

(1) CIA Director Says ...

world," Pompeo said. "We have bolstered our capacity. There are collection capacity. We have done that jointly with Treasury Department, with Secretary (Steven) Mnuchin and his team, working together to take the trade craft that we have historically used against networks that look very much like financial networks and apply them against those very same networks." The CIA director meanwhile said al-Qaeda is still a threat, but he said Washington is committed to fighting the network and other terrorist groups.

"We have an obligation to do everything we can to operate in a way that engenders the American people's trust so that those powers and authorities remain in place. If we don't, if we behave in ways that are lawless, if we behave in ways that you might see in the movies, then the American people would rightfully take those powers, that authority, that capacity away from us, that would be unforgivable for agent to find in that place. What we do is simply too important," he stated.

At the same event, Rose Gottemoeller, Deputy Secretary General of NATO, said they will not let Afghanistan to become a safe haven for terrorists once again.

"Our experience in Afghanistan has taught us that training local forces is one of our best weapons in the fight against terrorism. That is a challenge that affects us all. And if we are training local forces, then they begin to provide for their own security and they begin to take up the fight against terrorism. Thus, we are adding 3,000 more trainers to our Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan," she said. "We are there to train, advise and assist the Afghans so that they can best provide for their own security and to prevent that country from ever again becoming a safe haven for terrorists."

The CIA director's remarks came shortly before reports emerged of the death of Nasir Mahmoud, known as Ehsan Khawari, a Haqqani network leader's death in a US drone strike in North Waziristan in Pakistan.

The drone strike was conducted in Spin Atal area along the border between Kurram Agency and Orakzai Agency on Wednesday morning. The remarks also came shortly after the Taliban announced a group of its members met with Pakistani officials in Islamabad recently to discuss ways to end the crisis in Afghanistan. The claim was made in a statement issued by the Taliban. (Tolonews)

(2) Uzbekistan, Afghanistan ...

president, Mohammad Humayon Qayoumi.

During the meeting, it was noted that there is high interest in products manufactured at Uzbekistan's enterprises - GM Uzbekistan, SamAuto and JV MAN Auto Uzbekistan.

The Afghan side expressed hope that the products of Uzbek producers will soon appear in the trade house of Uzbekistan in Kabul. Uzbekistan and Afghanistan also exchanged views on bilateral cooperation in the automotive industry. Qayoumi noted that Afghanistan is interested in further development of cooperation with Uzbekistan. (Trend)

(3) New Women's Dormitory ...

(AUAF) Registrar Dr. Julie Barker Holland. Constructed with support from USAID's Promote Gender Equity and Women's Empowerment program, the new facility is designed to increase female attendance at AUAF by providing a safe and secure living and learning environment.

The women's dormitory is a state-of-the-art three-story 3,000 square meter building that includes living quarters for up to 200 students, study and lounge areas, and administrative space. To expand housing opportunities to the broadest possible range of women, priority placement will be given to women from outside the capital, who are unable to commute to classes.

From its inception, the women's dormitory was designed to advance women's empowerment. Fifteen female engineering graduates from Kabul University participat-

ed in the dormitory's design and construction, receiving on-the-job training and increasing their skills. Since its establishment in 2006, the American University of Afghanistan has played a key role in educating the next generation of Afghan civic, business, and government leaders. With a nearly 50 percent female student body and with the addition of the women's dormitory, AUAF is poised to continue advancing women's education and economic opportunities. The United States is proud to partner with AUAF as it contributes to a more inclusive and prosperous future for Afghanistan's women leaders. (PR)

(4) Terrorists Attack ...

the compound. The fire that started in the Save the Children compound spread to the neighboring building of another charity, the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan. Eyewitnesses said they saw that building engulfed in flames.

The Afghan Taliban have denied responsibility for this attack.

Save the Children issued a statement via Twitter Wednesday saying the agency was "devastated" of news of the attack. "Our primary concern is for the safety and security of our staff," the charity said. (VoA)

(5) Triggered by...

JabarShaiq, the civil hospital director, confirmed receiving two injured protesters and said their condition was stable.

Amanullah, a protestor, said the provincial council office did not respond to the protest turning violent.

Nasir Mehri, the governor spokesman, said the protestors did not communicate with the authorities. He further said a policeman has been arrested in connection with the student's killing. (Pajhwok)

(6) Taliban Inaugurate ...

to the project.

Another resident of locality who wished to go unnamed said that he bought a shop at Umrui Township. "I bought land for the shop for 1,500 afghanis. Now I have constructed my shop which added to its value." The township had been constructed in 100 acres land, he said, adding that plots distribution will start soon.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said the Umrui township had been constructed in line with the wishes of people and people had began investing in the township. (Pajhwok)

(7) 2 Killed, 21 ...

police team had been assigned for investigation.

However, a doctor at the Mirwais hospital, confirmed the casualties, said a number of the injured were in critical condition. (Pajhwok)

(8) 4 ALP Personnel ...

were killed in the ensuing firefight. The attack was repulsed by security forces, the official added.

