

US Plans Expansion to Arctic in Bid to Challenge Russia, But Can It?

WASHINGTON - Washington will send a Navy warship to sail through the Arctic in a demonstration of its growing ambitions in the far North, the US Navy secretary said. But will it be enough to challenge Russia? The US has long since set its sights upon the Arctic, which it openly sees as a potential new arena for a geopolitical standoff. As the planet's changing climate gradually turns ice-bound wastes into passable waterways, Washington is clearly

intending to get its piece of the economic action in a region that might well become a major sea trade lane one day.

In what looks like a statement of claim, the US will send a Navy warship to the Arctic waters in yet another freedom of navigation operation, Navy Secretary Richard Spencer told the Wall Street Journal. The US Navy already conducted similar missions in the South China Sea to challenge Beijing's territorial

claims there. So far, that has led to nothing but heightened tensions between the US and China but Washington is apparently eager to use the same approach in another region. Here, it is all about challenging the adversaries once again, as the US sees Russia and China as its major competitors in the region. Washington's plans are not just limited to the freedom of navigation mission but also involve deploying troops to the abandoned base of Adak. (RT)

Greek PM Set to Squeak Through Confidence Motion over Macedonia Deal

ATHENS - Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras made an impassioned appeal to parliament for support on Tuesday, the eve of a confidence vote he is expected to survive by a whisker with the support of a handful of opposition lawmakers.

Tsipras called the confidence vote following the resignation of Defence Minister Panos Kammenos

and his right-wing Independent Greeks' party over an accord to end a long dispute between Greece and Macedonia by changing Macedonia's name. He called on lawmakers to support him, saying that his government had pulled Greece from international bailouts and a debt crisis and has more work to do in the nine months that remain before its term ends in October. (Reuters)

Cambodian FM to Attend ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Retreat in Thailand

PHNOM PENH - Cambodian Foreign Minister Prak Sokhonn will attend the ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Foreign Ministers' Retreat (AMM Retreat) in Chiang Mai, Thailand on Jan. 17-18, said a foreign ministry's statement on Tuesday.

At the AMM Retreat, ASEAN foreign ministers will touch on various priority areas of common interests

that ASEAN will be carrying out in 2019 in the ASEAN community building processes, the statement said.

It added that they will also discuss ways to work together towards a more resilient and people-centered ASEAN Community as well as to intensify relations with external partners for mutual prosperity. (Xinhua)

High-Level DPRK-U.S. Talks Expected to be Held This Week to Discuss 2nd Summit

SEOUL - High-level talks between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the United States were expected to be held in Washington this week to discuss the second DPRK-U.S. summit, Yonhap news agency reported Tuesday citing diplomatic sources. The unnamed diplomatic source was quoted as saying it was known that Pyongyang and Washington were in talks to hold a senior-level dialogue, noting that given the U.S.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's schedule, the possible date for the high-level talks would be from Thursday to Friday.

Pompeo reportedly cut short his Middle East trip for a family funeral. He was forecast to attend the Global Chiefs of Mission Conference scheduled for Wednesday to Thursday in Washington D.C.

Yonhap estimated that there was a possibility for Kim Yong Chol, vice chairman of the DPRK's rul-

ing Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) Central Committee, to visit Washington from Thursday to Friday to discuss with Pompeo the date and venue for the second summit between top DPRK leader Kim Jong Un and U.S. President Donald Trump.

Kim and Trump already expressed their willingness to meet again after holding the first-ever DPRK-U.S. summit in Singapore in June last year. (Xinhua)

(1) Khalilzad...

Khalilzad tweeted on Jan. 13 that he held "fruitful talks" with senior Chinese officials "who committed to the success of Afghan peace".

"We discussed regional support for an inclusive peace process for all Afghans & ensuring #Afghanistan never again serves as a platform for terrorism," Khalilzad tweeted.

On Jan. 12, he met India's External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale in New Delhi where the Indian officials emphasized that the peace and reconciliation process in the Afghanistan "must be Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan-controlled".

Khalilzad continues to coordinate with the National Unity Government and other Afghan stakeholders to ensure an intra-Afghan peace process, the US Embassy's statement read.

"The US goal is to promote dialogue among Afghans about how to end the conflict, and to encourage the parties to come together at the negotiating table to reach a political settlement in which every Afghan citizen enjoys equal rights and responsibilities under the rule of law," the statement added.

During his last trip in December, Khalilzad reiterated that the only solution to the conflict is for all parties to sit together and reach an agreement on the political future of Afghanistan with mutual respect and acceptance. (Tolo news)

(2) Zalmay Rassoul...

unity, justice, security, peace, balance and equality"

He said that bringing peace to the country would be in his priority but hoped the peace would establish in Afghanistan before the elections. "Election is meaningless without peace," he said. Rassoul asked the IEC to observe full transparency in the upcoming presidential elections and the commission was responsible for any possible problems during the election process.

Earlier, Abdul Latif Pedram, Mohammad Hakim Torsan, Sayed Anwar Jalili and Enayatulla Hafiz have registered as presidential candidates for July 20 elections.

According to the IEC, the candidates registration process would continue until July 20 and

there was no plan to extend this process.

A presidential candidate should be a Muslim, Afghan citizen, having completed the age of 40 and should present 100,000 supporters and pay a million afghanis to the commission based on the electoral law. (Pajhwok)

(3) Political Parties...

have not reached a final conclusion about their electoral team.

"We believe that the existence of the office of chief executive in future structures can guarantee broad-based participation and political stability in Afghanistan," said CEO spokesman, Mujiburrahman Rahimi.

In addition, deputy chairman of The National Islamic Movement of Afghanistan, led by the First Vice President Abdul Rashid Dostum, said this time Dostum will not run as second vice president in the elections and instead he will nominate someone else from the party for the post.

