

# Russian Warships Strike IS Terrorists in Syria with Cruise Missiles

MOSCOW - Two Russian frigates and a submarine deployed in the eastern Mediterranean have fired six Kalibr cruise missiles at Islamic State (IS) targets in west-central Syria, the Russian Defense Ministry said Friday. The "sudden massive missile strike" was directed at "command posts and large ammunition depots of IS terrorists in the vicinity of Akerbat settlement in the province of Hama," it said in a statement. The Russian navy has once again demonstrated the capability of delivering effective strikes with Kalibr high-precision missiles against remote targets in the shortest possible time after receiving the combat order, the state-



ment said.

The remaining militants and terrorist facilities were destroyed by Russian air force bombers, it added.

Turkey and Israel were informed of the launches of cruise missiles in a timely manner, the ministry said.

According to the Russian defense ministry, IS continued to withdraw from its stronghold of Raqqa in northeastern Syria last week, making use of the night time and favorable terrain.

IS militants moved along various routes to the province of Hama, occupying large buildings and setting up command posts as well as weapons and ammunition depots there. (Xinhua)

## Central Europe Leaders Meet with France's Macron

BRUSSELS - Poland's prime minister says it is a good sign for the future that France and Central European countries want to seek consensus despite their differences on key issues. Prime Minister Beata Szydlo offered her assessment at a European Union summit in Brussels on Friday. Earlier in the day, at her invitation, the so-called Visegrad Group of four central European countries held talks with French President Francois Macron. In a recent interview, Macron accused some of them of

betraying European values by refusing to support an EU refugee relocation program.

Szydlo described the talks as "good," but says Macron and the Visegrad Group differ in many areas. She stressed that the dialogue would continue.

On Macron's criticism, Szydlo said she asked him for better direct communication, free of "stereotypes." Macron says he and the central European leaders "defined their points of disagreement" and talked frankly, but showed no sign



of softening his criticism. German Chancellor Angela Merkel says that British Prime Minister Theresa May's pledges not to immediately force out EU citizens are a "good start but not yet

the breakthrough." Speaking Friday at an EU summit in Brussels, Merkel said that after talks with May the night before, "it became clear ... that there is a long road in front of us." (AP)

## AU Welcomes UN Resolution on G5 Force

ADDIS ABABA - The African Union (AU) has welcomed the UN Resolution for the deployment of a joint force for the Group of Five for Sahel States (FC-G5S), said a statement released by the pan-African bloc on Friday.

The UN resolution is reportedly said to give the go-ahead for the FC-G5S, a counter-terrorism effort of up to 5,000 military and law enforcement personnel drawn from Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger.

Welcoming the UN Security Council's authoriza-

tion for the deployment of a joint force for FC-G5S, the Chairperson of the AU Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, has commended the UN support which echoes the AU's Peace and Security Council decision of April 13, 2017.

The Chairperson has reiterated the importance of the FC-G5S to address the persistent threats of violent extremism and transnational organized crimes including arms, drugs and human trafficking with the aim of protecting civilians and promoting peace, security and stability in the region. (Xinhua)

## Post-IS Vacuum in Syria Could Lead to Clash of Powers

DAMASCUS - As the Islamic State (IS) continues to falter in Syria and Iraq, regional and world powers are walking a fine line to back their allies on the ground to reclaim IS-controlled territories without stirring up direct conflicts. The IS occupied about one third of lands in Syria in its prime. Although it has shrunk about 50 percent after three years of anti-terrorism military operations by the international community, those areas are still of strategic value for all involved parties in the country.

The United States shot down a Syrian warplane and two Iranian drones this week that Washington said threatened its allied forces on the ground in Syria, a sharp escalation exposing an intense power struggle and possibility of direct confrontation in the post-IS era.

STRATEGY PREVIEW The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), with U.S. support, has been battling IS militants in operations to recapture Raqqa and other areas in northern Syria in recent months. (Xinhua)

BRUSSELS - EU leaders warned Friday Britain's plans to protect the rights of European citizens post-Brexit risked leaving them worse off, after Prime Minister Theresa May gave what she insisted was a "fair" offer. "My first impression is the UK offer is below our expectations and this risks worsening the situation of our citizens in the UK," EU President Donald Tusk told a news conference after the second day of a Brussels summit.

European Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker told reporters that May's

offer was a "first step but this step is not sufficient." The fate of around three million European citizens living in Britain after Brexit is one of the most contentious issues in the negotiations on Britain's withdrawal from the 28-member bloc, which began on Monday.