Abdullah, a resident of the area, confirmed the guerrillas assaulted the post late on Tuesday night. However, he was unaware of casualties.

On the other hand, Taliban's spokesman ZabihullahMujahid claimed four security personnel had been killed and their weapons seized by the militants. He did not provide details of casualties among the assailants. (Pajhwok)

(9) Explosives Used...

According to the NDS statement, the explosive chemical used by the insurgents was produced by a company in Islamabad called Biafo Industries Limited.

Saturday's deadly attack left at least 43 people dead and many more wounded. However, government has only confirmed the death of 29 people so far. (Tolonews)

(10) Afghan Herbs...

continue to increase exports.

According to ACCI, most of the spices and herbs are exported to China, India and some other Asian markets.

ACCI says that the exports of Afghan spices and herbs to Indian markets increased after the inauguration of the air cargo corridor between the two countries.

Based on ACCI statistics, this year Afghanistan has exported over 32,000 tons of herbs to international

markets.

"Our saffron export is expected to be five tons. This year we exported eight tons of cumin. We expect a significant increase until the end of the year and also the export of liquorice is expected to be an estimated 20,000 tons," said Mir ZamanPopal, head of ACCI export development department.

MAIL officials claim that the ministry has restored over 100 hectares of grasslands in the country where herbs are found in large numbers.

"We will create unions in different provinces to identify the medicinal herbs to increase production," said Akbar Rustami, MAIL spokesman. Herb and spice exports make up over 25 percent of Afghanistan's exports.

Liquorice (which is the root of Glycyrrhizaglabra plant) makes up the biggest part of the herb market.

According to officials, last year Afghanistan earned \$54 million through the export of liquorice which totaled 20,000 tons.

Last year, the overall amount of money Afghanistan received from medicinal herbs was over \$167 million USD. (Tolonews)

(11) Voter Lists ...

institutions was vital in the conduct of elections and their greater coordination could ensure the environment of peace for people to turn out and vote without fear. He asked the government to address people's concern election security. (Pajhwok)

(12) Afghanistan May...

with goods, fuel and other items. But the neighbouring country, in violation of its commitments, continued occupying more Afghan territory in Islam Qala.

Haji Ghulam Siddique, 63, another resident, said: "The Iranians offered to provide food and other necessary items for Afghans. They brought their containers here.

"They exploited the opportunity they were given by the Afghan government of that time and captured our territory," he alleged.

Ghulam Habib Hashami, a provincial council member, suggested the issue should be resolved through diplomatic channels. If that option failed, the dispute should be referred to the UN.

JilaniFarhad, the governor spokesman, told Pajhwok a delegation comprised of representatives from different departments, had been tasked with addressing the issue through diplomatic channels.

Officials of the Iranian consulate in Herat City, the provincial capital, refused to comment on the issue. (Pajhwok)

(13) Abbasi Seeks ...

against extremism and militancy would be taken to its logical conclusion.

"We are not fighting the war against terrorism based on financial assistance from others; we are fighting it on our own resources," the prime minister remarked. (Pajhwok)

Pentagon Aids Afghan Units Accused of Rights Abuses

KABUL - The Pentagon has been accused of funding, training and equipping units of the Afghan security forces that are involved in gross human rights violations, including child sex abuse.

Under the Pentagon's version of the so-called Leahy law, assistance to units accused of human rights violations is generally withheld, US media outlets say.

A new report from Pentagon's independent watchdog said the US military reported accusations of "gross human rights abuses" by the Afghan military on 5,753 occasions from 2010 to 2016.

The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan's Reconstruction (SIGAR) suggested child sexual abuse was prevalent in the Afghan military and police.

It said the American military commonly looked the other way at the widespread practice of pedophilia. "Although DoD has taken steps to investigate child sexual assault incidents, the full extent of these incidences may never be known."

At the request of Congress, SIGAR opened an investigation into the bachabazi practice. "DoD and State began efforts to address this issue after it was raised by The New York

Times."

John F. Sopko, the special inspector general, said: "And even after that story, the sufficiency of policies they've put in place and the resources they've committed seem questionable.

"When Congress passed the Leahy laws they prioritized the issue of gross human rights violations. As our report clearly shows, both agencies failed to live up to that task."

As of Aug. 12, 2016, the DoD was probing 75 incidents of gross human rights violations, seven involving child sexual assault. But officials acknowledged that was a small portion of the total.

"DOD's continuing to provide assistance to units for which the department has credible information of a gross violation of human rights undermines efforts by US government officials to engage with the Afghan government on the importance of respect for human rights and rule of law."

However, the report explained no evidence had been found that American soldiers were ordered to ignore a matter of policy, or that their commanders condoned the practice.

It shows the challenges the US military faces in partnering with forces abroad that do not always adhere to the same codes of conduct. US troops have long complained that some Afghan commanders sexually abuse boys. (Pajhwok)

Haqqani Network Commander Killed in North Waziristan Drone Strike

The insurgent commander was reportedly killed during a twin drone strike by US forces that had targeted a house allegedly belonging to Afghan refugees.

