

BAKU (Dispatches) -- Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif on Thursday hit out at the U.S. and its regional allies over their "short-sighted" policies that encourage the occupying regime of Israel to continue its criminal activities. "Regrettably, short-sighted policies of some regional governments in befriending the Zionists and sidelining our Palestinian cause have made the apartheid Zionist regime and its supporters more brazen in their ongoing criminal acts," Zarif told a Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) meeting Palestine in this Azerbaijani capital. He also called Israeli the "main threat" to the world's security, urging an international probe into the regime's atrocities against Palestinians.

TEHRAN (Tasnim) -- Deputy Chief of Iran's Army for Coordination Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari reiterated the country's unwavering policy to boost its military power in the face of foreign threats and said the Islamic Republic would never ask for others' permission in this regard. Sayyari hailed Iran's position in the international arena and said, "Today, we raise our truthful words loudly in the world and play a powerful role." "We should increase the country's deterrent power," he said, adding that Iran should boost its defense capabilities so that nobody even thinks of infiltrating into the country.

Viewpoint

Bloodbath in Gaza as Arabs, UN look the ther way

Iranian Art Reaches New Heights at Christie's Auctions



Iran Fail to Advance to FIBA U-17 World Cup



U.S. Approves \$1.3bn Worth of Artillery Sale to Saudi Arabia



Trade War Escalates:

China Vows to Fight U.S. 'at Any Cost'

BEIJING/WASHINGTON (Dispatches) -- China warned on Friday it would fight back "at any cost" with fresh trade measures if the United States continues on its path of protectionism, hours after President Donald Trump threatened to slap an additional \$100 billion in tariffs on Chinese goods.

Trump upped the ante on Thursday by ordering U.S. officials to identify extra tariffs, escalating a high stakes tit-for-tat confrontation with potentially damaging consequences for the world's two biggest economies.

China's Commerce Ministry spokesman, Gao Feng, called the U.S. action "extremely mistaken" and unjustified, adding that the spat was a struggle between unilateralism and multilateralism. He also said no negotiations were likely in the current circumstances.

"The result of this behavior is to smash your own foot with a stone," Gao told a news briefing in Beijing. "If the United States announces an additional \$100 billion list of tariffs, China has already fully prepared, and will not hesitate to immediately make, a fierce counter strike."

Gao was speaking shortly after Trump defended his proposed tariffs on U.S. radio, saying the move might cause "a little pain" but the United States will be better off in the long run.

On Wednesday, China unveiled a list of 106 U.S. goods — from soybeans and whiskey to frozen beef and aircraft — targeted for tariffs, in a swift retaliatory move only hours after the Trump administration proposed duties on some 1,300 Chinese industrial, technology, transport and medical products.

Washington has called for the \$50 billion in extra duties after it said a probe determined Chinese government policies are designed to transfer U.S. intellectual property to Chinese companies and allow them to seize leadership in key high-technology industries of the future.

Responding to Trump's latest comments, the Chinese commerce ministry reiterated that China was not afraid of a trade war even though it did not seek one, and accused the United States of provoking the conflict.

"If the United States disregards the objections of China and the international community and persists in unilateralism and trade protectionism, the Chinese side will follow through to the end, at any cost, and definitely fight back resolutely," a spokesperson was quoted as saying in a statement on the ministry's website.

The ministry has called for a media briefing on Friday night, in an unusual move on a public holiday.

Earlier in the day, Chinese state media had slammed Trump's threat of more trade action as "ridiculous."

"This latest intimidation reflects the deep arrogance of some American elites in their attitude towards China," the state-run Global Times said in an editorial.

So far, U.S. information technology products from mobile phones to personal computers have largely escaped the ire of Beijing, as well as telecoms equipment and aircraft larger than the equivalent of a Boeing 737.

Among the most affected by a trade war could be the U.S. technology sector, particularly chipmakers. The U.S. semiconductor sector relies on China for about a quarter of its revenue.

It also remains to be seen if the trade dispute would trigger a nationalistic travel backlash. When ties between Beijing and Seoul chilled, Chinese tourism to South Korea plummeted and Made-in-South Korea products were shunned by consumers in China.

On Chinese social media on Friday, among the most searched phrases were "China hasn't grown up afraid" and "China will follow through to the end."

Analysts at Oxford Economics warned that a full-blown trade war will have damaging consequences. "Importantly, these threatened tariffs will be subject to negotiation, and therefore shouldn't be considered as final," the analysts wrote in a note to client.

"A (full-blown) tradewar meanwhile would have a more pronounced effect. The U.S. and China would suffer significant slowdown in real GDP growth a cumulative loss around 1.0 percentage point," and cut global economic growth to 2.5% in 2019 from 3.0% in Oxford's baseline scenario.

The escalating tit-for-tat trade actions between the two economic superpowers have roiled global financial markets, as investors worried about the impact on world trade and growth, hitting equities, the dollar and a range of riskier assets such as copper and boosting safe-havens such as the Japanese yen and gold.

The dollar fell in Friday's trade, while U.S. stock futures and most of Asia's stock markets were in the red. "This is what a trade war looks like, and what we have warned against from the start," said National Retail Federation President and CEO Matthew Shay. "We are on a dangerous downward spiral and American families will be on the losing end," Shay added in a statement, urging Trump "to stop playing a game of chicken with the U.S. economy."

Gaza Revolt Rages at Zionist Doorsteps



A Palestinian protester hurls stones toward Zionist forces during clashes in the village of Kfar Qaddum, near Nablus in the occupied West Bank, on April 6, 2018.

