

# Kerry Flies to Switzerland for Make-or-Break Iran Nuke Talks

WASHINGTON - Secretary of State John Kerry is heading back into negotiations with Iran with an end-of-March deadline days away, hoping to seal a framework deal to roll back its nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief.

Kerry was flying to Switzerland for several days of make-or-break talks with Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif. The top diplomats from Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia would join if the U.S. and Iran are close to an agreement.

The pressure is high. The seven nations have

set themselves a March 31 deadline for the outline of a final accord they hope to seal by the end of June. Both President Barack Obama and Iran's Ayatollah Ali Khamenei have spoken against what would be a third extension of the talks.

And opponents, among them wary American allies in the Middle East and hardliners in Iran and in Congress, stand ready to complicate the process if negotiators cannot reach a breakthrough in the next six days. American lawmakers have threatened new sanctions on Iran as well as the establishment of a process which would



allow them to vote down any final accord. The United States and its partners are trying to get Iran to cut the number of centrifuges it uses to enrich uranium, material

that can be used in warheads, and agree to other restrictions on what the Islamic Republic insists is a peaceful nuclear program. Speaking Wednesday morning to U.S. ambassa-

dors, Kerry assailed opponents of a deal. Kerry said the whole point of years of U.S. sanctions was to get Iran to agree to limits on its nuclear program. He said it was the

Obama administration's job to "provide an agreement that is as good as we said it will be; that will get the job done; that shuts off the four pathways to a nuclear weapon." (AP)

## Russia Warns US over Deploying Missile System in S. Korea

MOSCOW - Moscow has warned Washington against plans to deploy a ballistic missile system in South Korea, saying it may further complicate the situation of the volatile Korean Peninsula.

"In a region where the situation is already extremely complicated in terms of security, this could serve as another push toward an arms race in northeast Asia and further complicate any resolution of the nuclear issues on the Korean peninsula," read the statement.

Moscow further voiced concern over the plan's detrimental impact on the international security. "Such a development

cannot but cause concern about the destructive influence of the United States' global missile defense on international security," the statement added.

Moscow also called on Seoul to reconsider its military cooperation with Washington over ballistic missiles, recommending that South Korea "thoroughly assess whether US interceptor missiles and radars might have more negative aspects than positive ones."

On Monday, Kim Min-seok, spokesman for South Korea's Defense Ministry, told reporters that Seoul has yet to decide whether to author-



ize the deployment. Meanwhile, a high-ranking Russian military official warned that Moscow will take necessary measures against the US military presence on the Korean Peninsula. "We will have to boost our strategic means in this region in order to be able to properly re-

spond to elements of the American missile defense shield, should they appear there," said Gen. Yury Yakubov, coordinator of the Russian Defense Ministry's general inspectors department. The Russian official added that it was "unlikely" that China and other

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## Turkey Shells Syrian Artillery Units near Border: Turkish Military

DAMASCUS - Turkey has fired shells at Syrian artillery units positioned near the border between the two countries, the Turkish military says.

According to the Turkish military, the shelling of the Syrian artillery positions on Wednesday, was in retaliation for a stray Syrian rocket that hit an area some 200 meters (yards) west of a Turkish military unit, near the Turkish border town of Reyhanli.

The Turkish military add-

ed that the rocket, which had been fired during the fighting between Syrian forces and terrorists operating against the Syrian government, injured five Turkish soldiers.

In March 2014, Turkey's armed forces shot down a Syrian warplane near the Turkish-Syrian border. Turkey's then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan claimed that the Syrian jet had crossed the border into Turkey.

However, Syrian officials rejected Turkey's allega-

tions about violation of its airspace and said the plane was inside the Syrian airspace when it was downed. The officials said the warplane was targeting foreign-backed militants in the coastal province of Latakia, close to the border with Turkey.

Turkey has been one of the main opponents of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad since a conflict began in Syria five years ago.

Ankara is being accused

by many governments for the persistence of bloody violence in Syria as it has openly supported the armed militants fighting against Assad.

Various offshoots of al-Qaeda and the ISIL Takfiri terrorists use the Turkey-Syrian border as a major supply route for obtaining heavy weapons and artillery. Ankara is widely believed to be facilitating the flow of foreign nationals into neighboring Syria and Iraq...*(More on P4)...(21)*

## Iraqi President Expects U.S.-Led Coalition Air Strikes on Tikrit Soon

BAGHDAD - Iraqi President Fouad Massoum said on Wednesday that the U.S.-led coalition would soon carry out air strikes against Islamic State in the Sunni city of Tikrit, after starting aerial reconnaissance flights this week.

