

US Deploying Even More Missiles to Middle East as Iran Saber-Rattling Reaches Fever Pitch

WASHINGTON - The US is sending a battery of Patriot missiles to join the carrier strike group and bomber task force currently "protecting" American interests in the Middle East from Iran, still insisting the buildup is merely defensive.

The missiles and transport ship USS Arlington are being deployed to the region "in response to indications of heightened Iranian readiness to conduct offensive operations against US forces and our interests," according to a Pentagon statement.

While the Pentagon continues to insist it "does not seek conflict with Iran," it is "postured and ready to defend US forces and interests in the region," according to the statement.

The latest round of heavy



weaponry joins the USS Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group and an Air Force bomber task force, both of which arrived in the Central Command region this week to send

an "unmistakable message," in the words of National Security Advisor John Bolton, that the US is prepared to unleash "unrelenting force" in response to any provocation. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo echoed the threat on Thursday, promising a "swift and decisive" response to an attack by Iran - or its proxies. Details about the "intelligence" used as a pretext for the military buildup have been scarce, though multiple reports suggest the tip came from Israel's Mossad, which is far from a neutral source when it comes to Iran. A CNN report on Friday claimed "intelligence has shown" Iran is "likely" loading short-range ballistic and cruise missiles onto ... (More on P4)...(7)

Neighbor News

Iran Not Much Concerned about Fresh US Sanctions: Deputy Industry Min

TEHRAN - Iran's deputy minister of industry, mining and trade says the country is not much concerned about the United States' recent metal sanctions, noting that Iranian steel, copper and aluminum have already their own special customers in the world," he said. Sarqini also stressed that Iranian goods in the metal sector have high-quality and meet global standards. "There is no specific problem regarding the selling of Iranian metals in the international markets because they always have their special customers due to their high quality and value," he added. ... (More on P4)...(15)

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Pakistan Believes Chinese Muslims Enjoy Their Due Rights. Dr Alvi

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan believes that Muslims in China enjoy religious freedom and their fundamental rights are well protected, said President Dr. Arif Alvi. We do not think anyone is stopping to fast anyone in China. This is just propaganda that Muslims in Xinjiang and other parts of the country are not able to practice religion with liberty and being stopped from fasting too.

China, he said takes care of its minorities as a responsible State, Dr. Alvi said in an interview with FM-98 Dosti Channel. President further said that Pakistan is highly impressed by the leadership of Chinese President Xi Jinping. He is

a visionary leader who attaches high importance to the basic rights of the common man. About Chinese citizens arrested in Pakistan, President said, such incidents makes no difference to Pakistan-China friendship as Pakistan and China both want to finish criminals. Therefore Pakistan's reaction to such criminals isn't against the mutual benefits of both the countries. China's friendship is very good both economically and socially, he remarked. President also praised China's growth and development in the reign of president Xi Jin Ping. Presently China's accumulative growth's 38% and it is due to the digital economy. ... (More on P4)...(16)

Turkmenistan Approves Turkmen Membership of Turkmen-Japanese Committee

ASHGABAT - Turkmenistan has approved the Turkmen membership of the intergovernmental Turkmen-Japanese Committee for Economic Cooperation, Trend reports referring to the decree of the President of Turkmenistan.

The document was signed "in order to implement the bilateral agreements reached between Turkmenistan and Japan, as well as to further develop cooperation between the two countries."

It was reported earlier, business negotiations are planned to be held with Japanese companies in Ashgabat on

May 23-24. The impulse to business partnership was given by the official visit of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to Turkmenistan in October 2015, during which memoranda were signed in the areas of development of natural resources and the transport infrastructure of Turkmenistan. Agreements on a number of projects worth \$18 billion were also concluded. Japan then expressed its desire to participate in projects to develop the industrial infrastructure of Turkmenistan's biggest gas field Galkynysh. (Trend)

UNDP Director for Europe, CIS to Visit Uzbekistan for First Time

TASHKENT - Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations, Assistant Administrator of UNDP and Director of the UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS Mirjana Spolyarich Egger will visit Uzbekistan on May 13-14 for the first time, Trend reports with reference to UNDP's website.

