

Yemen's Houthis Threaten More Drone Attacks

SANAA - Houthi group threatened on Sunday to launch more drone attacks after a deadly strike last week on a Yemeni government military parade, stoking tension between the warring parties amid U.N. peace efforts.

Houthi spokesman Yahya Sarea said Thursday's drone strike on a military base in Lahaj province, which killed several people, was a "legitimate operation against aggression". He said the movement was building a stockpile locally manufactured drones.

"Soon there will be enough in the strategic stockpile to launch more than one drone operation in multiple battle fronts at the same time," Sarea told reporters in the Houthi-held capital Sanaa.



The attack on the military parade came as the United Nations tries to get peace talks going between the Houthis, who control most ur-

ban centers in Yemen, and the Saudi-backed government of Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi, which is based in the southern port city of

Aden.

The day after, a Saudi-led military coalition said it destroyed a Houthi communication and control center used to direct drones.

The Houthis said in November they were halting drone and missile attacks on Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and their Yemeni allies, but tensions have risen over how to implement a U.N.-sponsored peace deal reached in December in the Red Sea port city of Hodeidah. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are leading the Western-backed Sunni Muslim Arab coalition that intervened in Yemen's war after the Houthis ousted Hadi's government from Sanaa in 2014. (Reuters)

EU May Need Rules to Stop Doctors Emigrating: German Minister

VIENNA - The European Union should consider regulating to stop member states from poaching each other's doctors and other professionals, German Health Minister Jens Spahn said.

Spahn, a conservative heavyweight among Chancellor Angela Merkel's Christian Democrats who recently lost a contest to become the party's leader, described a knock-on effect of countries attracting doctors from neighboring countries, as is the case with Switzerland taking in German physicians.

"I can understand them. Switzerland is a beautiful country. But what is clear is that there is a shortage of these professionals in Germany. And then Polish doctors work in our country, and in turn there is a shortage of them in Poland," he told Swiss tabloid Blick am Sonntag. Spahn added that there were currently such agreements within the World Health Organization that could serve as a model, but he did not spell out what those were or how they might be applied within the EU. (Reuters)

BEIRUT — He has survived eight years of war and billions of dollars in money and weapons aimed at toppling him. Now Syrian President Bashar Assad is poised to be readmitted to the fold of Arab nations, a feat once deemed unthinkable as he forcefully crushed the uprising against his family's rule. Gulf Arab nations, once the main backers of rebels trying to oust Assad, are lining up to reopen their embassies in Syria, worried about leaving the country at the heart

Arab Nations Inch Toward Rehabilitating Syria's Assad

of the Arab world to regional rivals Iran and Turkey and missing out on lucrative post-war reconstructive projects. Key border crossings with neighbors, shuttered for years by the war, have reopened, and Arab commercial airlines are reportedly considering resuming flights to Damascus.

And as President Donald Trump plans to pull out America's 2,000 soldiers from northeastern Syria, government troops are primed to retake the area they abandoned in



2012 at the height of the war. This would be a significant step toward restoring Assad's control over all of Syria, leaving only the northwest in the hands of rebels, most of

them jihadis.

It can seem like a mind-boggling reversal for a leader whose military once seemed dangerously close to collapse. (AP)

Pompeo: Qatar Diplomatic Crisis 'Has Dragged on Too Long'



RIYADH, Saudi Arabia — U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Sunday an ongoing boycott of Qatar by four of America's

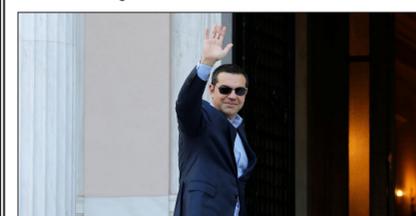
allies in the Middle East "has dragged on too long," though he gave no sign of any coming breakthrough in the dispute.

Stopping off in the small, energy-rich nation as part of a Mideast tour, America's top diplomat made a repeated point to say that "great things" were happening between Qatar and the United States.

"We're all more powerful when we're working together," Pompeo said at a news conference. "Disputes between countries that have a shared objective are never helpful."

