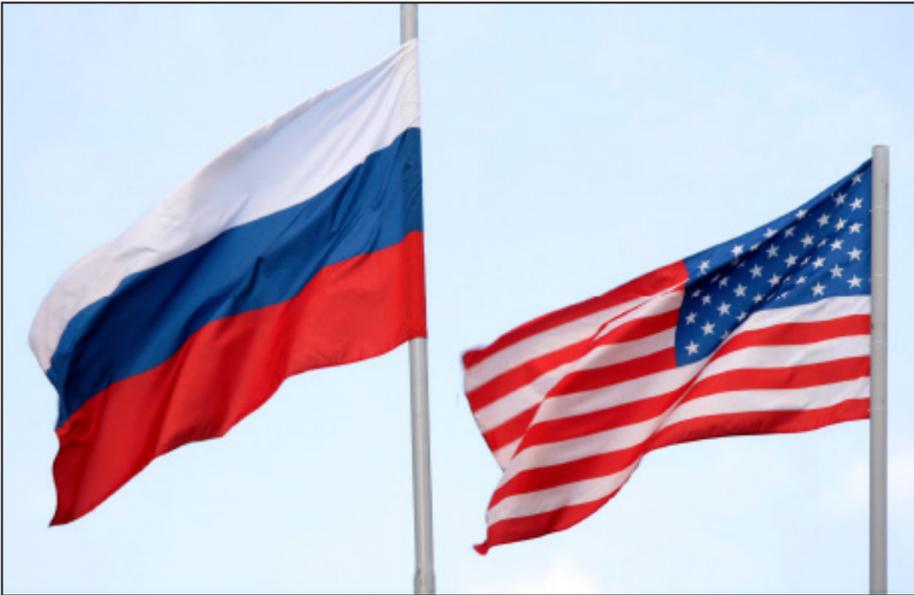


US - Russia Tensions on the Rise

WASHINGTON - With U.S.-Russia tensions on the rise especially over disagreements involving the war in Syria, U.S. experts said that though not as hostile as they were in the Cold War, ties are certainly at their frostiest in several years and may get worse before they get better.

This was underscored by reports on Tuesday that an armed Russian fighter jet buzzed within five feet of a U.S. Air Force reconnaissance plane in the Baltic Sea, which happened after U.S. planes shot down a Syrian air force jet on Sunday.

U.S.-Russia tensions are high in Syria after the Kremlin warned it would target any U.S.-led coalition's aircraft flying west of



the Euphrates River.

"U.S.-Russia relations are frosty," Brookings Institution Senior Fellow Darrell West told Xinhua.

"Trump has not delivered on his promise for better relations with Moscow and the Congress is moving towards expanding sanctions against Russia," West said. "There are disagreements on the Syrian war and each country harbors grave suspicions about the other. It is hard in this type of situation for there to be any cooperation on foreign policy issues," West said.

"The two countries don't see eye-to-eye on many issues," West said, noting that Trump spent considerable time on the campaign trail promising closer relations with Russia. (Xinhua)

Rapid Nuclear Decommissioning Threatens Climate Targets, Says IEA

ESTORIL, Portugal - Decommissioning nuclear plants in Europe and North America from 2020 threatens global plans to cut carbon emissions unless governments build new nuclear plants or expand the use of renewables, a top International Energy Agency official said.

Nuclear is now the largest low-carbon power source in Europe and the United States, about three times bigger than wind and solar combined, according to IEA data. But most

reactors were built in the 1970s and early 80s, and will reach the end of their life around 2020.

With the average nuclear plant running for 8,000 hours a year versus 1,500-2,000 hours for a solar plant, governments must expand renewable investments to replace old nuclear plants if they are to meet decarbonization targets, IEA Chief Economist Laszlo Varro told Reuters. "The ageing of the nuclear fleet is a considerable challenge for energy security and decarbonization ob-



jectives," he said on the sidelines of the Eurelectric utilities conference in Portugal.

Renewables have grown rapidly in the past decade but about 20 percent of

new low-carbon capacity has been lost from the decommissioning of nuclear plants in the same period, he said. "This is just a taste of thing to come," Varro said. (Reuters)

Israeli PM, U.S. Official Meet for Reviving Israeli-Palestinian Peace Talks

JERUSALEM - Israeli prime minister and a top U.S. national security aide met here on Tuesday as part of the U.S. effort to revive the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Jason Greenblatt, the U.S. aide, held a two-and-a-half-hour meeting, said a statement released by the prime minister's office, without elaborating on its content. Greenblatt tweeted that he met Netanyahu and his staff "for further talks ahead of Jared Kushner's

visit tomorrow."

Kushner, U.S. President Donald Trump's son-in-law and senior adviser, is scheduled to arrive in Israel on Wednesday for talks with Israeli and Palestinian leaders.

The two arrive in the region as part of the White House's bid to reignite the stalled peace talks, which reached an impasse in 2014. The visit also came on a day that Israel broke ground on its first new settlement, known as Amichai, in the West Bank for nearly 25 years. (Xinhua)

Abortive Brussels Attack Could have been Much Worse: PM

BRUSSELS - A suitcase bomb packed with nails and gas bottles could have caused heavy casualties, Belgium's prime minister said on Wednesday, a day after a soldier shot dead a Moroccan national attempting an attack on Brussels' Central Station.