She will hold meetings with key national partners and discuss the contribution of UNDP in promoting national development priorities, including the implementation of the 2030 agenda.

in such areas as fighting corruption and improving governance, employment, women's empowerment, judicial reform and environmental protection. Furthermore, she will take part in the launch of the new UNDP project "Promoting Youth Employment in Uzbekistan", which will be carried out jointly with the Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations, plus she will participate in the Regional Forum on Innovation in Combating Corruption that will be held in Tashkent. The UNDP in Uzbekistan has been operating since 1993 and cooperates with the government in finding solutions to the problems impeding national development. (Trend)

Rebels Set to Begin Pullout from Yemen Aid Port

SANAA - Yemeni rebels confirmed Saturday they were beginning a unilateral withdrawal from the lifeline port of Hodeida in a bid to kick-start implementation of a December truce brokered by the UN. Hodeida is the main entry point for the bulk of Yemen's imports and humanitarian aid, providing a lifeline to millions of civilians who have been pushed to the brink of famine by more than four years of devastating conflict. The head of the rebels'

Supreme Revolutionary Committee, Mohammed al-Huthi, said fighters would start pulling back at 10 am (0700 GMT). He said the rebels had been forced to act unilaterally after the Saudi-backed government repeatedly delayed a parallel pullback from parts of the city of Hodeida that it had pledged to make under the truce deal.

"The (rebel) army and committees are withdrawing unilaterally as a result of the refusal of the ... (More on P4)...(10)

BEIJING - Chinese President Xi Jinping has congratulated Laurentino Cortizo on his election as president of Panama. In a congratulatory message sent Friday to Cortizo, Xi recalled that China and Panama formally established diplomatic relations in June 2017, opening a new chapter in bilateral ties.

Bilateral practical cooperation has since boomed in various fields and achieved fruitful results, bringing tangible benefits to the people of both countries, said Xi.

Xi Congratulates Cortizo on Election as Panama's President



Facts have proven that the establishment of diplomatic ties between China and Panama is in line with the shared aspirations and fundamental interests of the

two countries and their people, said Xi. He added that he attaches great importance to the development of China-Panama ties, and stands ready to work with Cortizo to lift

bilateral relations to a higher level on the basis of mutual respect, equality and mutual benefit, so as to better serve the two countries and their people. (Xinhua)

Venezuela's Maduro Says Turncoat General 'Recruited by CIA' Was Mastermind of Failed Coup



CARACAS - Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro called his former intelligence chief a mastermind behind the recent botched coup attempt, claiming Caracas

has proof that he was recruited by the CIA over a year ago. During a televised speech on Friday, Maduro unleashed an attack on General Ma-

nuel Ricardo Cristopher Figuera, former director general of Venezuela's National Intelligence Service (SEBIN), who defected from Maduro's side in the wake of the failed military coup on April, 30. The coup attempt fizzled out within hours as it failed to attract broad support from the military, having been orchestrated by a small group of soldiers.

Maduro said that investigators were able to determine that Figuera was the driving force

behind the attempt, and was apparently doing it at the behest of Washington. "Investigations have succeeded in proving that General Manuel Ricardo Cristopher Figuera has been recruited by the CIA for more than a year," Maduro said, adding that justice would be served on the "traitor" Figuera "sooner rather than later."

After the coup flopped, opposition leader Juan Guaido, recognized as ... (More on P4)...(8)

Indian Air Force Intercepts Cargo Plane Flying to Delhi: Military Sources

NEW DELHI - Two fighter jets of the Indian Air Force (IAF) intercepted a Georgian "AN-12" heavy cargo aircraft flying from Tbilisi (capital of Georgia) to Delhi via Karachi, and forced it to land at the Jaipur airport in the western state of Rajasthan, after the plane entered the Indian air space from an unscheduled point.

According to official sources in the IAF, the incident occurred on Friday.

