

European Leaders Side with Spain Amid Brewing Tensions over Catalonia

BRUSSELS - European Leaders on Friday sided with Madrid amid spiraling tensions prompted by the Catalan parliament's unilateral declaration of independence.

"For EU nothing changes. Spain remains our only interlocutor," European Council President Donald Tusk tweeted. "I hope the Spanish government favors force of argument, not argument of force." European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker on Friday stressed the "constitutional order" in a speech at the Conference of Presidents of the Outermost Regions in French Guiana. "The Eu-



ropean Union is first and foremost a set based on the rule of law, respect for it. It's true in the French Republic ... This is also true in Spain. The constitutional order is what it is, it must be respected," he said.

French President Emmanuel Macron, who attended the conference with Juncker, underscored that Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy is his only interlocutor in Spain, reiterating France's full support to the Spanish government.

"There is a rule of law in Spain, with constitutional rules. Rajoy wants to enforce them and he has my full support," Macron said. (Xinhua)

Spanish PM Dismisses Catalan Gov't, Calls Fresh Regional Elections

MADRID - Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy on Friday announced the immediate sacking of Catalan leader Carles Puigdemont and his government and called new elections in the region on Dec. 21. This followed the decision taken by the Catalan parliament earlier in the day to unilaterally declare independence of the region in the northeast of Spain. Rajoy announced the measures after a special cabinet meeting called at his residence in the Pala-

cio de la Moncloa to decide how to apply Article 155 of the Spanish Constitution. Reading a statement in an appearance which did not allow questions from the press, Rajoy said: "Spanish people were living a sad day when the lack of reason had gone over the head of the law," and that his government had begun "to adopt the measures against an inadmissible kidnapping of the rights of the majority of Catalan." (Xinhua)

UN Officials Call for Greater Partnership to Boost Women's Participation at All Levels

UNITED NATIONS - A senior United Nations official on Friday called on Member States, regional organizations and civil society for greater partnership to boost women's participation at all levels.

"We will strengthen the collection and analysis of gender statistics and encourage Member States to monitor gender equality indicators as part of their work to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)," Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, the Chief of Cabinet, speaking on behalf of the Secretary-

General, told a day-long debate in the Security Council, underlining the need for more action on the "women, peace and security agenda."

In her briefing, the Chief of Cabinet spoke of the need to ensure adequate representation of women in the security sector both to reduce their exposure to harm as well as to realize their potential in conflict prevention.

Noting that only 3 percent of peacekeepers are women, she informed the Security Council of the Secretary-General's efforts



with troop- and police-contributing countries to increase the number of female uniformed personnel. Viotti also noted that 17 years after its adoption, Security Council resolution 1325 on women and

peace and security was too often being implemented "in an ad hoc fashion," and called on UN Member States to share evidence and examples in order to examine gaps and successes. (Xinhua)

British FM Says Forcing EU Citizens out of UK Post-Brexit Unthinkable



LISBON - British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said here Friday that it was unthinkable that European Union (EU) citizens would be forced to leave Britain after Brexit.

"I cannot imagine a scenario in which citizens are obliged to leave," Johnson told a press conference during a brief visit to Lisbon. Britain is home to a sizable

Portuguese population and tens of thousands of Britons live in Portugal. The future of both groups is one of many issues yet to be defined by those pushing for Britain to leave the EU. Johnson is one of the scheme's masterminds and most vocal advocates. The British foreign secretary held a meeting with his Portuguese counterpart, Augusto Santos Silva, before convening with local delegates and businessmen. Johnson described Portuguese and British relations as "an uninterrupted suc-

cess story" and invoked the "spirit of alliance" between the two countries. Britain's alliance with Portugal is believed to be the oldest bilateral alliance in the world, having been established in 1386. Santos Silva, meanwhile, pledged to continue to work closely with the UK, even if it does end up leaving the EU.

"Brexit does not mean the collapse of the alliance," he said, "quite the opposite, there will be increased responsibility to improve our bilateral relations." (Xinhua)

US Grand Jury Files First Charges in Special Counsel's Russia Probe: Reports

WASHINGTON - At least one defendant in connection with the alleged Russian meddling in the 2016 U.S. presidential elections will be taken into custody as soon as Monday, local media reported. The preparations followed after a federal grand jury approved the first charges in special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation, the reports said. Peter Carr, a spokesperson for Mueller, declined to comment. The news about the charges was first reported by CNN on Friday night, quoting anonymous sources.