A three-week offensive by Iraqi government forces and Iranian-backed Shi'ite paramilitaries has failed to flush out Islamic State fighters from Tikrit, the birthplace of former dictator Saddam Hussein.

"Since yesterday, aerial support and reconnaissance flights started in Tikrit. They first begin with reconnaissance missions; then they compile the aerial reports; and afterwards the aerial (strike) operations start," Massoum told Reuters in an interview at the presidential palace in Baghdad.

Iraqi military commanders had asked for air strikes, while the Iranian-backed Shi'ite militias had publicly rejected the U.S. role in the campaign to retake the jihadist bastion. Faced with the deadlock, the Iraqi government had

called a halt to most operations a week ago, citing concerns about civilian and military casualties. But Massoum made clear that the Iraqi government had decided to ask for the U.S.-led alliance's air support in the battle despite the strong aversion of Shi'ite paramilitary leaders, who boast the strongest fighting force in the war against the militant Islamic State.

"The Iraqi government along with residents of the area wanted an active contribution from the international coalition... The Iraqi government alone decides and no other force decides," Massoum, a veteran Kurdish politician who became Iraq's president last summer, said. Upon being informed of Massoum's comment, Shi'ite paramilitary commander Hadi al-Amiri, one of the most powerful men in the country, who enjoys close ties with Iran, told reporters in Samarra, north of Baghdad, that he had no knowledge of the decision and had not been

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## IS Releases Bangladeshi Hostages in Libya Oilfield Attack

DHAKA - Two Bangladeshi citizens, among a group of foreign workers taken hostage by the Islamic State militant in an attack on a Libyan oilfield, have been released after more than two weeks, the foreign ministry said on Wednesday.

Foreigners have increasingly become targets in Libya's turmoil, where two rival governments are battling for control and Islamist extremists have grown in the chaos that followed Muammar Gaddafi's ouster four years ago.

Up to 10 foreign workers were missing after the attack on the Al-Ghani oilfield south of the city of Sirte, Czech and Libyan officials have said. Helal Uddin and Mohammed Anowar Hossain were released on Tuesday evening and now staying overnight at Sirte hospital, about 700 kms (435 miles) from Tripoli, the foreign ministry said in a statement. Western

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## British Inventor Heads to China with Rare Timepiece Invention

LONDON - A British inventor is heading to Shanghai to sell his rare timepiece -- a three-meter-high clock priced at around 4.5 million U.S. dollars.

Dr. John Taylor is expecting the clock, Dragon Chronophage, to sell for an estimated 4.5 million U.S. dollars during China's leading international design event which starts Friday.

The multi-millionaire Taylor, who holds 400 patents for his inventions, described his clock as one of his proudest inventions. Speaking at his workspace on the Isle of Man, a British dependency in the Irish Sea halfway between England and Ireland, Taylor said: "Clocks are boring -- all they do is to tell the time. I wanted a clock which was entertaining." The Dragon Chronophage, one of three in a series of similar clocks made by the inventor, will be shown in the Collectible Design Hall at Design Shanghai. Weighing 450 kg, the

## EU Urges Quick Restart to Israeli-Palestinian Talks

BRUSSELS - The European Union urged Israelis and Palestinians on Wednesday to quickly restart peace talks that collapsed last year, as the bloc's new foreign policy chief seeks to reinvigorate European involvement in the negotiations.

Israel should make "every effort to ensure an early resumption of the Middle East peace process," the EU said in a series of annual reports assessing progress on democracy and human rights in countries close to the 28-nation bloc.

A separate report urged the Palestinian Authority to pursue "positive steps" to restart peace talks.

EU foreign affairs chief Federica Mogherini, who took on her position in November, wants to more closely involve Arab states in the work of the Middle East Quartet, which comprises the United States, United Nations, the EU and Russia.

Rather than expanding the Quartet, it would hold more frequent top-level meetings with at least Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Egypt, senior diplomats have said.

Last week, the bloc chose veteran Italian negotiator Fernando Gentilini as its special

representative to the Middle East.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu caused deep alarm in Brussels and Washington last week when, a day before winning a national election, he declared the Palestinians would never have a state on his watch. He later tried to row back on his comments.

In its reports, the EU called on Israel to ensure respect for international law and human rights in the occupied territories.

While the EU recognized Israel had the right to defend itself, the "devastating effect" of last year's Gaza conflict on civilians "underlined the significant challenges attached to Israel's responsibilities in the occupied territories," it said.

