

## As Shanahan Heads to Asia, Iran Tensions Threaten Pentagon's 'Great Power' Focus

WASHINGTON - As acting U.S. Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan heads to Asia on Tuesday to deliver a major policy speech on the region, increasing tensions with Iran threaten to upend the Pentagon's strategy to focus on "great power competition" and countering Russia and China, officials and experts say. In January 2018, the U.S. military put China and Russia at the center of a new national defense strategy, shifting priorities after more than a decade and a half of focusing on the fight against Islamist militants. On his first day as acting defense secretary in January, Shanahan told civilian leaders of the U.S. military to focus on "China, China, China." But escalating tension with Iran



over the past month could impair that focus. The U.S. military has cited what it sees as a threat of potential attack by Iran to deploy hundreds of troops to the region, in addition to Patriot missiles, bombers and the accel-

erated movement of a carrier strike group. The United States on Friday announced the deployment of 1,500 troops to the Middle East, describing it as an effort to bolster defenses against Iran as it accused the coun-

try's Revolutionary Guards of direct responsibility for this month's tanker attacks off the United Arab Emirates. Those deployments are small compared with the nearly 70,000 American troops stationed across the Middle East and Afghanistan and are not enough to change the Pentagon strategy. But a period of protracted tensions could set it back. "The greatest way to kill the National Defense Strategy and its focus on long-term competition and preparing for the possibility of conflict with China and Russia is to start another war in the Middle East," said Mara Karlin, a former Pentagon official now with the Brookings Institution. ...*(More on P4)...(8)*

### Taiwan Lands Aircraft on Highway as Part of Military Drills

JERUSALEM - Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu urgently worked to break a deadlock in coalition negotiations Tuesday as the once far-fetched possibility of fresh general elections only months after April polls loomed ever larger. Netanyahu has until Wednesday night to reach a coalition deal, but he has been unable to convince ex-defense minister Avigdor Lieberman to abandon a key demand and allow a government to be

formed. Failing to do so would be a major setback for Netanyahu, and the stakes are especially high with the premier facing possible indictment for corruption in the months ahead. There have been reports that Netanyahu is seeking legislation in the new parliament that would result in him receiving immunity from prosecution, and new elections would delay those efforts and may make it impossible. ...*(More on P4)...(12)*

### Energy Watchdog Warns Aging Nuclear Power Plants Spell Doom for Green Future

PARIS - The International Energy Agency, which advises 30 nations on energy policy, has warned the world's sustainability and climate goals could be unattainable unless countries shore up their declining nuclear power industries. With many of the world's nuclear reactors aging out of their natural lifespan, and few coming online to replace them due to regulatory hurdles and cheap fossil fuels, humankind is looking at a clean en-

ergy crisis, according to the IEA. Ten percent of global electricity currently comes from nuclear power. "Without policy changes, advanced economies could lose 25 percent of their nuclear capacity by 2025 and as much as two-thirds of it by 2040," the IEA wrote in a report - its first on the topic of nuclear energy in 20 years. With the average American and European reactor over 35 years old, many are expected to close within five years, and there's nothing in



the pipeline to replace the energy they generated, the agency warns. While wind and solar power have grown over the past two decades, the decline in nuclear power means the total proportion of all global energy that can be classed as "clean" ...*(More on P4)...(9)*

### Indian Military Doubles Down on PM Modi's 'Radar Evading Cloud' Theory



NEW DELHI - With several top Indian military officials defending Narendra Modi's claim that clouds might in a way have helped Indian jets

evade Pakistani radar during their raid on Balakot, online vigilantes have again ridiculed the theory. "Very strong clouds

and very strong convective conditions in clouds prevent the radar from detecting very accurately," the chief of Western Air Command, Air Marshal Raghunath Nambiar said Monday, defending the controversial theory voiced by the Prime Minister earlier this month. Sharing his 'raw wisdom' of air combat tactics, Modi claimed that bad weather conditions contributed to the success of the Balakot air strike against a Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) ter-

rorist camp deep inside Pakistani territory on February 26, because the clouds served as a shield from the enemy's radar. While Twitter users found this logic puzzling, Air Marshal Nambiar was not the theory's only apologist within the Indian military. "There are various kinds of radars working with different technologies. Some have the capacity to see through, some don't have the capacity to see through," Army Chief General Bipin ...*(More on P4)...(10)*

