

MOSCOW (Press TV) -- A senior Russian official has denounced fresh U.S. sanctions against Iran on "unfounded" grounds, saying they will only undermine the implementation of the 2015 nuclear agreement with Tehran. Mikhail Ulyanov, head of the Russian Foreign Ministry's department for non-proliferation and arms control, told RIA Novosti news agency that the nuclear accord calls on "Iran to refrain from launching ballistic missiles, but ... it is just an appeal, not an obligation," adding, "Sanctions for failing to comply with this call are ridiculous."

ARSAL, Lebanon (Dispatches) -- Hezbollah launched Friday a large-scale offensive to clear terrorists from rugged terrain in the outskirts of Arsal, seizing key positions and tightening the noose around gunmen entrenched in the area since 2013. After a first wave of attacks at dawn, Hezbollah fighters conducted a renewed attack around 5:30 p.m. seizing the Rahwe Terrain as well as another strategic hilltop position in the area. Five Hezbollah fighters were martyred and 18 terrorists were killed in the offensive, a security source told The Daily Star.

Viewpoint

By Kayhan Int'l Staff Writer

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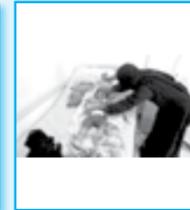
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Russia Adopts New Strategy to Counter U.S.

MOSCOW (Dispatches) -- Russian President Vladimir Putin has signed off on a new state policy strategy for his navy that views the U.S. as aspiring to dominate the world's oceans in a threat to Russia. The strategy, in effect as of Thursday—the day Putin signed it—sheds more light into where Russia's fleet sees potential for international friction and conflict. Among the direct naval threats for Russia falls "the striving of a series of governments, above all the United States of America and its allies to dominate the oceans, including in the Arctic and also to reach an intimidating supremacy with its naval forces."

The strategy outline, binding until 2030, adds to previous statements from Russian navy officials who have designated the Arctic a priority development area for Moscow. The Arctic and the globe's resource-rich northernmost are the subject of claims by Russia and four other countries, all of whom are U.S. allies.

In the 22-page navy document, intended as the policy foundation for future Russian military activities, the Kremlin's ambitious self-image is clear. "The Russian Federation continues to retain its status as a great naval state, whose naval potential ensures the defensive of its national interests in any part of the World Ocean," the paper declares.

The document says that other countries are trying to "limit Russia's access to resources at sea and its access to vitally important naval transport communications," a copy of Putin's decree on Russia's official legal documents database said.

The picture painted by the new strategy is one of a wider conspiracy to "reduce the effectiveness" of Russia's navy

through "economic, political, legal and military pressure on Russia."

Meanwhile the world is in for a rough ride by 2030, the document warns, predicting "an unstable military-political environment, characterized by the increase of global competition, rivalry in the world power centers" due both to the rise of extremism and international power plays.

Russia's navy is "one of the most effective tools of strategic (nuclear and non-nuclear) containment, including in preventing a global strike," Putin's decree said.

China-Russia Naval Drills

Chinese warships joined the Russian navy in the Baltic Sea on Friday ahead of war games which are being watched closely by Western powers.

The drills, which are a sign of both the growing reach of the Chinese military and closer strategic ties between Moscow and Beijing, kick off a busy summer of drills by Russia in eastern Europe which have raised alarm in Washington.

