

NATO Commence Life Operation “Trident Juncture 2015”

MADRID - Over 36,000 NATO troops from over 30 different nations are currently taking part in Operation Trident Juncture. The operation is designed to test and train troops of the NATO Response Force and Very High Readiness Response Force and is taking place across 16 different locations in Italy, Spain and Portugal. It aims to see how NATO forces respond to “a changed security environment and challenges from the South and the East.”

TJ2015 is divided into two parts, with the first,



which ran from Oct. 3 until Oct. 16 aimed to test command and control elements, while the second

part, which runs from Oct. 21 until Nov. 6 is a life exercise based on a scenario which requires

“the use of military capabilities in an out of area crisis response mission.” TJ2015 will test all kind of scenarios, from cyber-attacks, terrorism, Hybrid Warfare and conventional combat, as well as the resulting humanitarian crisis, such fighting would no-doubt produce (and which is all too relevant given the ongoing Syrian refugee crisis.) This is the biggest NATO exercise in over a decade and the organization is confident it is in line with the new challenges the Alliance faces in a rapidly shifting geo-political framework. (Xinhua)

New Russian Military Mighton full Display in Syria

HEMEIMEEM - Slick combat jets loaded with precision bunker-buster bombs roar into the skies as soldiers in desert-style uniforms march past rows of neat housing at this Russian military base at one of Syria's largest airports. The air campaign in Syria, Russia's first military action outside the former Soviet Union since the war in Afghanistan, shows a revamped Russian military, which sharply differs in both capability and mindset from the old, Soviet-style force. It is capable of quickly projecting power far from Russian borders, widely uses drones and precision weapons, and cares about soldiers' com-

fort. The thunder of Syria's civil war couldn't be heard at Hemeimeem, located in the coastal province of Latakia, which has largely been spared the chaos and destruction of more than 4 1/2 years of fighting in Syria. A small group of journalists visiting the base this week could see a dozen Su-24 bombers taking off into the night with a deafening roar, piercing the darkness with scarlet flames from their engines. Such missions were impossible just a few years ago, when the Russian air force had few planes capable of hitting targets at night. As part of President Vladimir ...*(More on P4)...(21)*

Russia Says wants Syria Elections, Ready to Help Free Syrian Army

MOSCOW - Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said the Kremlin wanted Syria to prepare for parliamentary and presidential elections, as Moscow intensified its drive to convert its increased clout with Damascus into a political settlement. In comments which mark a shift in Russia's position, he also said that Russia's airforce, which has been bombing Islamist militants in Syria since Sept. 30, would be ready to help Western-backed Free Syrian Army rebels, if it knew where they were. The Kremlin, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's strongest foreign ally, has spoken broadly about the need for elections in Syria before. But



Lavrov's comments were its most specific call for political renewal yet and came just days after a surprise visit by Assad to Moscow. “External players can not decide anything for the Syrians. We must force them to come up with a plan for their country where the interests of every reli-

gious, ethnic and political group will be well protected,” Lavrov told Russian state TV in an interview broadcast on Saturday. “They need to prepare for both parliamentary and presidential elections.” Lavrov on Saturday phoned U.S. Secretary of

State John Kerry to discuss organizing talks between the Syrian government and opposition, the Russian foreign ministry said. It said the two men had spoken of the need to tap the potential of other countries in the region to push the political process forward. The U.S. state ...*(More on P4)...(22)*

Bulgaria, Serbia, Romania don't want to be Buffer Zone for Refugees: PMs

SOFIA - The prime ministers of Bulgaria, Serbia and Romania jointly announced here on Saturday that they will not allow their countries to become a buffer zone for refugees. If Germany, Austria and other countries close their borders, the three Balkan countries will not agree to become a buffer zone for refugee flows located between Turkey and fences that will follow after Serbia, Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borissov told a joint press conference. “We will be ready in



the same way to close our borders at the same moment,” Borissov announced the joint position of the three countries, which will be expressed on Sunday at an EU special sum-

mit on tackling migration that will be held in Brussels. “We will not put our countries on the devastating pressures of millions who would come,” Borissov said. The intensive

building of fences in Europe worried Bulgaria, Serbia and Romania, and the three countries were worried about how far the refugee wave would reach, Borissov said. (Xinhua)

