

IAEA Report Shows Iran Probe Essentially Stalled

VIENNA - Amid accelerated international efforts to reach a nuclear deal with Iran, the U.N. atomic agency on Friday reported that work on a key element — an assessment of allegations that Tehran worked on atomic arms — remains essentially stalled.

Iran's Zarif hopes for nuclear deal within 'reasonable period of time' Reuters
 The report from the International Atomic Energy Agency also reiterated that more cooperation is needed by Iran for full clarity on its present activities. Without it, the IAEA said it cannot "conclude that all nuclear material in Iran is in peaceful activities."

After years of deadlock, Iran



and the IAEA agreed in November 2013 on a new attempt to probe the accusations. The U.S. and its allies also included the investigation into a to-do list for talks with Iran meant to curb its nuclear programs in exchange for sanctions relief. Washington continues to insist that full lifting of sanctions depends on the IAEA's ability to thoroughly probe the accusations and deliver an assessment on its findings. Iran denies any work on — or interest — in nuclear arms. It accuses Israel, the United States and other adversaries of providing phony evidence to the agency for the probe. The IAEA is focused on 12 alleged activities ... (More on P4)...(26)

Russia to Respond to NATO Anti-Missile Network Build-Up



MOSCOW - Russia will have to respond to the unrestricted development of NATO anti-missile defense system capable of intercepting intercontinental ballistic missiles, Russia's defense ministry said Friday. "Given the unrestricted development of missile defense system capable of intercepting Russian intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), we will have to undertake countermeasures, as we have repeatedly underscored before," Deputy Defense Minister Anatoly Antonov was quoted as saying by the Interfax news agency, when commenting on the joint military

exercises of NATO member states scheduled for October in the northern Atlantic.

The exercises involving the United States, Britain, Italy, Canada, the Netherlands, France, Norway are expected to practise the interception of Russian ICBMs, Antonov said. "We cannot help being concerned about such kinds of drills," he added. Building stationary facilities of a European anti-missile network, accompanied by a steady growth of mobile seaborne missile-interception systems "concerns Moscow gravely," he said. Moscow has ... (More on P4)...(27)

Cambodia, Russia Sign Deal on Fight against Terrorism

PHNOM PENH - Cambodia and Russia have signed an intergovernmental memorandum of understanding (MoU) on counter-terrorism, an official said Friday. The deal was inked on Wednesday during Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sar Kheng's visit to Moscow, Gen. Por Pheak, director of the Cambodian Interior Ministry's International Relations Department, told reporters at Phnom Penh International Airport while returning from Russia with Sar Kheng. "During the visit, Deputy Prime Minister Sar Kheng signed

the MoU with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov," he said. "The MoU focuses mainly on mutual help through exchanging information, experiences, and expertise in the process of preventing and cracking down on terrorism and financing of terrorism." In Moscow, Sar Kheng also met with Russian Interior Minister Vladimir Kolokol'tsev in which they discussed details of cooperation plan stated in the MoU, he said, adding that the two ministers also talked on cooperation in law enforcement and cross-border crime suppression. (Xinhua)

Baltics Mull Joint Air Defence System Against Russia



PANEVEZYS, Lithuania - Defence ministers for the three Baltic states said Thursday they are mulling a joint air defence system in response to security concerns over Russia's activity in the region. The ministers of NATO-members Estonia, Latvia

and Lithuania met in the northern Lithuanian city of Panevezys along with their Ukrainian counterpart, at a time when their relations with Russia are at a post-Soviet low over the Ukraine crisis. "We plan to analyse the possibility of developing... (More on P4)...(29)

US Presses Europeans at Meeting to Solve Greek Crisis

DRESDEN, Germany - Finance ministers from the Group of Seven wealthy democracies heard a sharp call from U.S. Treasury Secretary Jacob Lew to find agreement on more financial help for Greece.

Lew said that further delaying Europe's six-month old talks with Greece was "courting an accident" — such as a Greek default or messy exit from the euro, which could have unpredictable effects on the global and European economies.

Lew said Friday at the end of meetings in Dresden, Germany, that "too much time has been spent unproductively and the challenge is to treat this week as a week in which there has to be

progress."

Greece faces large debt repayments in June on its bailout loans from the International Monetary Fund. Despite two bailouts totaling 240 billion euros (currently \$264 billion) from the IMF and other countries that use the euro currency, the country has not been able to repair its finances and economy enough to pay its bills. It faces a large payment on June 5, one of four due during the month. Finance ministers and central bankers from the Group of Seven, or G-7, on Friday were wrapping up three days of debate and discussion, where the official topic was not Greece but how to get the global recovery moving faster. (AP)

China Has Placed Mobile Artillery on Reclaimed Island: U.S.