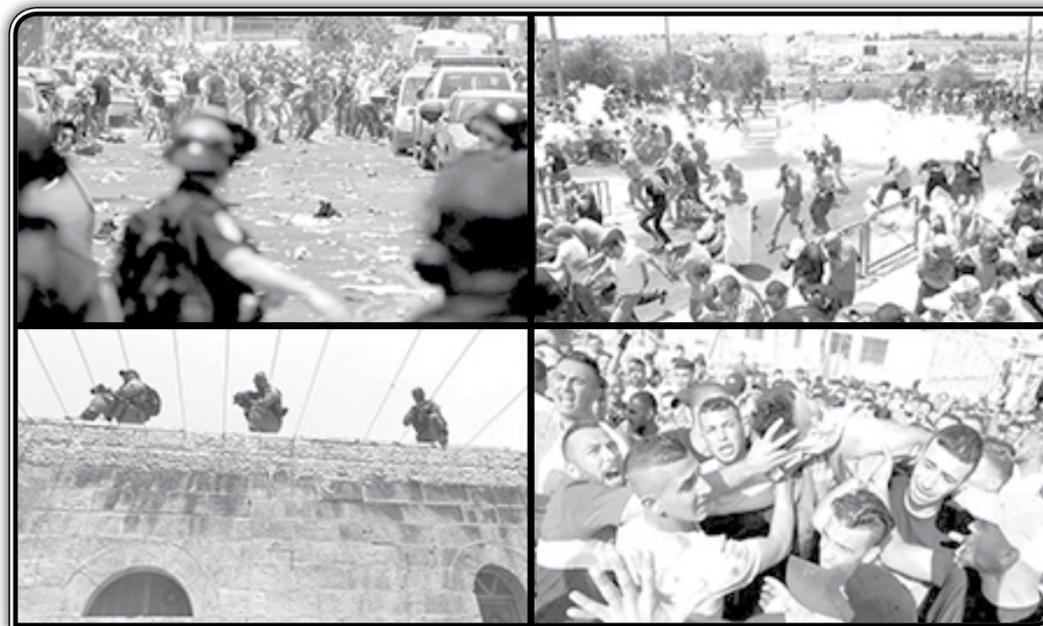
China's most advanced guided-missile destroyers were expected to arrive in the Russian enclave of Kalingrad on Friday before taking to the seas with a Russian flotilla on Monday for exercises that will run until July 31.

The Type 052D destroyer, Changsha, missile frigate Yuncheng and supply ship Luoma Lake are taking part in the drills.

The Changsha was described as China's "most advanced guided-missile destroyer" by Chinese media, while the Yuncheng is also believed to be among the most capable frigates in the People Liberation Army (PLA) Navy's arsenal.

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Al-Quds Explodes in Rage at Zionist Siege of Al-Aqsa



Photos show dramatic scenes from clashes between angry Palestinians and Zionist troops in East Jerusalem Al-Quds on July 21, 2017.

OCCUPIED AL-QUDS (Dispatches) -- At least four Palestinians were shot dead on Friday as thousands of Palestinian worshippers clashed with Israeli forces on a "day of rage" over the occupying regime's siege of Islam's third holiest site.

Muhammad Sharaf, 17, was shot by an Israeli settler in the Ras Alamood area in East Jerusalem Al-Quds. Muhammad Hassan Abu Ghannam, 19, died of his wounds in Al-Makassad hospital after he was shot by a Zionist settler in East Al-Quds.

A 7-year-old boy, whose identity was not immediately known, died after inhaling poisonous gas used by Israeli forces to suppress a demonstration in Al-Ramm town northeast of Jerusalem Al-Quds.

Later on Friday afternoon, the Palestinian Ministry of Health said another Palestinian succumbed to his wounds at a hospital in Ramallah after having been shot in the chest by Israeli forces during a demonstration

in Abu Dis.

The deaths came as thousands of Palestinians clashed with Zionist forces following peaceful prayers around the Old City. Those inside refused to enter the Noble Sanctuary and its Al-Aqsa mosque in protest at new Israeli security checkpoints at two key entrances.

The sanctuary has for a week been subjected to increased security measures, including metal detectors, that many in Palestine see as an attempt to gain control of the site.

Worshippers outside the Old City were scattered soon after Friday prayers as Zionist forces fired tear gas and rubber bullets into the crowds in Salah al-Din Street. Four

Palestinians were reported injured.

Israeli forces also entered Al-Makassad hospital in Jerusalem Al-Quds, and asked employees to leave. Witnesses said they believed Zionist officers were looking for those wounded in the clashes.

Earlier the hospital released a statement asking for blood donations due to the number of injured.

The occupying regime's violent attacks after prayers came on a day Palestinian leaders had promised a "day of rage" over Israel's moves to control access to the Noble Sanctuary.

Talks to remove metal detectors from the gated entrances collapsed overnight as Palestinian Authority

negotiators refused to accept Israel's offer of subjecting only "suspicious people" to metal detection checks.

The Zionist regime had poured thousands of extra forces into the city. Troops were seen taking up positions above crowds of worshippers, armed with baton rounds and assault rifles.

