

Not You Too! US Warns India against Russian S-400 Ahead of Pompeo's Visit

WASHINGTON - Although Washington already has its plate full trying to dissuade Turkey from buying S-400 air defenses, it is also "urging" India against buying the Russian missile system just ahead of Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's visit.

Having already told India not to go through with the S-400 deal last week, a State Department official issued a reminder to US "allies and partners" on Friday, backing up the "suggestion" with a veiled threat.

"With respect to the S-400, we're urging all of our allies and partners, India included, to forgo transactions with Russia that risk triggering the CAATSA sanctions," the unnamed official said during



a background briefing, referring to the 2017 law that threatens to sanction other countries for buying Russian weapons. "This is a time we will be

encouraging India to look at alternatives." The warning comes after New Delhi made clear it had no plans to scrap the multi-billion dollar

deal it signed with Moscow last October. While the US remains one of India's top weapons suppliers, Friday's message was yet another indication the expected waiver for the S-400s may not be forthcoming.

The Russian missiles will likely be one of the issues brought up when the top US diplomat arrives in New Delhi next week. Pompeo's visit will primarily focus on improving diplomatic ties and cooperation between the US and the populous South Asian nation. India may have "Strategic Trade Authorization Tier-1 status" in Washington, but Turkey is a full-fledged NATO member yet Washington ...*(More on P4)...(12)*

Neighbor News

Ambassador: US Supports Diversification of Turkmen Gas Export Markets

ASHGABAT - The US will render assistance to the diversification of the Turkmen gas export markets, US Ambassador Matthew S. Klimow said. Klimow, who will soon head the US diplomatic mission in Turkmenistan, made the remarks in the Senate, Trend reports referring to Turkmen gas state concern, citing The Diplomat.

He stressed that he will make every effort to promote the diversification of the Turkmen gas export markets across the Caspian Sea, as well as in South Asia. As reported, the

White House supports regional gas pipeline projects in which Turkmenistan is involved, such as TAPI (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India) and the Trans-Caspian gas pipeline project through Azerbaijan and Turkey to Europe.

The diplomatic relations between the two countries were established on February 19, 1992. The legal base consists of 59 documents, 53 of which are interstate and intergovernmental documents and six are interdepartmental documents. (Trend)

Russia Will Help Iran with Oil, Banking If Payment Channel Not Launched: Ryabkov

TEHRAN - Russia has signaled its willingness to secure Iran's interests in the oil and banking sectors if Europe's non-dollar mechanism aimed at facilitating trade with the Islamic Republic is not launched.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said on Friday that Moscow is ready to help Iran export its crude and ease restrictions on its banking system if Europe fails to launch its mechanism, officially called the Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges (INSTEX), with Tehran. The three European signatories to the 2015 nuclear agreement, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive

Plan of Action (JCPOA), unveiled late in January the long-awaited direct non-dollar payment mechanism meant to safeguard their trade ties with Tehran following the US withdrawal from the nuclear deal and in the face of the "toughest ever" sanctions imposed by the United States against the Islamic Republic. In its initial stage, INSTEX will facilitate trade of humanitarian goods such as medicine, food and medical devices, but it will later be expanded to cover other areas of trade, including Iran's oil sales. However, it has not resulted in any trade deals so far. (Press TV)

Germany Must Combat Right-Wing Extremism, Merkel Says after Politician's Murder

BERLIN - Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel on Saturday said the state must rigorously fight right-wing extremism following the murder of a prominent politician.

The arrest of a man with suspected far-right sympathies over the shooting this month of Walter Luebecke, a regional ally of Merkel known for his pro-migrant views, shocked Germany and prompted calls for a more pro-active government response to anti-immigrant extremists.

Merkel, speaking in Dortmund at an annual gathering of Protestant churches, said that right-wing extremism must be fought "without any taboo".

"Otherwise we will have a complete loss of credibility," she said, adding that the government took the issue "very, very seriously". Her Interior Minister, Horst Seehofer, made similar comments last week. Germany is home to some 12,700 potentially violent ...*(More on P4)...(17)*

It's Odd That UK's PM Is Elected by 'His Party's Get-Together' but We'll Work with Anyone - Putin