Almost exactly one year after Britain voted to leave in the June 23 referendum, May promised that nobody would be forced to leave after Brexit, offering permanent rights over healthcare, education, welfare and pensions to Euro-



peans who arrive before a cut-off date.

But she declined to say when that date would fall, offering only a window between March 29, 2017, when Britain triggered the Brexit process, and its

expected departure two years later.

Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel said the proposal outlined by May over an EU leaders' dinner on Thursday was "particularly vague". (AFP)

## EU Leaders Slam Britain's Brexit Citizens Plan

## China Urges EC to Stop Using Surrogate Country Approach

BEIJING - China Friday urged the European Commission (EC) to stop using the surrogate country approach in its anti-dumping investigation against China. The EC initiated Friday an anti-dumping proceeding concerning imports of low carbon ferro-chrome originating in China, Russia and Turkey. China has noticed that the case is the first since December 11 last year, when the surrogate country approach should no longer be used against China, according to Article 15 of the accession protocol signed when China joined the WTO, said Wang Hejun, head of the Ministry of Commerce trade remedy and investigation bureau. "We urge the EC to fulfill its WTO obligations, stop using the surrogate country approach against Chinese enterprises in any circumstances, and give them fair treatment," said Wang. (Xinhua)

## Merkel to Gather European G-20 Participants Next Week

BERLIN - The German government says Chancellor Angela Merkel will host a meeting next week of European participants in the Group of 20 summit to prepare for the meeting of global powers in July. Government spokeswoman Ulrike Demmer said Friday that the meeting will involve the leaders of Spain, France, Britain, Italy, the Netherlands and Norway as well as the head of the EU's executive Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker.



er, and European Council head Donald Tusk.

The meeting will take place Thursday at the chancellery in Berlin. Earlier that day, Merkel will

give a pre-summit speech to the German parliament.

Merkel will host the leaders of the G-20 in Hamburg on July 7-8. (AP)

## Turkey, Russia, Iran to Deploy Troops in Syria

ANKARA - Turkey, Russia and Iran are working on a plan to deploy their troops in de-escalation areas in Syria, Turkish presidential spokesman Ibrahim Kalin said on Thursday.

Speaking to reporters at the Presidential Complex in Ankara, Kalin said these forces could minimize the possibility of clashes between the regime and oppositions, local media reported.

According to the spokesman, Russian and Turkish forces could be stationed in the Idlib region while Damascus and neighboring areas could see the presence of mainly Iranian and Russian troops and forces from Jordan and the U.S. could be deployed in the southern Deraa region.

"Russian have a proposal: Maybe the Kyrgyz, or Kazaks would deploy a number of troops. They could also be involved in this task force," Kalin said, quoted by Daily Sabah. The delegations from Turkey, Russia and Iran were discussing the logistics of the conflict-free zones. Parties are working on a mechanism, of which the main aim is to provide a structure to the ceasefire in Syria, kalin said, adding that work may be finalized until the next Astana meeting in early July, and a deal would be likely cemented. Russia, Turkey and Iran signed an agreement in the Kazakh capital Astana on May 4 to establish four main "de-escalation zones" in Syria for at least six months. (Xinhua)

## EU to Extend Economic Sanctions against Russia: EU's Tusk

BRUSSELS - The European Union (EU) leaders have decided to extend economic sanctions against Russia, European Council President Donald Tusk said Thursday. "Agreed. EU will extend economic sanctions against Russia for their lack of implementing the Minsk Agreement," Tusk said on his twitter account.

The EU made such a decision during a two-day summit in Brussels with security and defence, Brexit, migration and economic development on the agenda.

The EU initially introduced economic sanctions on Russia in 2014 over Ukraine conflict, targeting Russia's financial, energy and defense industries. (Xinhua)

## Turkey Refuses Closing Military Base in Qatar upon Arab States' Demand

ANKARA - Turkey will not close its military base in Qatar, Turkish Defense Minister said on Friday in reply to a demand by four Arab countries to end boycott against Doha.

"Re-evaluating the base agreement with Qatar is not on our agenda," Fikri Isik said speaking in an interview with NTV news broadcaster.

The minister said he has yet to see the list of demands by Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Egypt and Bahrain, who reportedly asked Doha to "immediately terminate the Turkish military presence currently in Qatar and end any joint military cooperation with Turkey inside of Qatar."