The number and identity of the defendants, as well as details of the charges were not disclosed immediately.

U.S. President Donald Trump has denied any collusion between his campaign and Moscow during the elections, calling the special counsel investigation "a witch hunt." The Russian government has also repeatedly denied that it sought to influence the elections. Mueller, a retired FBI director, was appointed special counsel in charge of the Russia probe in May. (Xinhua)

S. Korea, U.S. Agree to Expand Rotational Deployment of Strategic Military Assets

SEOUL - Defense chiefs of South Korea and the United States agreed Saturday to expand rotational deployment of U.S. strategic military assets to the Korean Peninsula to counter the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)'s threats. South Korean Defense Minister Song Young-moo and U.S. Secretary of Defense James Mattis held the 49th Security Consultative Meeting (SCM), an annual security dialogue between the defense ministers of the two allies, in Seoul. Song told a post-meeting press conference that they agreed to expand the rotational deployment of U.S. strategic assets to enhance the U.S. commitment to an extended deterrence while agreeing to strengthen cooperation on other deterrence measures.

The U.S. strategic military assets include nuclear-powered aircraft carriers, nuclear-capable attack submarines, stealth fighter jets and strategic bombers, which the U.S. military recently sent near the peninsula more frequently.

According to the 18-point joint statement, the two allies agreed not to tolerate any type of the DPRK provocations, promising to maintain a close coordination of the alliance to effectively counter any provocation.

Mattis said in the statement that any use of nuclear weapons will be met with effective and overwhelming military response, re-confirming the U.S. offer of all categories of military capability, including nuclear umbrella, conventional striking capability and missile defense capability, for extended deterrence to South Korea. (Xinhua)

US to Keep up Economic, Diplomatic Pressure on DPRK: Pence

WASHINGTON - U.S. Vice President Mike Pence said Friday that the United States will keep up economic and diplomatic pressure on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) to curb its nuclear and ballistic missile programs.

Pence made the remarks during a visit to an Air Force base at North Dakota, home to both B-52 bombers and intercontinental ballistic missiles. The United States will continue to apply "economic and diplomatic pressure" so as to make



the DPRK "abandon its nuclear and ballistic missile programs," Pence said.

Meanwhile, Pence warned "all options are on the table" and the United States will defend itself "with military power that is effective and

overwhelming" when it is forced to do so.

Also on Friday, visiting U.S. Secretary of Defense James Mattis said in Seoul, the capital of South Korea, that his country seeks no war, but the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

JFK Files Release is Trump's Latest Clash with Spy Agencies

WASHINGTON - It was a showdown 25 years in the making: With the world itching to finally get a look at classified Kennedy assassination files, and the deadline for their release just hours away, intelligence officials were still angling for a way to keep their secrets. President Donald Trump, the one man able to block the release, did not appreciate their persistence. He did not intend to make this easy.

Like much else surrounding investigations of the 1963 killing of President John F. Kennedy, this week's release of 2,800 records from the JFK files was

anything but smooth. It came together only at the last minute, with White House lawyers still fielding late-arriving requests for additional redactions in the morning and an irritated Trump continuing to resist signing off on the request, according to an account by two White House officials. They spoke only on condition of anonymity to discuss internal discussions.

The tale of the final hours before the congressionally mandated 25-year release deadline on Thursday adds a new chapter to the story of Trump's troubled relationship with his spy agencies. (AP)

Mattis Says Threat of Nuclear Attack by N. Korea Accelerating

SEOUL, South Korea - U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said Saturday the threat of nuclear missile attack by North Korea is accelerating. In remarks in Seoul with South Korean Defense Minister Song Young-moo at his side, Mattis accused the North of illegal and unnecessary missile and nuclear programs - and vowed to defeat any attack.

Mattis said North Korea engages in "outlaw" behavior and that the U.S. will never accept a nuclear North. He added that regardless of what the North might try, it is overwhelmed by the firepower and cohesiveness of the decades-old U.S.-South Korean alliance. "North Korea has accelerated the threat that it poses to its neighbors and the world through its illegal and unnecessary missile and nuclear weapons programs," he said, adding that U.S.-South Korean military and diplomatic collaboration thus has taken on "a new urgency."

"I cannot imagine a condition under which the United States would accept North Korea as a nuclear power," he said.