"We have avoided an attack that could have been a great deal worse," Charles Michel told reporters after a national security council meeting following Tuesday evening's incident, in which no one else was hurt. No further threat was seen as imminent and

the public alert level was left unchanged.

A counter-terrorism prosecutor named the dead man only by his initials, O.Z. He was a 36-year-old Moroccan citizen who lived in the Brussels borough of Molenbeek and had not been suspected of militant links. He set off his bomb on a crowded station concourse below ground at 8:44 p.m. (2.44 p.m. ET).

Walking up to a group of passengers, "he grabbed his suitcase, while shouting and causing a partial explosion. (Reuters)

U.S., China Meet on North Korea after Trump Points to Failed Chinese Effort

WASHINGTON - Top diplomats from the United States and China began a day of talks in Washington on Wednesday looking for ways to press North Korea to give up its nuclear and missile programs.

The talks come a day after U.S. President Donald Trump said Chinese efforts to persuade North Korea to rein in its weapons programs had failed, ratcheting up the rhetoric after the death of an American student who had been detained by Pyongyang. Trump's statement is like-

ly to increase pressure on Beijing at the Diplomatic and Security Dialogue, which pairs U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Defense Secretary Jim Mattis with China's top diplomat, State Councilor Yang Jiechi, and General Fang Fenghui, chief of joint staff of the People's Liberation Army.

The State Department says Wednesday's talks would focus on ways to increase pressure on North Korea, but also cover such areas as counter-terrorism and territorial rivalries in the South China Sea.



The U.S. side is expected to press China to cooperate on a further toughening of international sanctions on North Korea.

The United States and its allies would like to see an

oil embargo and bans on the North Korean airline and guest workers among other moves, steps diplomats say have been resisted by China and Russia. (Reuters)

NATO Jet Approaches Russian Defence Minister's Plane

MOSCOW - A NATO military plane on Wednesday approached the plane of Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu above the Baltic Sea, Russian news agencies reported, the third such encounter in three days. A NATO fighter jet tried to approach Shoigu's plane but a Russian escort plane intervened to defend it, Interfax news agency reported, citing journalists accompanying the minister. The escort plane, a Sukhoi SU-27, demonstrated it was armed by rocking its wings, after which the NATO plane flew off, Interfax reported. Russian state television aired defence ministry footage of the incident, reporting that it took place over neutral waters. (AFP)

Merkel, Invoking Marshall Plan, Says Strong Europe Good for U.S.

BERLIN - A strong European economy is good for the United States, German Chancellor Angela Merkel said on Wednesday, against a background of tense relations with Washington on trade and other issues. Less than a month after U.S. President Donald Trump called Germany's trade and spending policies "very bad", Merkel used an appearance alongside veteran German-born U.S. diplomat Henry Kissinger to stress that the transatlantic relationship was rooted in "joint convictions, values and understandings."

Merkel, who is seeking re-election for a fourth term in September, said the transatlantic relationship "does not focus on winners and losers, which could never work in the long-run." "It's more about balancing interests. (Reuters)

UN Chief Asked Developed Countries to Shelter More Refugees

UNITED NATIONS - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Tuesday asked developed countries to provide shelter for more refugees and to share the responsibility with developing countries that are hosting 80 percent of the world refugees.

"I ask countries in the developed world to increase their resettlement quotas at least to the levels that we had two or three years ago, to be able to offer an effective responsibility-sharing with those that are hosting millions of refugees in the deep South," said Guterres.

Tuesday marks the World Refugee Day. Guterres re-



minded countries that refugee protection is an obligation under international law as more borders have been closed worldwide and more refugees have been rejected.

UN statistics show that the global refugee population hit its highest level for two decades standing at 22.5

million at the end of 2016. The largest group of refugees was made up of the 5.5 million Syrians forced to flee. "It is important to say that refugee protection is not a matter of solidarity or generosity. Refugee protection is an obligation under international law," said Guterres. (Xinhua)

Putin, Trump May Meet in Germany, but no Agreement Yet: Kremlin

MOSCOW - Russian President Vladimir Putin and his U.S. counterpart Donald Trump may meet next month in Germany, but there is no agreement so far, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Wednesday. "Putin and Trump will attend the G20 summit on July 7-8 in Germany's Hamburg, and we do not rule out they will meet on the sidelines of the event one way or another," said Peskov. But he noted that there is no concrete agreement on the meeting so far and nothing has been planned.

If there is a need, Russia and the United States still have time to prepare for the long-anticipated meeting of the two presidents and there are no obstacles standing in the way, said Peskov.

As for the expanded U.S. sanctions, Russian experts are working on possible countermeasures, said Peskov, adding that reciprocity is the main principle of the response. The Kremlin spokesman said Moscow regrets the new U.S. sanctions, which will undermine the settlement of the Ukrainian crisis. (Xinhua)

Bill Clinton, Merkel, Macron to Speak at Kohl Memorial

BRUSSELS - German Chancellor Angela Merkel, French President Emmanuel Macron and former US president Bill Clinton will address a ceremony in Strasbourg where former German leader Helmut Kohl will lie in state, the EU announced Wednesday.