UN Says it Mistakenly Sent Expired Biscuits to Syrians

DAMASCUS - The United Nations said Saturday it had mistakenly sent hundreds of boxes of expired biscuits to besieged civilians in rebel-held areas near Damascus as part of a relief convoy earlier this month. A total of 320 out of 650 boxes of high energy biscuits sent to Zabadani and Madaya on Oct. 18 had expired a month earlier. “We can confirm that this was the result of an unfortunate human error during the loading process,” Yacoub El Hillo, the U.N. Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Syria, said in a statement Saturday. He said the U.N. Syria

team is taking the issue “very seriously” and working with its humanitarian partners to rectify the situation, but added that medical sources had confirmed that eating the expired biscuits would pose no health threats. The aid convoy that went into Zabadani and Madaya was a rare instance of assistance reaching besieged areas near Damascus during a cease-fire between Syrian government forces and their allies and insurgents. The U.N. statement came after concerns were raised that children consuming the expired biscuits could become sick. ...*(More on P4)...(23)*

Grenades Explosion Killson, Injures Scores in Bangladesh

DHAKA - Blasts during Ashura celebration preparation in front of a key venue in old Dhaka part of Bangladesh capital Dhaka Saturday left one dead and scores of others injured. The blasts occurred 1:30 a.m. (local time) when Shiite Muslims were gathering there for a traditional procession to be brought out from there in the morning marking the holy Ashura. “One youth was dead and at least 70 people were injured as three handmade grenades blasted,” said a police officer who preferred to be unnamed. This is the first time that Bangladesh Ashura mourners came under such a deadly attack. It was not immediately clear who carried out the attack or why. Ashura, or the 10th of Muharram in the Islamic calendar, is observed in Bangladesh to commemorate the martyrdom of Imam Hussain, grandson of Islam's Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his companions. Thousands of Muslim mourners, specially Shiite Muslims, are seen every year gathering in old Dhaka's HussainiDalan, a key venue for majlis or gatherings. During the first 10 days of Muharram, HussainiDalan has become a center of mourning and religious gathering in the Bangladesh capital. (Xinhua)

Migrants at British Base in Cyprus Claim Asylum

NICOSIA - Some of the 114 migrants who arrived recently by boat at a British airbase in Cyprus have asked for asylum, the British military said Saturday, but their fate remains in limbo. The migrants came ashore Wednesday at the Royal Air Force base at Akrotiri, from where British planes are carrying out bombing raids against the Islamic State jihadist group in Iraq. “A small number of the migrants have already claimed asylum,” a British military statement said. Officials could not confirm if those who had asked for asylum would be handed over to Cypriot authorities to process their applications. But the statement said: “RAF Akrotiri is not a route through which people will be able to get to the UK.” The British military said it could move all the migrants to another facility on the island at the Dhekelia Garrison. “As a precautionary measure, a temporary transit facility is being provided at an appropriate location on the Sovereign Base Area should it become necessary to move the migrants,” said the statement issued by British Forces Cyprus. “In accordance with ...*(More on P4)...(24)*

EU's Juncker wants Decisions on Balkan Refugee Crisis

BERLIN - European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker aims to get a group of EU leaders attending a summit on Sunday to agree short-term steps to tackle the migrant crisis in the western Balkans. As winter approaches, concern is growing for hundreds of thousands of migrants who are camped outside in western Balkan countries after arriving in Europe, many from Middle East war zones such as Syria. Juncker has summoned European Union leaders from the region and Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany, which is taking in more refugees than any other EU state, for talks on Sunday. “They will discuss urgently needed, common operative answers to the current humanitarian demands and decide on short-term measures,”



Juncker told German media group Funke, adding closer cooperation was needed to master the crisis. The situation for migrants deteriorated after Hungary sealed its borders with Serbia and Croatia, leaving many stranded in other overwhelmed states. German media have reported that Juncker will present a 16-point plan,

including an undertaking not to send migrants from one country to another without prior agreement. Slovenia, where 58,000 migrants have arrived in the last week, said on Saturday that it expected an “immediate operational response of the EU” following the meeting, which its prime minister Miro Cerar will attend. (Reuters)

