

Russia Denies Meddling in U.S. Election



Kremlin spokesman, Dmitry Peskov

TEHRAN (Press TV) - The Kremlin has dismissed the U.S. allegations of interfering in the country’s presidential election campaign after Washington blamed Russian hackers for a leak of U.S. Democratic National Committee (DNC) emails.

Speaking at a press conference in Moscow on Wednesday, Kremlin spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, said Russian President Vladimir Putin has repeatedly emphasized that Moscow “has never interfered and does not interfere in the internal affairs ... of other countries.”

“Moscow has carefully avoided any actions, any words that could be interpreted as direct or indirect influence on the electoral process,” Peskov added.

He further denied claims by U.S. officials that Russia was involved in Friday’s leak of over 19,000 DNC emails, which forced Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz of Florida to resign as the chairwoman of the committee.

In an interview with NBC News set to be aired on Wednesday, U.S. President Barack Obama said that it was possible that Russia would try to influence the U.S. presidential election.

Obama also claimed that Federal Bureau of In-

vestigation experts have attributed the leak of the DNC emails to the Russians, saying, “What we do know is that the Russians hack our systems, not just government systems but private systems.”

He further noted that he was aware of Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump’s positive comments about the Russian leadership.

Elsewhere in his comments, Peskov said the Kremlin regretted that politicians in Washington were playing the “Russian card,” adding that it had become “the main card of their game.”

“This reminds me of a company where they tell each other horror stories and then start being frightened of their own stories,” he added.

The U.S. 2016 presidential election will be held on November 8, with over a hundred million Americans expected to go to the polls.

Hillary Clinton, who recently received the Democratic nomination at the party’s convention in Philadelphia, will face Trump in the election.

Trump has often expressed admiration for Putin, calling him a “strong leader.” The Russian president has also praised the Republican nominee as “a very striking man” and “unquestionably talented.”

Separatist Movement in Catalonia Escalates Battle with Madrid

MADRID (Dispatches) - **The separatist movement in Catalonia’s parliament has escalated its battle with Madrid after it defied Spain’s constitutional court by debating a controversial pro-independence roadmap, and the region’s president announced a confidence vote to consolidate the move towards sovereignty.**

The angry, last-minute debate – which saw the pro-independence Together for Yes coalition and the smaller, far-left Popular Unity Candidacy secure approval for the unilateral disconnection plan by 72 votes to 11 – represents another open challenge to the Spanish judiciary and to Spain’s acting prime minister, Mariano Rajoy.

It also provoked a furious reaction in the Catalan parliament from Ciudadanos and Popular party MPs who left the chamber rather than

take part in a vote they described as “illegal” and flagrantly undemocratic. One Ciudadanos MP accused the separatist faction of “wanting to take us not only out of Spain and the EU, but out of the 21st century and modern democracy”.

However, the president of the Catalan parliament, Together for Yes’s Carme Forcadell, insisted that the parliament was exercising its sovereign rights.

Earlier on Wednesday, the pro-separatist Catalan president, Carles Puigdemont, said that a confidence vote would be held in parliament on 28 September to help bring the region to “the gates of independence”.

Last November, the Catalan parliament voted to begin the process of breaking away from Spain after separatist MPs used their majority to pass legislation to effect a

“disconnection from the Spanish state” and pave the way for an independent Catalan state.

Spain’s constitutional court responded by unanimously ruling that the legislation had ignored and infringed the rules of the 1978 constitution, adding that the “principle of democracy cannot be considered to be separate from the unconditional primacy of the constitution”.

Rajoy hailed the court’s decision as a victory for “the majority of Spaniards who believe in Spain, in national sovereignty and in the equality of all”.

The issues of Catalan independence remains bitterly divisive in both Spain and within the region itself. A recent poll suggested that 47.7% of Catalans are in favor of separating from Spain, while 42.4% were against it, with 8.3% undecided.

EU Vows to Help France Fight Daesh ‘Barbarity’

PARIS (AFP) - The head of the European Commission on Tuesday pledged “Europe’s solidarity and cooperation in the fight against barbarity”, in a letter to French President Francois Hollande after a church attack claimed by the Daesh group, reported AFP.

“More than ever, all over Europe, solidarity and cooperation will be essential in the fight against barbarity and to ensure that our shared values prevail,” Jean-Claude Juncker wrote.

“The European Commission is fully mobilized, along with

other European institutions, to provide all the support it can to France in these painful moments,” he added.

In a statement, the EU’s foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini also expressed solidarity and offered her “condolences to the families of the victims, to France and the Catholic Church.”

“Targeting a man of faith, of any faith, is always a crime against our common humanity because it means targeting the deeper essence of our lives, believers and non-believers alike,” she said.

EU States Confirm Estonia to Take Over Presidency From UK

BRUSSELS (AFP) - **Estonia will take over the rotating EU presidency from Britain in late 2017 after London pulled out to focus on negotiations to leave the bloc, the 28 members of the union said.**

In the first major step towards Brexit after last month’s shock referendum result, Prime Minister Theresa May announced that Britain would no longer take up its scheduled six-month stint next July.

Ambassadors of the 28 member states had reached a “broad

agreement” on July 20 to bring forward Estonia’s presidency by six months to take Britain’s place, a spokesman for European Council President Donald Tusk said last week.