SINGAPORE - The United States said on Friday that China had placed mobile artillery weapons systems on a reclaimed island in the disputed South China Sea, a development that Republican Sen. John McCain called "disturbing and escalatory." Defense secretary wary of island construction in South China Sea CBS News Brent Colburn, a Pentagon spokesman traveling with Defense Secretary Ash Carter, said the United States was aware of the weapons. McCain,

chairman of the Senate's Armed Services Committee, said the move would escalate tensions but not lead to conflict. "It is a disturbing development and escalatory development, one which heightens our need to make the Chinese understand that their actions are in violation of international law and their actions are going to be condemned by everyone in the world," he said at a news conference in Ho Chi Minh City. "We are not going to have a conflict with ... (More on P4)...(28)

Good Progress Made over Removal of Sanctions in N-Talks: Iranian Official

TEHRAN - A senior Iranian nuclear negotiator says good progress has been made on the issue of the removal of the anti-Iran sanctions during nuclear talks between the Islamic Republic and the P5+1, Press TV reports.

Hamid Ba'edinejad, who is also the director general for political and international affairs at Iran's Foreign Ministry, made the remark in an exclusive interview with Press TV in the Austrian capital, Vienna, on Friday. He did not provide specifics. Ba'edinejad,

who has been in Vienna for talks with the P5+1, is now heading to the Swiss city of Geneva to join Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and other members of the Iranian nuclear negotiating team for the continuation of the talks there. During the Press TV interview, he also said that the idea of foreign access to the country's military sites has never been on the agenda of negotiations between the Islamic Republic and six world powers over Iran's ... (More on P4)...(30)

Syrian Army in Retreat as Rebels Tighten Grip on Idlib

BEIRUT - Syrian troops retreated as regime warplanes bombarded Al-Qaeda-led rebel fighters on Friday, a day after the insurgents overran the last government-held city in the key northwestern province of Idlib.

Opposition forces now control the vast majority of Idlib after Al-Nusra Front and its allies in the Army of Conquest captured Ariha and surrounding villages on Thursday in a swift assault. It was the latest blow to loyalist forces who have been battling myriad groups of rebels for four years, after the fall of the ancient city of Palmyra to the Islamic State (IS) extremist group

last week.

"The lightning offensive ended with a heavy pullout of regime forces and their allies Hezbollah from the western side of the city," said Rami Abdel Rahman, head of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. "We can't even say there were real clashes with the government in Ariha."

The Army of Conquest — Jaish al-Fatah in Arabic — had also seized villages around Ariha as regime warplanes bombarded the city. The rebel alliance has won a string of victories in Idlib, including the provincial capital, the key town of Jisr al-Shughur, and a massive military base. (AFP)

Russian, U.S. Positions on Syria are Getting Closer: Lavrov

MOSCOW - Russian and U.S. positions on Syria are getting closer, Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Thursday after several high-level contacts between Moscow and Washington this month over the conflict. "Indeed, I think our positions with the United States are getting closer, first and foremost in re-

gard to statements that there can be no alternative to a political solution in Syria," Lavrov told a news conference. Lavrov criticized Washington for supporting some of the armed opposition groups fighting Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, saying Russia considered this approach "short-sighted". (Reuters)

U.S., Allies Target Islamic State with 24 Air Strikes: Statement

WASHINGTON - The U.S.-led coalition conducted 20 air strikes in Iraq and four in Syria targeting Islamic State militants since early on Thursday, the Combined Joint Task Force leading the air operations said.

In Iraq, air strikes carried out using attack, fighter, bomber and drone aircraft struck near Baghdadi, Baiji, Falluja, Makhmur, Ramadi, Sin-

jar and Tal Afar, the task force said in a statement Friday.

In Syria, air strikes carried out using bomber and fighter aircraft struck near Al Hasakah and Kobani, it said.

The air strikes were conducted between 8 a.m. on Thursday and 8 a.m. on Friday local time, the statement said. "All aircraft returned to base safely," it said. (Reuters)

Western Women Who Join IS Defy 'Jihadi Bride' Stereotype: Report

LONDON - Western women joining Islamic State are increasingly from comfortable backgrounds and often well educated with romantic notions of adventure often quickly dispelled by the harshness of life as a "jihadi bride", according to a British research report.

Some 550 women from Western countries have left their homelands to join Islamic State, which has captured swathes of Syria and Iraq, said the report by the Institute for

Strategic Dialogue and the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation at King's College, London.

