

MOSCOW (Dispatches) -- Iranian Defense Minister Hussein Dehqan will visit Moscow on April 25-26 and will take part in a security conference, RIA news agency cited a source in the Iranian embassy as saying on Tuesday.

The agency also said Dehqan would meet Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu. Iranian Ambassador to Russia Mehdi Sanai said military cooperation between Russia and Iran has reached a level that has become a source of fulfillment for both sides. After signing an agreement on military cooperation between Russia and Iran in 2015, important steps have been taken in bilateral cooperation in the field of defense, he said.

TEHRAN (Tasnim) -- Georgia's President Giorgi Margvelashvili hailed on Tuesday growing relations between his country and Iran, saying Tbilisi is keen for further development of the ties.

Since the establishment of relations between Iran and Georgia 25 years ago, there has been "very good progress" in the ties, Margvelashvili said in a meeting with Iranian Foreign Minister Muhammad Javad Zarif in Tbilisi. "We are eager for development of the relations to a level higher than the current one," he added.

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## Planemakers Boosted As Iran Buys 'Orphan Jets'

PARIS (Dispatches) -- Iran's return to the world economy is helping planemakers cope with a downturn in global demand, providing homes for airplanes orphaned by reversals in the growth plans of airlines elsewhere.

Planemakers are also gambling that the early delivery of such aircraft could help prop up a nuclear sanctions deal between Iran and world powers, threatened by opponents in both Washington and Tehran, Western sources said.

Since sanctions were lifted under the deal to reopen trade and curb Iran's nuclear program, the Islamic Republic, trying to boost its economy, has joined a waiting list of up to eight years for 200 new aircraft.

But efforts to meet its most immediate needs have been boosted by financial problems facing other airlines across the globe as new airplanes come onto the market at bargain prices.

"We hunt opportunities in the market. If there are opportunities, we can take advantage of that," Deputy Roads and Urban Development Minister Asghar Fakhrieh-Kashan told Reuters.

Despite denials by manufacturers that the downturn is hurting, Iran's return to the market has brought to light pockets of surplus aircraft.

With presidential elections looming in May and keen to show the 2015 nuclear deal is working, Iran's government has proved only too keen to take up the slack.

So far it has taken delivery of only three Airbus jets. Industry executives say they were left on the planemaker's books when their Colombian buyer, Avianca,

balked at taking delivery. Such orphan planes are often known as 'white tails'.

Last week, Iran also signed a deal for 20 ATR turboprops.

Unusually in a risk-averse industry with high costs, four of those are already built and ready to be delivered: short-circuiting their usual 18 months' waiting time.

Although it denies they are white tails, ATR took the rare decision to build them for Iran Air before the final contract was signed. Analysts say that too is a signal of market weakness as manufacturers wrestle with weakness in developing economies.

The sudden reshuffling suits both sides as Iranian President Hassan Rouhani tries to demonstrate results from the nuclear deal, opposed by Principlist candidates in May elections.

It also holds up a mirror to geopolitical changes in the region, played out in the fortunes of national carriers.

While Iran's aviation industry is coming out of decades of cold storage as sanctions are lifted, Turkey has seen a slump in travel demand after a failed coup and attacks in major cities.

Now, Turkish Airlines is having doubts about taking one of the industry's key growth engines, a 350-seat Boeing 777-3000ER.

Uncertainty over next month's scheduled delivery contrasts with Iran's urgent need for the same model, the first of which is due to be delivered to Tehran in April or May next year.

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# Iran Sends Message to Enemies With Military Parade



A missile is displayed as Iranian armed forces commanders review an army parade in front of the mausoleum of the late revolutionary founder Imam Khomeini just outside Tehran, April 17, 2017.

TEHRAN (Dispatches) -- Iran on Tuesday rolled out its defense missiles in a huge military parade as troops from all units of the armed forces across the country marked the National Army Day.

The military parade saw units from all arms of the military show off missiles, tanks, armored vehicles, weaponry, drones, fighter jets and air defense systems.

National Army Day parades are used to celebrate the military's latest achievements. The ceremony passed near the mausoleum of the late founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Imam Khomeini, and representatives from Ground Force, Navy, Air Force and Air Defense Force were on the march.

Army Commander Major General Ataollah Salehi, Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Muhammad Hussein Baqeri, Defense Minister Brigadier General Hussein Dehqan, Army Ground Force Commander Brigadier General Kiomars Heidari, and ranking commanders of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) attended the ceremony.

"Our armed forces will not be a threat to others... We move in the direction of avoiding confrontations and tensions; however, we should always maintain our alertness against conspiracies by others and should enhance our deterrent power day by day," President Hassan Rouhani told the event.

The president reassured Iran's neighbors that Iranian armed forces acted to defend the entire "important and sensitive" region of the Middle East.

He said other countries could rest assured that Iran's military power was "defensive," not "offensive." He

promised a "vigorous and determined" response to potential aggressors, however.