Air Base, which hosts the forward headquarters of the U.S. military's Central Command and some 10,000 American troops. However, comments by Pompeo and Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani gave no sense of any movement in the ongoing diplomatic crisis with Doha. Bahrain, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates began a boycott of Qatar in June 2017, alleging Qatar funds extremist groups and has too-cozy ties to Iran. (AP)

Greece's Tsipras Calls Confidence Vote after Ally Quits Coalition



ATHENS - Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras on Sunday said he would call a confidence vote in his government after his coalition ally quit, leaving him bereft of a parliamentary majority and raising the possibility of snap elections. Earlier, Greece's right-wing defense minister resigned in protest at a deal ending a long running dispute with Macedonia over its name, saying he was taking his other six ministers in cabinet with him. (Reuters)

Greek Defense Minister Resigns over Macedonia Name Change

ATHENS, Greece — Greece's conservative defense minister, who leads the junior partner in the country's coalition government, resigned Sunday over the Macedonia name deal, which he opposes.

Panos Kammenos announced his resignation after meeting with Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras on Sunday morning. He said his party is quitting the government. Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras said, in response, that he will ask for a vote of confidence in Parliament in the coming week. He added he had a "frank discussion" with Kammenos, whom he thanked for his government partnership.

Tsipras also announced that Admiral Evangelos Apostolakis, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, will replace Kammenos as defense minister. Greece and Macedonia agreed last June to a deal that would change the name of Greece's northern neighbor to North Macedonia. In exchange, Greece would lift its objections to the country joining NATO. (AP)

Brazil President Says He Wants Free Trade with 'The Entire World'

SAO PAULO - Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro wants "bilateral trade with the entire world without an ideological bias," he said on Twitter on Saturday ahead of the Davos World Economic Forum later this month.

Latin America's largest economy is also one of the world's most restrictive. The Heritage Foundation, a right-wing think tank, last year ranked Brazil 153 out of 180 countries in its Index of Economic Freedom. (Reuters)

Israel Confirms Syria Strike, Ends Mission on Lebanon Border

JERUSALEM - Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday confirmed that Israel has struck hundreds of Iranian and Hezbollah targets in Syria, including a weapons facility in a weekend airstrike, as the military announced the discovery of a sixth and final tunnel dug by the Lebanese militant group for cross-border attacks. The statements marked a rare, public acknowledgment of Israeli attacks against Hezbollah and its patron Iran in neighboring Syria, where Israel is long believed to have targeted Iranian weapons shipments to the Lebanese Shiite group. However, Israel has until now generally refrained



from commenting about the strikes for fear of triggering a reaction and being drawn into the deadly fighting in neighboring Syria's civil war. At his weekly Cabinet meeting, Netanyahu publicly confirmed the strike as he thanked outgoing military chief Lt. Gen. Gadi Eisenkot for long years of service and particularly his marshaling of Israel's shadowy campaign against Iran in recent years. "We have operated with impressive success in thwarting Iran from establishing a military foothold in Syria, in the framework of which the military has struck hundreds of times against Iranian and Hezbollah targets," Netanyahu said. (Fox News)

Saudi Teen Who Fled Family Welcomed as 'Brave New Canadian' in Toronto

TORONTO - An 18-year-old Saudi woman who fled her family this week saying she feared for her life arrived in Toronto's international airport on Saturday after being granted asylum in Canada, where Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland welcomed her as a brave new Canadian. Rahaf Mohammed al-Qunun grabbed international attention this week after she barricaded herself in a Bangkok airport hotel room to resist being sent home

to her family, which denies any abuse. Qunun refused to meet her father and brother, who arrived in Bangkok to try to take her back to Saudi Arabia. Qunun arrived at Toronto's Pearson International Airport on Saturday morning, wearing a hoodie emblazoned with the word Canada in red, and a blue cap with the logo of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which has granted her refugee status. (Reuters)

Australia to Force Local Governments to Induct Citizens on National Holiday

SYDNEY - Australia's federal government has ordered local governments to hold naturalization ceremonies for new citizens on Australia Day amid controversy over the holiday, which some claim is offensive to its indigenous people.

The government is proposing that all local government bodies in Australia, typically referred to as councils, must hold induction ceremonies for new citizens on the Australia Day holiday on Jan. 26 and the Australian Citizenship Day holiday on Sept. 17 or have their authorization revoked, Immigration Minister David Coleman said in an emailed statement on Sunday.