"His excellency the first vice president this time has decided to nominate one his cadres for the post once he joins any candidate," said Abdullah Qarloq, deputy chairman of The National Islamic Movement of Afghanistan.

"We have agreed to move together with Junbishi-e-Islami and we are also having discussions with other factions," said Assadullah Saadati, member of Hizb-e-Wahdat-e-Islami Afghanistan.

Mohammad Karim Khalili-led Hizb-e-Wahdat-e-Islami party of Afghanistan has said the party will work together with National Islamic Movement of Afghanistan as a unified candidate.

The IEC meanwhile said that some candidates were preparing to register.

"Based on contacts we have, some citizens such as Zalmay Rassoul, Faramarz Tamanna and other personalities will register by the end of the week," said Abdul Aziz Ibrahim, deputy spokesman for the IEC.

Previously, reports surfaced in the media that incumbent President Ashraf Ghani, former national security advisor Mohammad Hanif Atmar and other political figures will register as candidates. But none of these officials has finalized their nomi-

nation to run for president in the elections yet. (Tolo news)

(4) Karzai Averse...

deal with them....

"We have been the victims of the deal concocted between the US and Pakistan during the Soviet invasion, which led to the creation and sustenance of extremist groups," he alleged. (Pajhwok)

(5) Saudi Arabia...

between the two sides, the statement said.

It was decided that OIC and Afghanistan would draw up a plan to combat terrorism and take serious steps for its implementation.

After meeting the Saudi leaders, the NSA performed Umrah and prayed for lasting peace and security in Afghanistan, the statement concluded. (Pajhwok)

(6) Afghan Taliban...

"The Taliban must stop continuing to use violence against their own people and come to the negotiating table," said Patrick Andrews, NATO's deputy senior civilian representative.

Qatar, home to the Taliban's political headquarters, joined international criticism of the attack. Its possible role as host nation to what would be the fourth round of U.S.-Taliban peace talks has become a point of contention.

Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates would boycott the talks if they were held in Qatar, diplomatic sources said, having severed ties with its government in 2017, alleging it funded militants and had close ties to Iran. Taliban sources on Tuesday said regional powers had created their own alliances to pursue the peace talks.

On one side, they said, were Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates and on the other, Iran, Russia and Qatar.

"Iran and Qatar are supporting Taliban's way but Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are saying what Afghan government and U.S. want," a Taliban official said on condition of anonymity.

The Taliban, seeking to restore strict Islamic rule after their 2001 ouster at the hands of U.S.-led forces, have ruled out talking to the Afghan government, dismissing it as a puppet of the United States. (Reuters)

(7) Taliban-Afghan...

Islamabad role it would be difficult that any talks would yield results.

Fazal Rahman refused to comment over the legitimacy of the Taliban armed struggles saying the time was critical and such commentary would not have positive impact.

Earlier, he supported the Taliban's armed struggles in Afghanistan saying that their legitimate government was ousted by the US and they had all the rights to launch armed struggles against foreign forces and the US backed government in Kabul. (Pajhwok)

(8) Afghanistan...

of India has pledged to implement 577 small projects having a total value of 177 million US Dollars and 327 projects have been implemented so far with a total value of 65 million US Dollars. (KP)

(9) Kandahar Customs...

g corruption, blocking illegal routes for trafficking, reforms and a computer based system were reasons that helped increase the custom revenue last year, he said.

He added the revenue increased despite trade volume with Pakistan declined last year.

Afghanistan's trade volume with Pakistan reduced after Afghanistan opened trade routes with other central Asian countries, he said.

Akbar said their revenue in 1393 fiscal year was only two billion afghanis.

Many people earlier escaped taxes and there was corruption as well in the revenue collections, but gradual reforms helped increase the income, he said.

He added traders were provided many facilities in return for paying taxes and the tax payment process had been simplified compared to the past.

Akbar said 22 acres of land has been allocated for the customs office in Spin Boldak border town where commercial goods were loaded into trucks without any disorder and traffic problem.

On the other hand, Akbar said the installation process of scanners was underway in Kandahar Airport, which would prevent tax evasion and facilitate

taxation process of commercial goods.

Traders in Kandahar now can clear their taxes through E-Payment system which was activated this ongoing solar year to speed up the tax payment process and save traders' time, he said.

On the other hand, traders complain they are overtaxed on raw materials, an issue they say has damaged the country's industry. But Kandahar customs office says all raw materials being imported from abroad and used for productions in domestic factories were taxed only two or one percent.

He said a laboratory for testing medicines and food materials would be imported from abroad and installed in Kandahar. These materials are currently sent to Kabul for test, he said. (Pajhwok)

(10) NATO Slams...

security forces as they fight terrorism and create the conditions for peace," said Andrews.

Four people were killed and 113 others injured in the car-bomb attack on the Green Village Camp in capital on Monday evening.

Wahidullah Mayar, spokesman for the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), said four dead bodies and 113 injured people had been evacuated to hospitals from the site of the blast. (Pajhwok)

(11) Kabul Attack...

Mohib said, "The enemy wants to sabotage the peace process by using any resources amid ongoing efforts and a regional consensus made for reaching a peace agreement in Afghanistan," he said.

He condemned the attack and stressed not to remain silent about the incident and would investigate it and take revenge of it. "Anyone behind these attacks should not think their crimes would remain unanswered," he concluded. (Pajhwok)

(12) Culture of...

Aziz Ahmad, another bookseller, confirmed the sale of books for children had seen a spike in Herat province.

Parvez Mujib, a psychologist, said: "Reading helps improve the personality of the child besides honing their skills like sound thinking and accurate analysis." (Pajhwok)