Neighbor News

Putin may Visit Tehran for Key Gas Summit

TEHRAN - Russia has announced that President Vladimir Putin may visit Iran next month to attend a crucial summit of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF). Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov has been quoted by the Russian media as saying that Putin has been invited to attend the GECF summit in Tehran by his Iranian counterpart Hassan Rouhani. “The decision will be made depending on [Putin's] schedule. Russia will be in any case presented there on a high level,” Peskov has been quoted by Sputnik news as telling reporters. The invitation for the

Russian president to attend the GECF summit was delivered by Iran's First Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri to the visiting Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak on Thursday. “Iran is interested to see Russia participate in the summit at the highest level,” Jahangiri told Novak. Apart from Russia, Iran has also submitted official invitations to the presidents of Algeria, the UAE, Venezuela, Qatar, Egypt, Bolivia, Libya, Equatorial Guinea, Nigeria, and Trinidad and Tobago as the key members of the forum as well as the Netherlands, Kazakhstan, Peru and Norway as the observer mem ...*(More on P4)...(25)*

Pakistani Shiites Demand Protection after Bombing Killed 18

ISLAMABAD - Pakistani Shiites rallied to demand greater government protection on Saturday after a suicide bomber targeted a Shiite religious procession, killing at least 18 people and wounding 40 others. The bomber struck a public Ashoura rally Friday night in Jacobabad, a city in the southern province of Sindh, senior police officer Zafar Malik said. Local media reported a higher death toll than the government, saying as many as 24 people were killed. Malik added that mourners were preparing for mass funerals Saturday and that the government had protectively deployed extra troops to

handle any “untoward situation.” Shiite Muslims, a minority in Pakistan, hold public rallies to mark Ashoura, a 10-day ritual that commemorates the death of Imam Hussein, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad and an iconic Shiite martyr. Some mourners whip themselves with knives attached to chains and women and children beat their own chests as they march in the streets. Sunni extremists who consider Shiites to be heretics. On Thursday, a suicide bomber targeted a Shiite mosque in southwest Pakistan, killing 10 people in Baluchistan province. The attacks ...*(More on P4)...(26)*

U.S. Patrols to Raise Stakes with Beijing in Disputed South China Sea

HONG KONG - U.S. plans to send warships or military aircraft within 12 nautical miles of China's artificial islands in the disputed South China Sea, possibly within days, could open a tense new front in Sino-U.S. rivalry. A range of security experts said Washington's so-called freedom of navigation patrols would have to be regular to be effective, given Chinese ambitions to project power deep into maritime Southeast Asia and beyond. But China would likely resist attempts to make such U.S. actions routine, some said, raising the

political and military stakes. China's navy could for example try to block or attempt to surround U.S. vessels, they said, risking an escalation. Given months of debate already in Washington over the first such patrol close to the Chinese outposts since 2012, several regional security experts and former naval officers said the U.S. government might be reluctant to do them often. U.S. allies such as Japan and Australia are unlikely to follow with their own direct challenges to China, despite their concerns over freedom ...*(More on P4)...(27)*

Tajikistan, Japan Sign Number of Bilateral Cooperation Deals

BISHKEK - Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe met with Tajikistan President Emomali Rahmon on Saturday in Dushanbe. The parties signed a joint statement on the partnership between the two countries, a grant agreement to restore the water supply in PanjKhatlon and agreement on the exchange of memoranda on the project. The parties also signed a memorandum between the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan and the Government of Japan on economic and scientific-technical cooperation. Financial Monitoring Department of the National Bank of Tajikistan and the Financial Intelligence Centre of the

National Public Safety Commission of Japan signed a cooperation deal to exchange information on issues of legalization of proceeds from crime and terrorist financing. The parties also signed an agreement between the Government of Tajikistan and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) on the project to improve methods of locust control and exchange agreement memorandums of FAO and the Government of Japan for this project. In addition, an agreement on cooperation and scientific exchange between the Tajik Institute of Languages and the University Tsukuba Japan was signed. (AKIpress)