### Satellite Images Show Crops on Fire in Syria Rebel Enclave

JAKARTA - Four Indonesian officials, including its chief security minister and the president's top intelligence advisor, were targeted in a failed assassination plot that may be linked to deadly riots in Jakarta, police said Tuesday. Details of the alleged plan come less than a week after eight demonstrators were killed and hundreds injured during the capital's worst violence in years. The heart of the city descended into chaos over two nights of street bat-

## Neighbor News

### China, Pakistan Vow to Further Strengthen Ties, Cooperation

ISLAMABAD - Chinese Vice President Wang Qishan visited Pakistan from Sunday to Tuesday and held meetings with Pakistani President Arif Alvi and Prime Minister Imran Khan respectively on further strengthening bilateral relations. When meeting with the Pakistani president, Wang said China and Pakistan are "iron friends." Throughout the past 68 years since the establishment of diplomatic ties, the two countries have always respected and supported each other on issues concerning each others' core interests, forging the sincerest friendship. In recent years, the development of China-Pakistan relations has kept

a good momentum, with mutual political trust further enhanced, pragmatic cooperation continuously deepened and people-to-people exchanges growing more vigorous, Wang said. He said the development of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has made concrete achievements and has become an important hallmark for China-Pakistan friendly cooperation in the new era, adding that his visit was meant for sending out a signal once more to peoples of the two countries and the world that China and Pakistan are all-weather strategic cooperative partners. (Xinhua)

### Iran's Guard Talks Tough, Says It Has No Fear of War with US

TEHRAN, Iran - Iran's influential Revolutionary Guard said Tuesday it doesn't fear a possible war with the United States and claimed that America hasn't grown in power in recent years - the latest tough talk from Tehran amid escalating regional tensions and a crisis with Washington. "The enemy is not more powerful than before," said the Guard spokesman, Gen. Ramazan Sharif. Tensions between Washington and Tehran soared recently over America deploying an aircraft carrier and B-52 bombers to the Persian Gulf over a

still-unexplained threat it perceives from Tehran. The U.S. also plans to send 900 additional troops to the Mideast and extending the stay of another 600 as tens of thousands of others also are on the ground across the region. The crisis takes root in President Donald Trump's withdrawal last year of the U.S. from the 2015 nuclear deal between Tehran and world powers that capped Iran's uranium enrichment activities in return to lifting sanctions. Washington subsequently re-imposed sanctions on Iran, sending its economy into freefall. (AP)

### Environmental Control Service Intensifies Activity in Turkmen Sector of Caspian Sea

ASHGABAT - The Caspian Environmental Control Service actively participates in the process of maintaining the ecological balance of the environment in the Turkmen sector of the Caspian Sea, Trend reports referring to Neytralni Turkmenistan newspaper. Most industrial enterprises located in this zone have treatment facilities reusing water for agricultural needs. There is a need to further improve the collection and recycling of industrial and household waste as far as industrial production increases. With this purpose, the effective methods of neutralization, centralized col-

lection and burial of waste are actively developed. The mobile sludge processing unit, which has been recently launched at a refinery in Turkmenbashi city, can be cited as an example, the news report says. Toxic waste at industrial facilities is transferred to the specialized enterprises for storage and for further processing or sale. Liquid, solid, domestic and other waste on the territory of the Turkmenbashi international seaport, as well as the waste received from foreign ships, is collected by the waste collection vessel to be transported to the special places. (Trend)

### Presidents of Uzbekistan, Germany Discuss Trade, Economic Issues

TASHKENT - President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev and President of Germany Frank-Walter Steinmeier held talks in narrow and expanded formats, Trend reports citing Uzbek media. During the meeting at Kuksaroy residence in Tashkent, the Uzbekistan capital, the parties underlined the important role of the parliaments of the two countries in supporting multidimensional cooperation and sharing experience. The Presidents thoroughly discussed the issues of further expansion of the political, trade, economic, investment, financial, technical, cultural and

humanitarian cooperation, as well as the international and regional agenda. The parties assessed the current state of trade and economic cooperation and identified priority areas for its expansion. It was noted that in 2018, the volume of mutual trade grew by 25 percent and exceeded \$770 million. Nowadays, more and more German companies express interest in the Uzbek market. Measures for the preparation and acceleration of joint investment projects and programs were analyzed and identified. A consistent political dialogue is maintained between Uzbekistan and Germany. (Trend)