"One AN-12 aircraft

of Georgia entered Indian air space from an unscheduled point in North Gujarat on Friday at 1515 hours. The aircraft was successfully intercepted by highly alert IAF air defence aircraft and was forced to land at Jaipur airfield," tweeted the IAF. The crew members of the cargo aircraft were questioned at Jaipur. After several hours of investigation, the plane was allowed to leave, added the official sources. ... (More on P4)...(11)

200,000 Syrian Refugees Return from Lebanon Since 2017: Report

BEIRUT - Lebanon's General Security said that the number of Syrian refugees who have returned from Lebanon to Syria since 2017 reached 200,000, Asharq Al-Awsat local newspaper reported on Saturday.

The report said that the return of Syrian refugees organized by Lebanon's General Security in coordination with Syrian authorities has increased in 2018 but slowed down recently due to the beginning of the holy fasting month of Ramadan. Sources at Lebanon's General Security told ... (More on P4)...(12)

Venezuelan Navy Wards Off US Coast Guard Ship 'Close' to Territorial Waters

CARACAS - The USCGC James, one of the US Navy's most technologically advanced ships, was sailing towards Venezuela's territorial waters when a patrol boat was sent to warn it off. The US vessel backed off after radio communication.

The Venezuelan Navy released a statement on Friday, saying the incident took place on Thursday and involved a US Coast Guard vessel heading towards the Latin American country's main port of La Guaira.

The USCGC James was 14 nautical miles (16 miles) off Venezuela's coast when Caracas sent a patrol vessel to intercept it. In the course of subsequent radio communications, the USCGC James agreed to turn away.

"The USCG James was encouraged to change its course and leave our jurisdictional waters. ... (More on P4)...(13)

South Africa's Ruling ANC Set to Celebrate Election Victory

JOHANNESBURG - South Africa's ruling African National Congress is preparing to celebrate its win in national elections, with the formal announcement coming later on Saturday.

With 99.9% of votes counted, the ANC has 57% of the vote. It is the worst-ever showing at the polls for the party of the late Nelson Mandela, which has ruled South Africa since the end of apartheid 25 years ago.

Voter turnout is another low at 65%, reflecting



the frustrations of many South Africans after corruption scandals around the ANC that led to the ouster of former president Jacob Zuma last year. Current President Cyril Ramaphosa, a

Mandela protege, has vowed to clean up the rot and apologized to South Africans. But his new five-year term is threatened by Zuma allies within the ANC's leadership. (Fox News)

'Very Standard Stuff': Trump Says He Is Not Concerned about N. Korean Short-Range Missile Tests

WASHINGTON - US President Donald Trump says he does not view recent short-range missile launches by Pyongyang as a violation of his trust, telling Politico that he and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un are still on good terms.

In an extensive interview on Friday, Trump briefly gave his take on North Korea's increased missile activity. In stark contrast to his saber-rattling of two years ago, Trump seemed to be pretty laid-back when speaking about Pyongyang's recent series of

short-range missile tests, the latest of which took place just a day earlier. Early Thursday morning, the DPRK test-fired two short-range projectiles from its Sino-ri launch site, which flew 260 and 170 miles.

"They're short-range and I don't consider that a breach of trust at all," the president said. Possibly leaving a loophole for himself in case of a sudden change of heart, Trump said that "at some point" he may start considering the launches inappropriate. ... (More on P4)...(9)

Trump Orders Tariff Hike on Remaining Chinese Imports

WASHINGTON - US President Donald Trump cranked up the heat in a trade battle with China on Friday, ordering a tariff hike on almost all remaining imports from the world's second-biggest economy, but Beijing said talks would continue to resolve the row.

After tweeting that two days of trade talks in Washington had been "candid and constructive," the businessman-turned-politician changed tack and followed through on a threat he had been making for months.

"The President... ordered us to begin the process of raising tariffs on essentially all remaining imports from China, which are valued at approximately \$300 billion," US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer said in a statement.

The move came less than 24 hours after Washington increased punitive duties on \$200 billion worth of Chinese imports, raising them to 25 percent from 10 percent, days after the Trump administration accused Beijing of reneging on its commitments. Details on the process for public notice and comment will be posted Monday, ahead of a final decision on the new tariffs, Lighthizer said. They were not expected to go into effect for several months.

China's top trade negotiator, Vice Premier Liu He, had warned earlier that Beijing "must respond" to any US tariffs.

The developments came as two days of talks to resolve the trade battle ended ... (More on P4)...(14)