However, very little was being done to explain why there had been this "unprecedented surge" to Islamic State, also known as ISIS, or to take preventative action.

"Western female recruits to ISIS are breaking previous stereotypes about who is 'at risk' of radicalization into jihadism and violent extremism... (More on P4)...(31)

Neighbour News

N. Korean Nuclear, Missile Experts Visit Iran

PARIS - An exiled Iranian opposition group said on Thursday that a delegation of North Korean nuclear and missile experts visited a military site near Tehran in April amid talks between world powers and Iran over its nuclear program.

The dissident National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) exposed Iran's uranium enrichment plant at Natanz and a heavy water facility at Arak in 2002. Analysts say it has a mixed record and a clear political agenda.

Iran says allegations that it is trying to develop a nuclear weapons capability are baseless and circulated by its enemies.

Iran and six world powers are trying to meet a self-imposed June 30 deadline

to reach a comprehensive deal restricting its nuclear work. Issues remaining include monitoring measures to ensure it cannot pursue a clandestine nuclear weapons program.

Citing information from sources inside Iran, including within Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps, the Paris-based NCRI said a seven-person North Korean Defense Ministry team was in Iran during the last week of April. This was the third time in 2015 that North Koreans had been to Iran and a nine-person delegation was due to return in June, it said.

"The delegates included nuclear experts, nuclear warhead experts and experts in various elements of ballistic missiles including guidance systems," the NCRI said. (Reuters)

U.S. Says China Agrees 'Pressure' Key on North Korea

BEIJING - China has agreed that "pressure" on North Korea is an important element in a push to rid the country of its nuclear weapons, a U.S. official overseeing policy on North Korea said on Friday. U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said last week the United States and China were discussing imposing further sanctions on North Korea, which he said was "not even close" to taking necessary steps to end its nuclear program.

China is North Korea's most important trading partner and only major ally, though the North's nuclear and missile tests

over recent years have strained their ties.

"The Chinese agree that pressure has to be an important part of our approach on North Korea," Sung Kim, the U.S. special representative for North Korea policy, told a media briefing in Beijing.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said that the issue of the Korean peninsula was "the common responsibility of all parties concerned". "The North Korean nuclear issue is very complex and requires dialogue and consultation to resolve the concerns of all parties," Hua said at a regular news briefing. (Reuters)

Pakistan Keen to Forge Closer Ties with Belarus: PM Nawaz

ISLAMABAD - Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on Friday held a meeting with Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko, who started his two-day visit to Pakistan. During the meeting at the Prime Minister House, the premier extended condolences to President Lukashenko over the death of his mother two days ago, which was also the reason why the Belarusian president delayed his visit to Pakistan until May 28.

Also read: Pakistan, Belarus vow to enhance bilateral ties

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif told President Lukashenko that Pakistan is keen to forge closer ties with Belarus in all fields including trade, economy, defence and culture. "Your visit will act as a catalyst in developing

strong political and economic relations between our two countries," the premier told the Belarusian president.

The prime minister said he was pleased with the increased exchanges between the Pakistan and Belarus in the recent past and there was a need to further increase frequency of bilateral visits.

"We also need to encourage contacts between our parliamentarians as regular interaction among them is beneficial for creating an environment of cordiality and friendship between the two peoples," the premier said. He said the current bilateral trade between the two countries standing at \$60 million is not commensurate with its potential and needs to be substantially increased. (Agencies)

Tajik Police Commander Joins IS

DUSHANBE - A top Tajik police commander who has been missing for weeks has reappeared on the Internet, claiming that he has joined the Islamic State (IS) militant group in protest at official restrictions on religious observance in his home country, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

In a video posted on YouTube, Colonel Gulmurod Halimov (in the photo), the commander of the Tajik Interior Ministry's Special Forces, known as OMON, singled out Tajikistan's crackdown on Islamic dress and limitations on public prayer as reasons for his radicalization.

Halimov, a father of eight, says that Tajik labor mi-

grants "must stop serving infidels" in Russia and join IS in Syria and Iraq in order to establish Shari'a law in other countries, including Tajikistan.

In his video statement, Halimov calls democracy "a religion of infidels" and describes Americans as "pigs," threatening that "we will come to you to kill you all."

The authenticity of the video could not be immediately confirmed, and it's not clear where the clip was shot. The 12-minute recording was removed from YouTube several hours after it appeared there on May 27.

In the video, Halimov says he joined the Tajik ... (More on P4)...(32)