MOSCOW - It's "odd" that the UK Prime Minister comes to power after a closed-door vote within his own party and not through a nationwide election, but Moscow is ready to work with anyone who will end up in Number 10, Vladimir Putin said. While the UK loves lecturing Russia on democracy, the peculiarities of its own political system may raise more than a few eyebrows, Putin told Rosiya-1 broadcaster on Saturday. "Take the way the first

man in the country, the head of the UK's executive branch, is propelled to power," he offered. [Is he elected] in a nationwide vote? No, [he is elected] by his party's get-together. Truth be told, this is strange to me but this is how the [British electoral] system works. Putin spoke as the race to become the next Conservative Party leader - and thus the UK's Prime Minister - comes to a climax. Boris Johnson and Jeremy Hunt are the two candidates who survived



the latest round of the internal Tory contest, with the former being the likeliest candidate to end up at 10 Downing Street. Johnson, who got the backing of 160 Tory MPs and Hunt, who scored just 77, ...*(More on P4)...(13)*

Great Game in Arctic: US Eyes Military Port to Counter Russia & China at North Pole



WASHINGTON - US lawmakers want its military to challenge Russia and China on the high seas by finding one or more locations for a port

that would help feed Washington's growing appetite for Arctic oil and other natural riches. The National Defense Authorization Act 2020

(NDAA) suggests that the Coast Guard and other branches of the US military should identify and designate a new strategic port in the Arctic. It openly states that the move is meant to counter Russia's presence in the polar region. Naturally, the bill - which will be voted on next week - stokes fears of Russia's military expansion at the world's northernmost region. Moscow, it points out, has around 40 icebreakers (whereas the US has just one) and "has made

significant investments" in the creation of a new Arctic Command. It is also building or renovating 19 deep-water ports and 14 airfields in the region. Another section of the bill warns that Russia has teamed up with China in exploring gas reserves in the Arctic, and here is where the proposal gets to the point. The economic significance of the Arctic continues to grow as countries around the globe begin to understand the ...*(More on P4)...(14)*

Russians Hit Out at Kremlin Ban on Flights to Georgia

MOSCOW - Russia's travel industry and ordinary Russians hit out Saturday at a decision by the Kremlin to suspend flights to Georgia as a politically motivated move that has little to do with safety concerns. President Vladimir Putin signed a decree banning Russian airlines from flying to pro-Western Georgia from July 8 late Friday in response to anti-government rallies in the ex-Soviet neighbour. The protests were sparked by a parliamentary address in Tbilisi by a Moscow lawmaker

earlier this week. The Kremlin said the ban was to "ensure Russia's national security and protect Russian nationals from criminal and other unlawful activities." Authorities recommended travel companies stop selling holiday packages to Georgia and advised Russian tourists to return home. Many ordinary Russians bristled at the Kremlin's latest initiative, while key players in the industry said they were blindsided by the move. (AFP)

Chinese, Irish Leaders Exchange Congratulations on 40th Anniversary of Ties

BEIJING - Chinese President Xi Jinping on Saturday exchanged greetings with his Irish counterpart Michael D. Higgins on the 40th anniversary of the establishment of bilateral relations.

Since the forging of the diplomatic ties 40 years ago, the two countries have been adhering to the spirit of mutual respect, treating each other on an equal footing, mutual benefit and win-win to push forward healthy and stable development of the bilateral relations and scored fruitful achievements in exchanges and cooperation in various fields, Xi said in a congratulatory message. President Higgins paid a state visit to China in 2014 and the two heads of state conducted in-depth and friendly exchanges and mapped out a blueprint of China-Ireland relations, Xi recalled. (Xinhua)

Thailand's Democrat Party Leader Expected to Boost Rubber, Oil Palm Prices

BANGKOK - Thailand's Democrat Party leader Jurin Laksanawit is expected to boost the prices of rubber and oil palm only if given the post of commerce minister. The Democrat Party leader, who is largely tipped to be concurrently named deputy prime minister and commerce minister in a new cabinet under Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha, is visiting Songkhla province in southern Thailand over the weekend.

Songkhla is one of several southern provinces where rubber and palm planters have long expected increases in the lower prices of their products in the domestic markets. (Xinhua)

US-China Trade War, Sea Row in ASEAN Summit Spotlight

BANGKOK - Southeast Asian leaders will commit to conclude a long-delayed regional trade pact this year despite lingering odds to fend off risks from a protracted U.S.-China trade war when they gather for a weekend summit in Thailand.