As he emphasized throughout his weeklong Asia trip, which included stops in Thailand and the Philippines, Mattis said diplomacy remains the preferred way to deal with the North.

"With that said," he added, "make no mistake - any attack on the United States or our allies will be defeated, and any use of nuclear weapons by the North will be met with a massive military response that is effective and overwhelming." (AP)

Neighbor News

China, Japan Officials Exchange Views on Security Issues at 15th Dialogue

TOKYO - Senior diplomats from China and Japan have exchanged views on a number of security issues at the 15th China-Japan Security Dialogue held in Tokyo. Chinese Assistant Foreign Minister Kong Xuanyou and Japanese Senior Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Takeo Akiba, co-chaired the dialogue on Friday which was attended by foreign affairs and security officials of both countries.

Kong also met with Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono during his visit.

Kong told Kono that Sino-Japanese relationship has seen a number of positive interactions recently but is still faced with complicated factors. As this year marks the 45th anniversary of the normalization of China-Japan diplomatic ties, and next year will

be the 40th anniversary of the signing of the China-Japan Peace and Friendship Treaty, Kong urged the two sides to take the opportunities to overcome obstacles and interruptions and consolidate the momentum of the improvement of bilateral relations.

Kono, for his part, offered congratulations on the success of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC), and said that Japan attaches importance to its relationship with China and is willing to make joint efforts with China to improve and develop bilateral relations.

During the security dialogue, the two sides exchanged views on the regional and world security situation, security policies of China and Japan and bilateral security communication and cooperation. (Xinhua)

Turkey, Pakistan Finalize Free Trade Agreement Talks

ANKARA - Turkey and Pakistan have finalized negotiations on free trade agreement (FTA), and wished to sign the deal as soon as possible, Turkish Customs and Trade Minister Bulent Tufenkci said on Friday.

"I believe that trade relations with Pakistan will and must boost," Tufenkci said in a statement after meeting with Pakistan's Commerce Minister Muhammad Pervaiz Malik accompanied by a delegation.

He highlighted that Turkey attaches the importance to a proposed

regional trade corridor linking Islamabad, Tehran and Istanbul.

Turkey and Pakistan inked the FTA Framework in the Pakistani capital Islamabad last March. Trade volume between the two countries stood at around 610 million U.S. dollars in 2016, according to the Turkish Statistical Institute.

Turkey mainly exports Pakistan telecommunication equipment, television, textile and machinery, and imports textile yam, cotton fabrics, plastics and organic chemicals from Pakistan. (Xinhua)

Iran, Russia Stress Boosting Economic Ties

TEHRAN - Senior Iranian and Russian officials in a meeting in Moscow underlined the need for the broadening of mutual cooperation, specially in trade and economic fields.

Iranian Minister of Road and Urban Development Abbas Akhondi in separate meetings with Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak and Minister of North Caucasus Affairs Lev Kuznetsov conferred on the expansion of economic and energy cooperation.

During the meeting with Novak on Friday, the two sides exchanged views on the prospect for mutual cooperation in various fields within the framework of Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF). During the meeting, the Russian energy minister pointed to the upcoming visit of President Vladimir Putin to Iran on Wednesday, and said, "The two countries'

transport cooperation is progressing well. The electrification of Garmar to Inche Burun route is one of prioritized projects of the two sides' cooperation."

Akhondi, for his part, hailed the measures taken for operational projects of Iran and Russia in recent years, and said, "The railway section is one of the most important areas of cooperation between Iran and Russia, particularly concerning freight wagons."

The Iranian minister of roads and urban development, who has been in Moscow since Thursday, also held talks with ministers of the North Caucasus, Construction, Housing and Utilities of the Russian Federation, as well as president of Russian Railways Oleg Belozorov. During his meeting with Minister of Construction, Housing and Utilities Mikhail Men, the two sides signed a memorandum of understanding on housing cooperation. (FNA)

Tajikistan's PM to Visit Uzbekistan

DUSHANBE - Prime Minister of Tajikistan Kohir Rasulzoda will visit Uzbekistan in early November, the Uzbek media reported.

The head of the Tajik government intends to hold a number of bilateral meetings in Tashkent, including the meeting with the President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev and the Prime Minister Abdul-

lah Aripov. The official visit is scheduled for the first days of November and is devoted to the upcoming meeting of the Heads of the CIS countries in Tashkent on November 3.

The agenda of the meeting includes issues on expanding cooperation in the economic sphere between the CIS countries. (Trend)