President Rouhani also said the Islamic Republic's Army has always been spoken of fondly, while "some of the world's armies are reminiscent of intervention in other countries' internal affairs, genocide, terror sponsorship, coups d'état, and lack of regard for the people's opinion and law."

Major General Yahya Rahim Safavi, a senior military adviser to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, earlier issued a message on the occasion, emphasizing that the country's defensive prowess and deterrence power relied on "domestic knowhow."

Safavi said while extraterritorial forces were causing instability in the region, Iran's armed forces have been providing national security at a level exceeding expectations.

Iran has recently made major breakthroughs in its defense sector and attained self-sufficiency in producing important military equipment and hardware.

The Islamic Republic says its military power poses no threat to other countries and is merely based on the doctrine of deterrence.

## Europe Inks Nuclear Safety Deal With Iran

TEHRAN (Dispatches) -- Iran and the European Commission have signed the first-ever project for nuclear safety cooperation within the framework of a landmark nuclear agreement signed between the Islamic Republic and the P5+1 group of countries.

The commission said on Tuesday that the €2.5 million project is aimed at improving the capabilities of the Iranian Nuclear Regulatory Authority (INRA) by preparing feasibility study for the Nuclear Safety Center under the nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

The project will also support the INRA in developing a nuclear regulatory framework, working toward Iran's accession to several international nuclear conventions, including the Convention on Nuclear Safety, and reviewing the results of the stress test which will take place in Bushehr Nuclear

Power Plant in southern Iran.

It is the first of a €5 million action approved by the European Union in 2016 under the Instrument for Nuclear Safety Cooperation.

A second project for the stress test at the Bushehr nuclear power plant is scheduled to be signed in the coming weeks.

Iran and the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council - the United States, France, Britain, Russia and China plus Germany - signed the JCPOA on July 14, 2015 and started implementing it on January 16, 2016.

Under the JCPOA, Iran undertook to put limitations on its nuclear program in exchange for the removal of nuclear-related sanctions imposed against Tehran.

The lifting of sanctions against Iran has opened the way for a renewal of broader relations between the Islamic Republic and the European Union.

## Yemenis Down Saudi Chopper, Kill Senior Officers

RIYADH (Dispatches) -- Twelve Saudi military personnel, including four officers, were killed on Tuesday when their helicopter went down in Yemen, the kingdom's state news agency SPA said.

The Saudi Black Hawk "fell during operations in the province of Marib" east of Sana'a, the military said in a statement, without clarifying the reason. "The causes of the incident are being investigated," it added.

Saudi military spokesman General Ahmed Assiri told AFP it was "too early" to comment on the causes of the crash, which is one of the deadliest incidents involving Saudi forces in Yemen.

Military sources allied to Yemen's Houthi Ansarullah movement said the helicopter was downed earlier in the day in Marib province in northeastern Yemen.

Military officials in Saudi Arabia earlier said the helicopter was mistakenly targeted by a missile interception system in Marib that was operated by the United Arab Emirates. Yemenis said however that armed forces loyal to former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who is allied to Houthis, shot down the aircraft with surface-to-air missiles. Riyadh said the fatalities included Saudi special

forces and crew members.

Saudi Arabia began airstrikes over Yemen in March 2015 in support of former president Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi in its fight against Houthis.

The campaign, which lacks any international mandate and has faced increasing criticism, has claimed the lives of more than 12,000 people, most of them civilians.

Saudis and allies have also suffered considerable casualties in the operation on Yemen as official estimates say more than 500 soldiers from Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain have been killed since March 2015.

Yemenis said on Tuesday that more than 100 Saudi-backed militants were killed in an operation in the southern province of Ta'izz a day earlier. They said most of those killed had been hiding in mountainous regions near the port of Mokha.

American officials have said the United States is considering deepening its role in the Yemen conflict by more directly aiding its Persian Gulf allies.

Congressional sources say the Trump administration is on the verge of notifying Congress of the proposed sale of precision-guided munitions to Saudi Arabia.

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## U.S. Airstrikes Kill Dozens of Syrian Civilians

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) -- U.S. airstrikes killed at least 23 civilians in two parts of the eastern Syrian province of Dayr al-Zawr on Monday.

There was no immediate comment from the U.S. which has said it tries to avoid civilian deaths in its bombing campaigns in Syria and neighboring Iraq.

Jets struck the town of al-Bukamal in the south of the province near the Iraqi border, killing three militants and 13 civilians including children, the so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said on Tuesday.

The Britain-based war monitoring group said airstrikes also killed seven civilians in the town of al-Husainiyah further north along the Euphrates river.

Daesh militants control most of Dayr al-Zawr province, which links territory they hold in Syria and Iraq, and parts of the provincial capital, which has the same name.

The Syrian government still controls some parts of Dayr al-Zawr city, including a nearby military air base, where Daesh has besieged about 200,000 people lacking food and medicine for around two years.

Syrian government forces and their allies have been fighting back against Daesh assaults in the area.

U.S.-allied militias in northern Syria announced on Tuesday the formation of a council to govern Raqqa after their planned capture of the city from Daesh.

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