The Chinese sinking of a Philippine boat, which endangered 22 Filipino fishermen, is also expected to put the South China Sea territorial conflicts under the spotlight in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations meetings. The two-day summit gets underway Saturday in the Thai capital of Bangkok, where ASEAN was



founded in 1967 in the Cold War era. Other key issues include the planned repatriation of more than 700,000 Rohingya Muslim refugees, who have fled a military crackdown in Buddhist-majority Myanmar since August 2017 to neighboring Bangladesh in a crisis

that has tested ASEAN. Critics have hit the regional bloc for failing to address the abuses in Myanmar's Rakhine state that the United Nations has called ethnic cleansing. A confidential draft of a post-summit communiqué, which is expected ...*(More on P4)...(15)*

Venezuela Should Release Jailed Opponents: UN Rights Chief

CARACAS - UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet called on Venezuela to release jailed dissidents Friday and said the crisis-racked country faced a "serious" humanitarian situation.

Her comments came at the end of a three-day visit to the country on the invitation of embattled President Nicolas Maduro, who has faced allegations of cracking down on political opponents amid rampant hyperinfla-

tion and shortages of basic goods. "I call on the authorities to release all those who are detained or deprived of their liberty for exercising their civil rights in a peaceful manner," said Bachelet, referring to the hundreds of Maduro government opponents who are currently incarcerated. The UN rights chief met relatives of these detainees, many of whom are accused of "conspiracy" to overthrow the government. ...*(More on P4)...(16)*

Hong Kong Protesters End Blockade of Police Headquarters

HONG KONG - Protesters in Hong Kong ended their overnight siege of police headquarters peacefully Saturday, disappointed that their demands for the territory's leader to formally withdraw a contentious extradition bill and police to apologize for heavy handed tactics have gone unmet.

By daybreak, police had cleared the streets of barriers set up by protesters to snarl traffic in the Asian financial center, and only a few groups in the mostly youthful crowd remained. Many slept outside the legislature. Traffic was again smooth on a major thoroughfare through the government's central complex as the protest movement regrouped to consider next moves.

Police said nine female and four male staffers were hospitalized "with considerable delay" during the blockade. The police statement did not say whether they were injured in clashes or had otherwise become unwell.

Around police headquarters, masked and helmeted protesters covered surveillance cameras with masking tape and lashed barriers together with nylon cable ties. They threw eggs at the building and drew graffiti on the walls. Protesters also "splashed oil" and targeted police officers' eyes with laser pointers, according to the police.

Hong Kong has been rocked by major protests for the past two weeks over legislative proposals that many view as ...*(More on P4)...(18)*

Pakistan Nuclear Physicist Reveals New Information about Egypt's Morsi

ISLAMABAD - Pakistani nuclear physicist Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan has revealed key facts about the reason behind the 2013 coup against Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi and the role played by the US, Israel and internal agents in these events.

Khan - who is described as the "father of the Pakistani atomic bomb" - wrote in a testimony on Facebook that "President Morsi travelled to Russia, India and Pakistan, but many do not know that he agreed with the Russians to re-operate an Egyptian nuclear reactor enriched with uranium that would generate electricity. He also agreed to establish another reactor that Egypt would receive three years later, for the same purpose".

"It would have been bet-

ter for me not to speak about Egyptian affairs," Khan added, "but the Egyptian people need to know the truth in order to decide the fate of President Morsi." Khan continued: "Do the Egyptians know that the results of this visit have been the most frightening to the West? Egypt would have solved the electricity problem in the country forever, as well as exported enough electricity to light the continent of Africa."

"The Egyptians should know that during the rule of President Morsi, Egypt received two German submarines. Israel had pressured Germany to prevent Egypt gaining possession of such submarines, which are capable of hitting an aircraft carrier if Egypt has the right missiles," Khan continued. (Agencies)

Pompeo Asks Pakistan to Release Those Facing Blasphemy Charges

ISLAMABAD - Last year Pakistan was put in Special Watch List category on International Religious Freedom mainly because of the deterioration in religious freedom in the country.

The US has asked Pakistan to release more than 40 members of the religious minorities facing blasphemy charges and also to appoint an envoy to address the various religious freedom concerns in the country. Speaking at the release of the annual report on the International Religious Freedom of the State Department for the year 2018, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo noted how the Pakistan's Supreme Court acquitted Asia Bibi, a Catholic,

of blasphemy, sparing her the death penalty after she spent nearly a decade in prison.

More than 40 others remain jailed for life, or face execution on that very same charge. We continue to call for their release, and encourage the government to appoint an envoy to address the various religious freedom concerns, Pompeo said as the Congress mandated annual report portrayed a grim picture of religious freedom in Pakistan. Last year Pakistan was put in Special Watch List category on International Religious Freedom mainly because of the deterioration in religious freedom in the country. (Agencies)