A Haqqani network commander, Ehsan, also known as Khawari, and two of his companions were allegedly killed during a twin drone strike conducted in North Waziristan, DawnNews reported on Wednesday.

The report said that sources within the political administration of Speen Thal Dapa Mamozai said the drone strikes, allegedly carried out by US spy planes, targeted a house belonging to Afghan refugees.

Station House Officer Thal, Ameer Zaman confirmed the death of a man named Ehsan, also known as Khawari.

Local sources from the Orakzai Agency said the strike was carried out on a Haqqani Network hideout. Dawn news reported on January 17, in the first drone strike of the year, one man was seriously injured in Kurram Agency's Badshah Kot area near the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.

Two people were killed on December 26, 2017 in another drone strike which targeted a vehicle. The strike occurred in the Mata Sangar area of Kurram.

In the same month, a US drone fired a missile at a compound in the same area. The missile had been fired at the compound at around 9pm, but no casualties were reported.

According to Dawn news, in November 2017, three suspected militants were killed in another drone strike targeting a militant compound in Afghanistan's Paktia province near the Pak-Afghan border.

Dawn news reports that drone strikes have surged in Kurram in the wake of US President Donald Trump's announcement of a new Afghan policy in August, in which Pakistan was also accused of offering "safe havens to agents of chaos". (Tolonews)

New chemical attacks reported in Syria, and Trump administration blames Russia

LONDON - Secretary of State Rex Tillerson blamed Russia on Tuesday for failing to rein in poison gas attacks on Syrian civilians amid a spike in reported chemical strikes against the final rebel-held pockets of the country. Doctors inside Syria have reported four such attacks since the start of the year, including two on Monday. Medical staff said dozens of civilians have been treated for symptoms of exposure

to chlorine, including many women and young children.

While the Syrian government's use of nerve agents in densely populated opposition areas has drawn international censure and prompted President Trump to order missile strikes against a Syrian military base in April, chlorine attacks have continued unabated throughout the six-year war, according to monitoring groups.

Speaking in Paris, Tillerson blamed Russia for the apparent use of chlorine gas Monday in the besieged Damascus suburb of eastern Ghouta.

"Whoever conducted the attacks, Russia ultimately bears responsibility," Tillerson said of Monday's attack in eastern Ghouta and other suspected gas attacks since the Russian military began backing government forces in Syria in 2015.

Rescue workers said pro-government forces fired nine shells at dawn carrying suspected chlorine gas on a densely populated residential area in the Damascus suburb. Medical staff in the enclave said they had treated four women, seven children and 10 men with breathing difficulties and other symptoms consistent with exposure to the chemical weapon. Photos from the area circulated by local activists showed at least two infants breathing with the help of respirators as anxious parents watched. ours later, pro-government media said that rebel forces responded by shelling the Old City of Damascus, killing nine civilians, including a 3-year old child.

Separately, doctors from the Syrian American Medical Society, a non-profit supporting hospitals across opposition-held parts of Syria, reported another attack on the northern province of Idlib. "Four people were treated in our hospital in Idlib with symptoms indicating exposure to chlorine," said Mohamed Katoub, a Turkey-based spokesman for the organization.

Violence has intensified in Idlib as the Syrian government presses an offensive against al-Qaeda-linked rebels there.

"When you hear the bombs, you brace yourself and wait. It is hard to describe the horrors we have seen coming through our doors this week," said a doctor in Idlib city, speaking on the condition of anonymity out of concern for the security of relatives living in government-held areas. "There was a little girl whose brain had fallen onto her pink T-shirt. And now we have the chemical victims, again. No one wants to stop this." Tillerson said Russia's failure to rid Syria of chemical weapons violates a 2013 disarmament agreement it made with the United States. "There is simply no denying that Russia, by shielding its Syrian ally, has breached its commitments to the United States," he said.

Russia is a key backer of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's government, providing both financial and military support, and has used its U.N. Security Council veto to block efforts to subject most alleged chemical assaults to U.N.-backed investigations.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov called the allegations that Russia was obstructing the investigations into chemical attacks "dirty and mendacious," according to Russian news agency Interfax. "This is a blatant and, by any standard, outrageous example of the American side's manipulating facts and ignoring what we've been saying for several years," Ryabkov told Interfax. Russia proposed Tuesday that the Security Council create a new inquiry to establish blame for chemical attacks in Syria, a move condemned by the United States as an attempt to distract from previous U.N. findings that Assad's military had carried out the April sarin attack. "When Russia doesn't like the facts, they try and distract the conversation. That's because the facts come back over and over again to the truth Russia wants to hide - that the Assad regime continues to use chemical weapons against its own people," said Nikki Haley, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. Tillerson was speaking at a meeting of 29 countries trying to identify, shame and punish those who use chemical weapons. He said their initiative puts perpetrators "on notice." (WP)