Hamas and other Gaza militant groups fought a 50-day war with Israel last July and August in which more than 2,100 Palestinians, many of them civilians, were killed. On the Israeli side 67 soldiers and six civilians were killed.

The EU also urged the Palestinian Authority to resume full governmental responsibility in Gaza and to organize free and fair presidential and legislative elections. (Reuters)

## Nieghbor News

### China, Russia Vow to Step up Anti-Corruption Cooperation

BEIJING - China is ready to strengthen anti-corruption cooperation with Russia, China's anti-corruption chief Wang Qishan said here Wednesday.

Wang, head of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, made the remark as he met with Oleg Plokhoi, head of the anti-corruption department of Russia's presidential executive office. Wang, also a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, said strictly governing the CPC in a comprehensive way constitutes the fundamental guarantee for realizing the strategic goals unveiled by the Chinese leadership with Xi Jinping as the General Secretary.

The strategic layout, known as "four compre-

hensives", refers to a political concept initiated by Chinese President Xi Jinping, which comprises comprehensively building a moderately prosperous society, comprehensively deepening reform, comprehensively advancing the rule of law, and strictly governing the Communist Party of China in a comprehensive way.

Wang said strengthening self-supervision is a must for the CPC to address various risks and challenges while remaining in power for the long run. He said the CPC has the confidence to ensure its leadership through self-improvement, purification and innovation. Plokhoi said Russia is ready to exchange experience and deepen cooperation with China on the fight against corruption. (Xinhua)

### Iran Nuclear Negotiators Leave Tehran for Lausanne

TEHRAN - A delegation of Iranian negotiators have left for the Swiss city of Lausanne to hold a new round of talks with the P5+1 global powers on Iran's nuclear program.

The negotiating delegation, led by Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, left Tehran for Lausanne on Wednesday. The new round of talks between Iran and the six countries is scheduled to kick off on March 26. The talks are expected to run until March 29.

The latest round of nuclear negotiations ended in Lausanne on March 20 after six days of intensive and serious talks between representatives from Iran, United States and the Eu-

ropean Union. The Iranian foreign minister said on Friday that "good progress" had been made over the six days of the latest round of negotiations and pointed out that some work still needed to be done.

US secretary of State John Kerry also said, "We've made a lot of progress."

The talks between the United States and Iran are part of broader negotiations between the Islamic Republic and the P5+1 group -- the US, Britain, France, China, Russia and Germany -- to reach a comprehensive agreement on Tehran's nuclear program as a deadline set for July 1 draws closer. (Press TV)

### Bill Gates Lauds Imran's Efforts for Polio Eradication from Pakistan



PESHAWAR - The owner of Microsoft and head of Bill Gates Foundation, Bill Gates, has expressed his interest to cooperate with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government to set up mapping technology in Pakistan for eradication of polio from the country.

In a letter to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan, Bill Gates said, "I am interested in your opinion on the use of mapping technology in Pakistan. I know there are sensitivities around this type of technology, and I look to your guidance on

what is appropriate." In the letter, Bill Gates also appreciated Imran for bringing federal, provincial government and security institutions on one platform against polio and other diseases in children. "It is encouraging to see the Army, federal and provincial governments working together under your banner United for Health", the letter said.

Gates, in the letter, also expressed hope that the personal interest and efforts of Khan could eradicate polio from Pakistan. (Monitoring Desk)

### Kazakhstan, Tajikistan add to Gold Reserves in Feb: IMF

SINGAPORE - Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Malaysia were among countries that added to their gold reserves in February, the International Monetary Fund said on Wednesday.

Kazakhstan added about 2.7 tonnes last month to bring its total gold reserves to 196.1 tonnes, while Malaysia and Tajikistan added around 0.6 tonnes each, data on IMF's website showed.

Russia, the world's fifth biggest holder of gold reserves, kept its holdings largely unchanged at about 1,207.7 tonnes. Russia had added to its reserves for nine straight months to December, followed by a small cut in January.

Turkey's gold holdings fell by roughly 4.5 tonnes to 510.3 tonnes. The Turkish central bank counts gold held with commercial banks as part of the country's reserves.

Central bank buying and selling can have a significant influence on gold prices. Central banks became net buyers in 2010 after two decades as net sellers, driven by an increased interest in gold in the wake of the 2008 global economic crisis.

Gold prices fell over 5 percent in February, the biggest monthly decline since September, on expectations that the Federal Reserve would soon hike U.S. interest rates. (Reuters)