The EU has announced a memorial service for July 1 for Kohl, widely regarded as the father of German reunification after the fall of the Berlin Wall and a key figure in European integration.

He died on Friday aged 87.

"The casket holding the remains of Dr Kohl will lie in state covered by a European flag" in the ceremony in Strasbourg, the home of the European Parliament, the statement said.

The European Council, which represents member states, confirmed in a statement that speakers would include Merkel, Macron and Clinton.

Clinton's time in office overlapped with Kohl's in the 1990s when a reunified Germany led efforts to expand the EU and NATO. European Council chief Donald Tusk, European Commission head Jean-Claude Juncker and European Parliament President Antonio Tajani will also make speeches.

"Following the European Ceremony of Honour, which is expected to last for around two hours, the casket will be brought to Germany, where the former Chancellor will be buried after a funeral service in the cathedral in Speyer," a town further up the Rhine river from Strasbourg, it said. (AFP)

Neighbor News

China Vows Cooperation with ASEAN to Promote Peace in South China Sea

BEIJING - China Wednesday vowed joint efforts with ASEAN countries to ensure the success of the China-ASEAN foreign ministers' meeting in August and promote peace and stability in the South China Sea.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Geng Shuang made the remarks in response to a question regarding recent comments from Philippine Assistant Foreign Secretary for ASEAN Affairs Ma. Hellen De La Vega. The Philippine diplomat was quoted as saying the set-up of senior diplomat hotline between China and ASEAN countries, and the application of the Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea (CUES) in the South China Sea, would help improve Chi-

na-ASEAN relations.

Geng applauded the Philippine diplomat's comments, adding currently the situation in the South China Sea has been stabilized and maintains sound development momentum. Parties concerned have pushed forward consultations on a code of conduct (COC) in the South China Sea as well as maritime cooperation, he told a routine press briefing. Geng said parties concerned had reached agreement on the COC framework at the 14th Senior Officials' Meeting on the Implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC), held last month in Guiyang, southwest China's Guizhou Province. (Xinhua)

CPEC to Set New Strategic Doctrine: President

ISLAMABAD - President Mamnoon Hussain on Wednesday said China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in view of its regional and global impact would necessitate a new strategic doctrine.

Addressing at the graduation ceremony of National Security and War Course 2017 here at the National Defence University (NDU), the President said the vision of 'One Belt, One Road' had laid the foundation of far-reaching changes at global scenario.

President Mamnoon said the objective of Pakistan's creation was promotion of peace and stability in the world. He mentioned that wars and other circumstances disrupted the achievements of national goals

and emphasized that terrorism was one of the major challenges.

However, he said, the resilience of nation and the national institutions helped overcome these challenges successfully.

He said Operations Zarb-e-Azb and Radd-ul-Fasaad would ensure stability and make Pakistan a citadel of peace.

The President lauded the NDU for its contribution as a think-tank in defence and strategic matters and its positive role in capacity-building of military and civilian leadership.

He said the participation of military officials from friendly countries in the National Security and War Course would prove beneficial for relations among the nations. (APP)

Iran to Respond more Decisively to Terrorist Attacks on its Soil: Rouhani

TEHRAN - Iranian President Hassan Rouhani stressed that the Islamic Republic will respond "more decisively" to any future terrorist attack on Iran's soil.

Rouhani made the remarks in a ceremony on Tuesday in reference to Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) firing six medium-range ground-to-ground missiles at Daesh bases in Syria's Dayr al-Zawr on Sunday in retaliation for twin terrorist attacks in the Iranian capital Tehran, which killed 17 people and injured over 50 others. He added that the IRGC's move to fire missiles toward Daesh positions in Syria was not made by one person or

military component. "If we decide to target a location with missiles, this decision falls within the field of national security," said Rouhani.

"Such decisions are made by the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC)," he added.

Rouhani, the chairman of the SNSC, said the body had in response to the terrorist attacks in Tehran given wider authority to the country's Armed Forces than the missile raid on Daesh in Syria.

Earlier in the day, the IRGC announced that at least 65 Daesh terrorists, including several high-ranking intelligence commanders, were killed in Iran's missile attack. (Presstv)

UN Monitoring SDG Indicators in Turkmenistan

ASHGABAT - UN representatives are monitoring social indicators of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Turkmenistan, the country's government said in a message.

The expert mission is headed by Gereltuya Altankhuyag, according to the message. Consultations are being held with the government of Turkmenistan and the UN country group on the processes to achieve SDGs integrated into socio-economic programs, which are being implemented in the country. The meeting participants have highlighted the need

to take a comprehensive approach to collective actions at all levels.

This envisages designing a system for measuring progress towards achieving the SDGs at ministries and agencies in Turkmenistan. The meeting participants discussed the outcomes of the work done to analyze the existing statistical data, mechanisms for intersectoral interaction and ways of improving the system of national institutions responsible for achieving the SDGs adapted to Turkmenistan's conditions and integrated into the country's state policy. (Trend)