Officials including the Palestinian Authority's chief negotiator, Hatem Abdel-Kader, were arrested shortly after the talks failed.

Speaking to Middle East Eye before his arrest, Abdel-Kader, said: "The Israeli offer to keep the metal detectors in place, but only require suspicious individuals to pass through them, was unreservedly rejected by the Palestinians."

"There will be an escalation tomorrow. Clashes will inevitably continue until freedom of religion is restored."

Clashes between Palestinians hurling stones and Zionist troops using stun grenades have been a daily occurrence in East Jerusalem Al-Quds since metal detectors were placed on Saturday at entrances to the Noble Sanctuary, which includes the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

Israel installed the metal detectors after three Palestinians and two Zionist troops were killed in a shooting outside the Noble Sanctuary complex on July 14 in one of the most serious incidents in the area in years.

Religious figures and Palestinian politicians called for resistance on Friday morning to what is widely seen across Palestine as an attempt by the occupying regime of Israel to control Al-Aqsa.

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Iran Summons Kuwaiti Envoy Over Baseless Claims

TEHRAN (Dispatches) -- Iranian foreign ministry has summoned the Kuwaiti chargé d'affaires to protest against the baseless allegations raised by the Arab country against the Islamic Republic.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi announced on Thursday that Kuwaiti envoy Fallah al-Hajraf had been summoned to the foreign ministry earlier in the day over the groundless accusations raised by the Persian Gulf state's officials against Iran on a case known as the "Abdali cell".

During the meeting with al-Hajraf, an official with Iran's foreign ministry rejected the false charges and regretted that Kuwait City is raising groundless accusations against Tehran instead of trying to ease the pointless tensions in the region and exercising self-restraint in reaction to pressures and provocations by regional

adventurous sides, Qassemi said.

According to the spokesman, the Iranian official has told the Kuwaiti envoy that the Islamic Republic has nothing to do with the case.

During the meeting, the Kuwaiti diplomat was also reminded that the Islamic Republic of Iran has always showed responsible behavior towards regional states, including Kuwait, during the country's hard times, he added.

The Iranian official also told the Kuwaiti chargé d'affaires that Iran reserves the right to reciprocate Kuwait City's move and decrease the number of its diplomats in Tehran, Qassemi noted.

Al-Hajraf, for his part, has expressed regret over the recent developments in ties between the two countries and promised to inform Kuwaiti officials about the issues raised in the meeting as soon as possible.

The envoy was summoned after Kuwait reportedly told the Iranian Embassy to reduce its diplomatic staff in the Persian Gulf state and close down some of its technical offices following a court ruling last year that implicated some Iranians in a spying case.

Citing a Foreign Ministry source, Kuwait's official new agency reported Thursday that Kuwait City decided to freeze any activities involving joint committees between the two countries following the ruling by Kuwait's top court in a case known as the "Abdali cell".

According to Kuwaiti diplomatic sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, the number of Iranian diplomats in Kuwait will be decreased from 14 to nine, Turkey's Anadolu news agency reported.

The Iranian diplomats will be granted 45 days to leave Kuwait, according to the report.

UN Confirms Saudi Airstrike Killed Yemeni Civilians

GENEVA (Dispatches) -- The United Nations on Friday blamed Saudi Arabia for a deadly airstrike on civilians in Yemen this week, saying there were no military targets in the area hit.

The attack on Tuesday in the Mawza district of the southwestern province of Ta'ez killed at least 20 people, including four children, according to residents.

The UN human rights office, which put the death toll at 18, said the strikes hit three families who were staying in a makeshift

straw house after being displaced from their homes three months ago by fighting.

The office said in a statement that the strike was carried out by "Arab Coalition Forces", referring to the Saudi-led military group waging a ruthless war in the impoverished country.

"There do not appear to have been any military objectives anywhere in the immediate vicinity of the destroyed house," it added.

Saudi Arabia has faced repeated criticism over civilian casualties

in Yemen. Riyadh and its allies have admitted responsibility for some strikes that killed non-combatants, including a raid on the capital Sana'a in October 2016 that killed more than 140 people at a funeral ceremony.

The United Nations called for a "comprehensive and impartial investigation" into the latest incident.

The conflict in Yemen has escalated dramatically since March 2015, when Saudi Arabia launched a military invasion against the country.