GAZA CITY (Dispatches) -- Three Palestinian men were killed by Israeli gunfire, Gaza's Health Ministry said, as clashes resumed between demonstrators and Zionist forces along the Gaza fence for the second consecutive Friday of mass protests.

According to the Health Ministry, 107 Palestinian protesters were wounded, five of them seriously as a result of gunshot wounds to the head and upper body. Those wounded were evacuated to hospitals in Gaza, with more being treated at the scene — mainly for smoke inhalation.

The ministry identified the latest Palestinian killed as a teenage boy,

while naming the other two protesters killed as Osama Khamis, 38, and Majdi Shabat, bringing the death toll to 25 since the "March of Return" — a series of mass protests along the fence leading up to Nakba Day — began on March 30.

Earlier Friday, the ministry reported the death of Tair Muhammad Raba'a, a 30-year-old protester who was wounded near the fence last week during the demonstrations.

According to the Zionist military spokesman, 20,000 Palestinians were protesting in five locations throughout the Gaza Strip, with several demonstrators attempting to cross the

fence into Occupied Palestine.

Protesters set fire to hundreds of tires along the fence with the aim of preventing Israeli snipers from targeting the demonstrators, causing the day of protest to be known as "Tire Day".

The Zionist army said demonstrators were hurling stones and molotov cocktails at the fence and troops stationed along it, with some protesters burning U.S. flags and pictures of Saudi Arabia's crown prince, who said Tuesday that "the Israelis have a right to live on their own land".

Clashes also erupted in the West

Bank around the cities of Nablus, Al-Bireh, Ramallah and Hebron (Al-Khalil). The Health Ministry in Ramallah said two Palestinians had been wounded from rubber-tipped bullets fired by Zionist forces. One of those wounded was shot in the head, while the second sustained a gunshot wound to the leg.

The organizers of the "March of Return" described this Friday's protests as a great success. Thousands of Palestinians have stayed in tent encampments near the fence over the past week.

The occupying regime of Israel has deployed tanks, armored vehicles and snipers near the fence and given shoot-to-kill permission to its troops.

On the eve of the new rally, Zionist war minister Avigdor Liberman threatened that the military would continue to fire at Gazans if they approached the fence.

AFP quoted 20-year-old Ahmed Abu Ghali saying that he "will be a martyr today" as he held up his shirt to show his still seeping wound from last week that required 40 stitches.

"I was wounded last Friday but escaped yesterday from hospital," he said.

Israel has warned that its open-fire rules remained unchanged for Friday's protests despite international outcry, including by UN chief Antonio Guterres who called for restraint.

"I particularly urge Israel to exercise extreme caution with the use of force in order to avoid casualties. Civilians must be able to exercise their right to demonstrate peacefully," he said in a statement.

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UK Opens New Bahrain Base Amid Major Oil Find

MANAMA (Dispatches) -- Britain on Thursday opened a new naval base in Bahrain, its first permanent military outpost in the Middle East in nearly half a century, London's defense ministry said.

The base, south of Bahrain's capital Manama, will house around 300 British troops and support personnel.

"Our presence in Bahrain will play a vital role in keeping Britain safe as well as underpinning security in the Persian Gulf," defense secretary Gavin Williamson said.

The new base means Britain will have the opportunity to add to its four mine-hunter warships currently based at the Mina Salman port.

"What happens in the Persian Gulf region has a direct impact on the national security of the United Kingdom, our prosperity and the safety of our citizens," Britain's defense ministry claimed.

"It is vital that we work with close allies like Bahrain to tackle regional threats such as that posed

by Daesh," it added.

The tiny island nation of Bahrain currently houses the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet.

Britain withdrew from bases in the Persian Gulf in 1971 as part of its plan to pull out from "East of Suez".

It ended its troop presence in southern Iraq in 2009, leaving bases built in Basra after the 2003 invasion.

British warships, specially the fleet of advanced Type 45 destroyers, have been struggling to stay afloat in the Persian Gulf's warmer waters. Constant power failures have on many occasions forced the £1 billion warships of this specific class to sail back to the UK and undergo repairs.

The base is also designed to house mine sweepers and aircraft carriers, but much to the surprise of military experts, it won't be able to service the Royal Navy's own flagship, the HMS Queen Elizabeth aircraft carrier, due to shallow waters.

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U.S. Patriot Being 'a Lemon', India Turns to S-400

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) -- India is to finalize a weapons deal to buy Russian-made S-400 missile defense systems, reportedly after seeing U.S.-made Patriot missile systems' repeated failures in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere.

India's Defense Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is visiting Moscow this week for New Delhi and Moscow to put the final touches to the agreement, which buys the latter six anti-aircraft-cum-anti-missile S-400 systems.

The deal, likely to reach \$6 billion in worth, comes despite U.S. sanctions against Russia, and heavy United States lobbying to peddle American arms to the subcontinent.

The New York Times reported on Thursday that the deal serves as a blow to Washington's "struggling Patriot missile defense system".

Sold to Saudi Arabia to highlight Riyadh and Washington's alliance,

the Patriot interceptors have been repeatedly failing against counterattacks by Yemen's Houthi Ansarullah movement amid the Saudi war on the neighboring country.

"The Patriot system has faced recent scrutiny after it failed to protect Saudi Arabia's capital from missiles fired by Houthi militants in Yemen," the paper wrote.

"India wasn't very impressed with the Patriot compared with the S-400, which wins hands-down in capability, in its availability, service availability. It's a more efficient system," it cited Rahul Bedi of Jane's Information Group as saying.

In March, Foreign Policy magazine published an article, describing Patriot as "a lemon of a missile defense system".

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