"If there is such a demand, it will mean interference in bilateral ties" between Ankara and Doha, Isik said stressing that Turkey's military presence in Qatar should be seen as a benefit for the whole Gulf since it is a value for "security of Qatar and the region."

On June 7, the Turkish parliament approved two agreements for the deployment of Turkish troops in a Qatari base, as well as offering military training to the nation's gendarmerie forces.

The move came amid a diplomatic crisis between Qatar and some other Arab states, led by Saudi Arabia, which cut diplomatic ties with Doha and imposed economic sanctions. (Xinhua)

## Nieghbor News

### China to Hold 15th East Asia Forum

BEIJING - The Chinese Foreign Ministry announced today that the 15th East Asia Forum will be held in the central province of Hunan from June 29 to July 1st.

According to spokesperson Geng Shuang, the forum will focus on the 20th anniversary of the co-operation platform 10+3, mechanism formed by the Association of Southeast Asia Nations (ASEAN) plus China, Japan and the Republic of Korea. Officials, businesspeople and academics of this mechanism will discuss on the economic community of East Asia, added the spokesperson.

According to Geng, China always has appreciated the cooperation 10+3 and participated actively in the meetings of the group. Beijing expects to benefit from this anniversary of cooperation 10+3 to work with all parts in order to strengthen cooperation in areas like finance, ag-

riculture and poverty reduction, he stressed. The spokesperson asserted the Asian giant looks to develop new fields for growth in production capacity, communication media and tourism, in order to promote construction of the economic community of East Asia. He also described the mechanism 10+3 as the main channel for cooperation in Eastern Asia and recalled that after 20 years, the group has endured two financial crisis, becoming one of the more fruitful cooperation platforms in the Asian region. Besides the three countries previously mentioned, ASEAN has also held the dialogue ASEAN+1 with several countries out of the region, although without a fixed regularity. Founded in 1967, this association includes Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. (Agencies)

### President Condemns Blast in Quetta

ISLAMABAD - President Mammoon Hussain Friday condemned the terrorist act in Quetta in which precious lives were lost.

The president expressed his sympathies with the families of those who lost their lives and directed best possible medical facilities for the injured. The president termed the act by the last remnants of terror-

ists and reiterated that the government would do its best to protect the lives and property of the people. He reiterated that the whole nation was united against terrorism and such cowardly incidents cannot deter its resolve and determination. Around 11 people were killed and over 20 injured in the blast at Mission Road Quetta. (APP)

### Iran Nuclear Chief Urges West to Save Historic Deal

LONDON - Iran's nuclear chief Ali Akbar Salehi is urging the West to change course in the Middle East in order to save the historic atomic deal, saying "the moment of truth has arrived".

The accord, reached between Tehran and world powers in Vienna in July 2015, saw Iran drastically curb its nuclear activities. In return, nuclear-related Western and UN sanctions were lifted.

But writing in Friday's Guardian newspaper, Salehi, head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation, said negotiating agreements with Western powers had been a "mixed experience" for Tehran.

"Often, following some hard-won engagement, some Western nations, whether distracted by

shortsighted political motivations or the lucrative inducements of other regional actors, walk away and allow the whole situation to return to the status quo ante," he said.

Salehi was writing against the background of increasing US-Iran tensions since President Donald Trump came to power.

He said the nuclear deal could be saved but it would take concerted action and a clarification of Western security policy in the Middle East.

"For example, US arms sales to some traditional regional clients in the Middle East, and ostentatious, lavish arms purchases by the same regional actors just because of the abundance of oil wealth, are provocative," he said. (AFP)

### "Turkmenistan Acting as Transcontinental Economic Bridge"

ASHGABAT - Turkmenistan is acting as a transcontinental economic bridge of interaction among the European, Asia-Pacific and South-Asian economic systems, Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov said.

He made the remarks at a meeting of the Turkmen State Security Council, the country's State News Agency reported. Turkmenistan has a strategic location for developing its own transport communications and increasing freight traffic along the International Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA), Berdimuhamedov said. It was noted that Turkmenistan is turning into an international logistics center, and this is facili-

tated by the implementation of projects for the radical modernization and development of transport infrastructure. "Considering the growth of cargo flows passing through Turkmenistan, the work is underway to ensure compliance with the country's customs legislation, as well as control over the transportation of goods across the border, implementation of freight and other operations," Turkmenistan State News Agency reported.

Berdimuhamedov noted that Turkmenistan's integration into the world economic space requires respecting the priority of national interests and ensuring mutually beneficial partnership in the foreign market. (Trend)