### Trump Expects Japan's Military to Reinforce United States in Asia and Beyond

TOKYO - U.S. President Donald Trump expects that Japan's military will reinforce U.S. forces throughout Asia and elsewhere, he said on Tuesday, as the key U.S. ally upgrades the ability of its forces to operate further from its shores. Trump's comments followed his inspection of Japan's largest warship, the Kaga, a helicopter carrier designed to carry submarine-hunting helicopters to distant waters. The vessel, which will soon be upgraded to handle F-35B short take-off and vertical landing (STOVL) jets, sailed to India on a flag-flying mission last year, going through the contested South China Sea, much of which is claimed by



Beijing. "With this extraordinary new equipment the Kaga will help our nations defend against a range of complex threats in the region and far beyond," Trump said in a speech on the ship's hangar deck. The refit of the vessel, and its sister ship, the Izumo, is expected to bolster U.S. forces operating from Japan by providing a refueling platform for U.S. Marine F-35Bs.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who accompanied Trump on the visit to the Kaga, has boosted defense spending since taking office in December 2012, stretching the pacifist constitution to ease limits on troop activities abroad. He also wants to revise the post-World War Two charter to recognize the existence of Japan's military. ...*(More on P4)...(11)*

### Nechirvan Barzani Elected President of Kurdistan Region of Iraq

ERBIL, Iraq - Regional lawmakers elected Nechirvan Barzani as president of the semi-autonomous Kurdistan Region of Iraq, a spokesman for the regional parliament told Reuters on Tuesday. Barzani, who had been serving as

regional prime minister, won 68 votes from the 84 lawmakers present. The regional legislature has 111 seats in total. He is the nephew of the previous and only other holder of the office, Masoud Barzani. (Reuters)

### Ten Contenders Vying to Become Britain's PM

LONDON - The race to replace Theresa May as British prime minister in a contest due to end in July has 10 declared contenders so far. Here is a look at the hopefuls in the Conservative Party leadership battle and their stances on Brexit, with Britain currently due to leave the EU on October 31: - Warm to no-deal - -- ESTHER McVEY The 51-year-old Brexit supporter and former television presenter, McVey resigned as work and pensions secretary last year over Brexit compromises. A blue-collar Conservative, she wants a clean break with Brussels. - Open to no-deal in October - -- BORIS JOHNSON A former mayor of London, Johnson says he would get Britain out of the European Union, "deal or no deal". A key figure in the 2016 Brexit campaign, he served as foreign minister afterwards but resigned after falling out with May over the government's Brexit strategy. Charismatic and popular with grassroots Conservatives, the 54-year-old has maintained his public profile by writing a weekly column in The Daily Telegraph newspaper. -- DOMINIC RAAB An ardent eurosceptic with a black belt in karate, the 45-year-old former Brexit minister resigned in protest at the Brexit deal struck with the EU by May. He says Britain should be ready to walk away from the EU without an ...*(More on P4)...(14)*

### Israeli Election Rerun Looms as Netanyahu Talks Falter

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### Indonesia Says Top Officials Marked for Death amid Deadly Riots

JAKARTA - Four Indonesian officials, including its chief security minister and the president's top intelligence advisor, were targeted in a failed assassination plot that may be linked to deadly riots in Jakarta, police said Tuesday. Details of the alleged plan come less than a week after eight demonstrators were killed and hundreds injured during the capital's worst violence in years. The heart of the city descended into chaos over two nights of street battles between riot police and protesters opposed to Joko Widodo's re-election as leader of the world's biggest Muslim-majority country. A group of six people - arrested before they could carry out the killings - planned to murder the officials and an election pollster in a bid to plunge the country into chaos, authorities said Tuesday. (AFP)