A statement on Tuesday said that decision was formalized.

Croatia, which in 2013 became the latest state to join the EU, will take over the presidency in the first semester of 2020, the members’ statement added.

Slovakia currently holds the presidency and will be followed by Malta in the first half of 2017.

Shootout Injures One Officer, 4 Gunmen in Armenia

YEREVAN (Press TV) - **A police officer and four gunmen have reportedly been injured in an exchange of fire at a police compound in the Armenian capital, Yerevan.**

Police spokesman Ashot Aharonyan said Wednesday that the clashes broke out at the police compound that was seized over ten days ago.

The gunmen stormed the facility on July 17, killing a police officer.

Aharonyan said that two of the gunmen and the police officer were in hospital being treated for their wounds while another two wounded armed men remained on the compound.

He said gunmen, holed up in the police station, took four medics hostage, as they “went into the captured territory to assist two members of the armed group who refused to go to hospital.”

“The police are taking steps to free the doctors through negotiations,” Aharonyan said.

The armed men have been demanding the release of Zhirair Sefilyan, an opposition leader accused by the government of plotting civil unrest. Sefilyan was jailed in June over allegations of illegal weapons possession.

Also on Monday, thousands of people staged a rally in Yerevan to voice solidarity with the pro-opposition gunmen.

The assailants had taken nine people hostage but gradually released all of them. They remained holed up inside the police building surrounded by security forces.

Police have cut electricity to the station and are refusing to deliver food after the release of the last hostages.

Of the total nine people taken hostage, the gunmen released two soon after the attack and three more a day later. Four police officers were also released on July 23 after negotiations with the hostage-takers, police said.

Sefilyan, an ethnic-Armenian who was born in Lebanon and fought during the Arab country’s civil war of the 1980s, has served jail terms since 2006 on charges of attempting to overthrow the government.

He opposes President Serzh Sargsyan, who has been ruling the country of 2.9 million people since he won contested elections in 2008.



BERN (The Guardian) - *A woman who wanted to stop her husband boarding a plane at Geneva has admitted making a false bomb threat, prosecutors said on Wednesday, after hours of tightened security that caused traffic chaos around the airport on the French-Swiss border.*

“Yesterday in the evening, a woman called Swiss customs at Geneva airport. She said that today a person carrying a bomb would be in the French sector of the airport,” the Geneva prosecutor’s office said in a statement.

The Swiss authorities traced the number to Annecy in France, some 45 kms from Geneva, where French police raided an address.

“They found a woman who admitted to having made the call and explained that she wanted thereby to prevent her husband from leaving,” the statement said.

ISTANBUL (Washington Post) — Turkish leaders on Tuesday stepped up their calls for the United States to punish Fethullah Gulen, the reclusive cleric living in Pennsylvania whose organization is said to be behind the failed July 15 coup attempt that sought to topple President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his government.

Officials in Ankara insist that Gulen had a direct hand in the coup plot, a mutiny led by a faction in the military that led to about 290 deaths before it was quashed.

U.S. Secretary of State John F. Kerry said he would consider an extradition request should Turkey submit “legitimate evidence [of Gulen’s involvement] that withstands scrutiny.”

LONDON (Press TV) - **British security services have warned that a terrorist attack in the country is “highly likely” following attacks in other parts of Europe.**

“The threat level currently stands at SEVERE (sic), which means that an attack in the UK is highly likely,” read a writing argument by James Eadie QC for the security services.

He presented his argument before the Investigatory Powers Tribunal (IPT) in London as Britain’s intelligence agencies were defending themselves against allegations of mass collection of communications data and UK citizens’ personal information without proper legal safeguards.

In the latest terrorist attacks in Europe, two knife-wielding men interrupted a French church service on Tuesday, took a number of people hostage and killed an 85-year-old priest.

TEHRAN (Press TV) - Heavy monsoon rains and subsequent flooding and landslides have left at least 58 people dead in Nepal, the government says.

Jhanka Nath Dhakal, deputy spokesman for Nepal’s Home Ministry, said Wednesday that 20 people have also gone missing.

“Our teams are working continuously in search and rescue operations, as well as to provide relief,” the official stated.

Hundreds of people are stranded in submerged villages. Photos released by the army show villagers awaiting evacuation on rooftops.

Each year from about April to October, monsoon causes floods with widespread destruction in Nepal, India and other southern Asian countries.

Heavy rains claimed the lives of two children earlier this month when a school in Nepal’s capital Kathmandu was partially damaged.

Nepal is not only prone to monsoon but also earthquakes. Millions of people are still living in makeshift shelters following a devastating quake that hit the country in 2015 killing nearly 9,000 people.

CANBERRA (Dispatches) - **Australian police have launched an investigation into the Vatican’s finance chief, Cardinal George Pell, over allegations of child sex abuse.**

According to a report by the national broadcaster, Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), police in Victoria State are conducting the probe into allegations of abuse by Pell in Ballarat, Torquay and Melbourne.

The ABC has obtained eight police statements from complainants, family members and witnesses contributing to the investigation.

The report also includes claims that Pell touched two boys inappropriately in a pool in the late 1970s. The two men, who were in primary school at the time, said Pell abused them when he would frequent Ballarat’s Eureka pool.