Australia Day marks the anniversary of the 1788 arrival of the first British fleet to Sydney Cove where the British flag was raised on the continent marking the start of colonization.

Aborigines trace their lineage on the island continent back 50,000 years and for them, the date marks the start of the loss of their cultural heritage and suffering under discriminatory policies. The holiday has become controversial with pressure by activists to change the date from what they call "Invasion Day".

The country's 700,000 or so indigenous people track near the bottom of its 25 million citizens in almost every economic and social indicator. Several local councils have stopped holding citizenship ceremonies on Australia Day because of concerns the date is insulting to Aborigines. (Reuters)

Neighbor News

Pakistan Should Stop Misappropriating Development Funds, Says Former US Ambassador

KARACHI - Former United States to Pakistan Ambassador Cameron Munter noted on Sunday that the time has come for Pakistan to work on good governance and to "stop misappropriating funds allotted for socioeconomic development".

The former diplomat, who served in Pakistan between 2010 and 2012, was speaking at a local hotel in Karachi. He asserted that relations between the two countries have always followed uneven trajectories for the US feels "Pakistan does not want to cooperate with it in the war against terror".

He claimed that Pakistan has been given funds for the development of education in Sindh and Balochistan, but "it hasn't always used the money honestly".

However, he added, US has always cooperated with Pakistan and wants strong ties between the two countries. He asserted that there was hope in the US after former dictator Pervez Musharraf's tenure that bilateral relations could be neutralized and the "misconception that the US always exploits Pakistan before disposing of it" could be done away. (Agencies)

Saudi Arabia to Make Biggest Investment in Pakistan: Minister

GWADAR - Saudi Minister for Energy Khalid bin Abdul Aziz said on Saturday that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) will make biggest investment of its history in Pakistan, says a press release.

The Saudi minister made the announcement during his visit, along with other delegates, to the deep seaport city of Gwadar to inspect the site for the proposed oil refinery.

The delegation was received by Federal Minister for Petroleum and Natural Resources Ghulam Sarwar Khan. Chief Executive Officer of Aramco Associates Company Al Buainain Ibrahim Qassim was also part of the delegation.

The delegates were given a briefing about

Gwadar Port and ongoing developments works at the Chinese Business Complex.

The Saudi minister said Pakistan and Saudi Arabia were key states with regard to peace and stability of the region, adding that the Gwadar Port is situated in a key region.

He said that friendship and mutual cooperation among Pakistan, China and Saudi Arabia would be an example internationally.

On the occasion, Khan said Pakistan and Saudi Arabia were enjoying cordial relations.

Describing the refinery a "state-of-the-art facility", he said a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with regard to the refinery was expected to be signed next month. (Agencies)

Iran's Leader Calls for Scientific 'Jihad' to Make Iran Self-Sufficient

TEHRAN - Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has called on Iranian students across the globe to contribute to the country's independence from foreigners. In a message to the 53rd meeting of the Union of University Students Islamic Associations in Europe on Saturday, Ayatollah Khamenei encouraged the Iranian youth studying abroad to engage in scientific jihad (endeavor for the sake of God) aimed at boosting the nation's self-reliance.

"We all know that you, the university students, are the best hopes for the future of our country. What everyone needs to know is that today - by the grace of God - numerous students of yesterday are engaged in great tasks and deeply feel the joy and satisfaction of contributing to the advancement of knowledge and technology in their homeland," the message read.

"Our university students today - in any corner of the world - have the opportunity to join these faithful and devout groups and make the country fully independent from foreigners," the message said.

"This action, when undertaken with sincerity and for the sake of God, is jihad in the path of God. (Press TV)

Iran Summons Polish Envoy to Protest US 'Circus' in Warsaw

TEHRAN - The Iranian Foreign Ministry has summoned Polish chargé d'affaires in Tehran, Wojciech Unolt, to protest an anti-Iran US summit which Warsaw is set to host on February 13-14.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's announcement that the summit is going to focus on Iran has drawn strong reaction from Tehran, with Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif denouncing it as a "desperate anti-Iran circus." "This is a hostile measure by the United States against the Islamic Republic of Iran, and Poland is expected to avoid assisting the US in holding the conference," an Iranian Foreign Ministry official told Unolt on Sunday.