday recaptured new areas from the Islamic State (IS) militants in the city of Mosul, as the troops reached the eastern bank of Tigris River for the first time in northern Iraq, the Iraqi military said. In the eastern front, the elite forces of Iraq's Counter-Terrorism Service (CTS) continued their progress in two routes; the first one was advancing to the fourth bridge on the Tigris River, which bisects the city, and capturing the eastern bank for the first time in the battles

of Mosul, a statement by the Iraqi Joint Operations Command said. The battles left some 40 militants killed and two car bombs destroyed, as well as destroying a vehicle carrying heavy machine gun, the statement said. The second CTS route within the eastern front was advancing toward Baladiyah and Succar neighborhoods amid heavy clashes that resulted in seizing the southern parts of the two neighborhoods, killing 43 extremist...*(More on P4)...(26)*

Assad Vows to Liberate "Every Inch" of Syria

DAMASCUS - Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has said that his mission is to liberate every inch of Syria, state news agency SANA reported on Monday. "Our mission, according to the constitution and laws, is to liberate every inch of the Syrian territory," SANA quoted the president as telling several French reporters Sunday. "This is, undoubtedly, not a subject for debate," Assad said. The president made the remarks as his army had wrested full control over

the northern city of Aleppo after the rebels' withdrawal to the countryside. Assad considered the Aleppo victory as "an important station toward the victory in the war imposed on Syria." Commenting on the destruction of the formerly rebel-held eastern part of Aleppo, Assad said there is no good war throughout history. "Every war is bad," he said. "Why bad? because every war involves de-



struction... involves killing. That's why it's bad we cannot say this war is good, even if it was for a noble purpose, which is defending your homeland." Still, Assad said that civilians need to be set free from the "oppression and control" of the "terrorist groups." (Xinhua)

Turkish President Sees Better Ties with U.S. Under Trump

ANKARA/ISTANBUL - Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan said on Monday he believed relations with Washington would improve under President-elect Donald Trump and that the two NATO allies would reach an easier consensus on regional issues. Ties between the United States and Turkey - which has the second largest army in the NATO alliance and is key to the U.S.-led fight against Islamic State in Syria and Iraq - have deteriorated sharply since a failed military coup in July. Erdogan and the govern-



ment blame the abortive putsch on Fethullah Gulen, an Islamic cleric who has lived in self-imposed exile in Pennsylvania since 1999, and want him extradited. Gulen denies involvement

in the coup. Ankara has also been angered by U.S. support for a Kurdish militia group fighting Islamic State in Syria. Turkey sees the group...*(More on P4)...(27)*

UN Appeals for Funds for Palestinians Caught up in Syria War

BEIRUT - The UN's agency for Palestinian refugees on Monday appealed for emergency funds to provide aid to nearly half a million Palestinians affected by the war in Syria. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency, UNRWA, said almost all the estimated 450,000 Palestinian refugees still inside Syria are in "critical need" of humanitarian aid in order to survive. It said it needed \$411 million (390 million euros) to support the Palestinians inside Syria as well as 47,000 others who have fled to neighbouring Jordan and Lebanon. UNRWA said that 43,000 Palestinians in Syria are in hard-to-reach or besieged areas cut off by fighting, including the Yarmouk camp in Damascus. "It's a clear violation...*(More on P4)...(28)*

S. Korea Closely Monitoring Dprk's Possible Test-Launch of Long-Range Missile

SEOUL - South Korea's defense ministry said Monday that its military is closely watching whether the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) would possibly test-launch its long-range missile. Defense Ministry spokesman Moon Sang-kyun told a routine press briefing that the country's military is closely trailing and monitoring the DPRK's possible launch of its intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) such as KN-08 or its enhanced version KN-14. Regarding the launch timing, the spokesman said the DPRK may use a variety of events to celebrate anniversaries scheduled for this year, without elaborating on details. His comments came after top DPRK leader Kim Jong Un said in his new year's speech that Pyongyang entered a final stage in preparations to test-launch a long-range ballistic rocket. Referring to the KN-14 missile, the spokesman said the DPRK advanced its technology to launch the ICBM from a mobile launcher. Moon expressed regrets over the DPRK leader's remarks violating the UN Security Council resolutions, which prohibit the country from testing any ballistic missile technology. He said threats of the ICBM launch is an act to damage peace and stability of the international community. (Xinhua)

Philippines, Russia May Ink Agreement to Conduct Military Drills: Defense Chief

MANILA - Russia and the Philippines are likely to sign an agreement in spring that would strengthen military cooperation between Moscow and Manila, the Philippine defense chief said on Monday. Philippine Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana told reporters that Manila is finalizing the memorandum of agreement that is expected to be signed in April or May this year when President Rodrigo Duterte visits Russia. "If we finish the nitty-gritty (of the agreement then it will be signed)," he said, adding the...*(More on P4)...(29)*

Major Gas Factory in Syria Could Be Blown up by IS: Report

DAMASCUS - The Islamic State (IS) posted photos in what it said was bombing of Syria's largest gas factory, as sources in the Oil Ministry in Syria said the photos seemed real, but the bombing hasn't yet been confirmed. IS' Amaq News Agency posted photos on Sunday, showing the militants booby-trapping and blowing up the Hayyan gas factory in the eastern countryside of Homs province in central Syria. Sources in the Oil Ministry were cited by pan-Arab al-Mayadeen TV Monday as saying that the photos of the factory while being booby-trapped are real, but

added that the later photos of the explosion, which were taken from a distance, couldn't confirm whether the factory itself was blown up or just its exterior. If true, it would be the largest economic facility in Syria to be blown up by IS since the eruption of crisis nearly six years ago. Hayyan gas factory is the largest production facility of gas feeding electricity station in central and southern Syria. Its production is estimated at three million cubic meters of gas daily. The facility's establishment cost the government over 280 million Euros. (Xinhua)

Nieghbor News

China, Uruguay Pledge to Enhance Cooperation Via Parliamentary Exchanges

BEIJING - China and Uruguay pledged on Monday to boost economic and political cooperation via parliamentary exchanges. The pledge came as top Chinese legislator Zhang Dejiang held talks with Gerardo Amarilla, president of Chamber of Representatives of Uruguay's National Congress at the Great Hall of the People in downtown Beijing. Hailing the development of bilateral ties in the past 29 years, Zhang, chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC), said China's NPC

attaches great importance to the cooperation with the South American country's National Congress. Chinese President Xi Jinping and his Uruguayan counterpart Tabare Vazquez agreed in October last year to establish a strategic partnership based on respect, equality and mutual benefit during Vazquez's state visit to China. Zhang said the fact that the delegation includes two presidents designate of the Chamber of Representatives shows "the...*(More on P4)...(30)*

Iran to Get Natural Uranium Batch: Diplomats

VIENNA - Iran is to receive a huge shipment of natural uranium from Russia to compensate it for exporting tons of reactor coolant, diplomats say, in a move approved by the outgoing U.S. administration and other governments seeking to keep Tehran committed to a landmark nuclear pact. Two senior diplomats said the transfer recently agreed by the U.S. and five other world powers that negotiated the nuclear deal with Iran foresees delivery of 116 metric tons (nearly 130 tons) of natural uranium. U.N. Security Council approval is needed but a formality,

considering five of those powers are permanent Security Council members, they said. Uranium can be enriched to levels ranging from reactor fuel or medical and research purposes to the core of an atomic bomb. Iran says it has no interest in such weapons and its activities are being closely monitored under the nuclear pact to make sure they remain peaceful. Tehran already got a similar amount of natural uranium in 2015 as part of negotiations leading up to the nuclear deal, in a swap for enriched uranium it sent to Russia. But the new shipment will be...*(More on P4)...(31)*

Pakistan Fires 'First Submarine-Launched Nuclear-Capable Missile'

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan fired its first submarine-launched cruise missile on Monday, the military said. The launch of the nuclear-capable Babur-3 missile, which has a range of 450 km (280 miles) and was fired from an undisclosed location in the Indian Ocean. "Pakistan eyes this hallmark development as a step toward reinforcing the policy of credible minimum deterrence," the military's media wing said in a statement. The Pakistani military said the Babur-3 missile

was "capable of delivering various types of payloads and will provide Pakistan with a Credible Second Strike Capability, augmenting deterrence". An army spokesman later confirmed the language meant the missile was equipped to carry nuclear warheads. The Babur-3 is a sea-based variant of the ground-launched Babur-2 missile, which was tested in December. The military said the missile had features such as "underwater controlled propulsion and advanced guidance and navigation". (Reuters)

Armenia, Iran, Turkmenistan Eye Energy Cooperation

ASHGABAT - Sound political relations between Armenia, Iran and Turkmenistan allow for the deepening of bilateral economic ties, as well as establishment of a trilateral dialogue, Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan said Monday, January 9. Karapetyan met with Iran's envoy to Armenia Seyyed Kazem Sajjad and Turkmenistan's ambassador Muhammetniyaz Mashalov in Yerevan.

"We have the opportunity to increase trade turnover among the three countries, current meeting testifying to the importance of our cooperation," the PM said. The sides further discussed the prospects of Armenia-Iran-Turkmenistan cooperation in energy sector, in particular, also dwelling upon issues of energy resources supply and joint projects. (Monitoring Desk)

Uzbekistan Puts off Plans to Expand Visa-Free Entry

TASHKENT - Uzbekistan said Monday it was cancelling plans to expand visa-free entry to the country this year. The Central Asian nation's government said in early December that citizens of 15 countries, including Germany, Britain and Canada, would no longer need visas to enter the country starting in April. The move came days after the election as president of interim leader Shavkat Mirziyoyev, who took control after

the death of the strongman Islam Karimov in September, and was interpreted as a sign of a potential thaw in one of the world's most tightly-controlled nations. But the new visa regime - which was also set to include visa-free travel for French and American citizens 55 or older - will only come into force on January 1, 2021, according to a presidential order signed in late December but only published online Monday. (Agencies)