

TEHRAN (Press TV) -- Chief of Staff Major General Mohammad Baqeri said on Sunday Iran's Armed Forces are ready to deal with any possible threat posed by enemies of the Islamic Republic. "At the present time, the Armed Forces are maintaining a high level of readiness to give a response to any threat and act of aggression by enemies of the Islamic Iran," Baqeri said. "The world-devouring America, the usurping Zionist regime and regional reactionary regimes have been trying to threaten and deal a blow to the Islamic Revolution of Iran for the past 40 years," he said.




KANO, Nigeria (AFP) -- Forty-five people died in an attack by armed bandits in northern Nigeria, civilian militia members said Sunday, amid growing levels of rural violence often involving cattle theft, robbery and kidnappings for ransom. "The 45 bodies were found scattered in the bush. The bandits pursued residents who mobilized to defend the village after overpowering them," said a vigilante who asked not to be named for fear of reprisals. "The dead included children abandoned by their parents during the attack."

Viewpoint

Iran's Prestigious Position in the Book World

Iran to Feature Sohrab Sepehri Biopic



Iranian Wrestler Gets Silver Medal in Kazakhstan's Int'l Tournament



Yemeni Ballistic Missile Destroys Saudi Positions



Lebanon Votes for First Time in 9 Years: Election Set to Give Hezbollah More Seats

BEIRUT (Dispatches) -- Lebanese voters on Sunday participated in the first parliamentary elections in nine years, being fiercely contested between rival groups backed by regional powers. The voting is unlikely to change the existing balance of power among the major groups in Lebanon. Thousands of army and police forces deployed near polling stations and on major intersections across the country to ensure security. Electoral campaigns have been tense as each group has mobilized its supporters, with fist fights and shootings occurring in several areas in recent weeks. The main race is between a Western and Saudi-backed coalition headed by Prime Minister Saad Hariri and the Hezbollah group. "This shows Lebanon's democracy and the importance of democracy. This is a democratic wedding, and as we said from the start, congratulations to whoever wins tonight," said Interior Minister Nuhad Machnouk, who is running on Hariri's list, after casting his ballot in Beirut. As Hariri entered a public school to vote, a woman in a wheelchair complained that polling stations were not equipped for disabled voters. "We are human beings. It is not fair that we have to be carried like bags of potatoes," the woman, Silvana Lakkis, said. The prime minister promised to address the problem in the next elections. "When we see what is happening in countries around us and Lebanon is holding democratic elections, this shows that Lebanon is fine," Hariri said after waiting in line around 20 minutes to cast his ballot. "Order is nice," he quipped. The vote is the first since Syria's war broke out in 2011, sending a flood of around million refugees to neighboring Lebanon and adding to the country's economic woes. Hezbollah has sent thousands of fighters to Syria to prevent the ferocious war on some of the most brutal groups from spilling into Lebanon. Leading Hezbollah legislator Ali Ammar defended his group's involvement in Syria, saying it protected Lebanon from the "evil powers" of the Daesh group and Al-Qaeda. In Hezbollah strongholds in southern Beirut, there was a steady flow of voters Sunday.

Outside polling stations, Hezbollah supporters displayed a replica of the voting ballot on a big board and explained to voters which among the color-coded lists is theirs, and how they can vote for it. They wore yellow shirts with the slogan "We protect and build" written on them. "We love the resistance," said Amira Sidani, an 85-year-old woman, after casting her ballot. This year's vote is according to a new election law that is based on proportional representation. Voters will choose one list of allied candidates, as well as a preferred candidate from among them. In the past, the winning list took all the seats in the electoral district. At midday, after casting his ballot in southern Beirut, President Michel Aoun described the process as "successful." Wary of voters' apathy toward a vote unlikely to change much, he urged people to turn out in large numbers. The legislature's term was supposed to expire in 2013, but lawmakers have approved several extensions since then, citing security concerns linked to the spillover from Syria's war. Lebanese who support opposing sides in the war have clashed on a number of occasions, and Takfiri extremists have carried out several bombings. There were about 3.6 million eligible voters, and early results were expected after polling stations close at 7 p.m. (1600 GMT). Some 586 candidates, including 86 women, are running for the 128-seat parliament, which is equally divided between Muslims and Christians. Hezbollah and its allies are likely to add more seats, while Hariri is likely to lose several. The billionaire businessman has faced criticism after laying off scores of employees from his companies in Lebanon and Saudi Arabia. Still, Hariri will most likely be named to form a national unity Cabinet after the vote. The rival sides are expected to recreate the unity government that currently exists, which includes Hezbollah. The vote comes a week after Lebanese living overseas voted in 39 countries around the world. It was the first time Lebanon's large expatriate community was allowed to take part in the vote. That, along with the new electoral law, has injected some unpredictability to the process.

President Rouhani: Nothing Will Change After Trump Leaves JCPOA



President Rouhani addresses people in Sabzevar on May 6, 2016.

TEHRAN (Dispatches) -- President Hassan Rouhani said Sunday Iran had plans to respond to any move by U.S. President Donald Trump on the 2015 nuclear agreement and the United States would regret a decision to exit the accord. Trump says that unless European allies rectify "flaws" in Tehran's deal with world powers by May 12 he will refuse to extend U.S. sanctions relief for Iran. "We have plans to resist any decision by Trump on the nuclear accord," Rouhani told a crowd in Sabzevar in northeast Iran.

"Orders have been issued to the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran and a few days ago, I spoke with senior officials of the organization about the programs ahead," he said without elaboration. "Our path is quite clear. The economic sector has also received the necessary orders," Rouhani said. He said if the United States opts to pull out of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), "you will soon see the historic remorse which the move will bring about for" Washington.

The president hit out at the "American and Zionist propaganda against the great and brave nation of Iran which has resisted all along during big and decisive moments," dismissing it all absurd and false. "This nation is neither afraid nor has any fear from you. This great nation will continue with its progress and development on the side of its officials and the Leadership," he said, addressing U.S. leaders. Iran insists there is no way it will renegotiate the multilateral nuclear pact, which was endorsed

by UN Security Council Resolution 2231 in 2015. Rouhani said, "We must know that nothing will change in our lives next week." "Every decision that Trump takes, we have a plan and program to counter him and resist. Our nation is a free, brave, and persistent nation, and our enemies, God willing, will be brought to shame with their plots." Trump says the agreement does not address Iran's missile capabilities as well as the country's role in the Middle East, which the U.S. and the occupying regime of Israel view to their detriment. The Europeans say they have offered to include those issues in a supplementary package in order to keep the JCPOA intact. Rouhani addressed the U.S. and Europeans, saying Iran "is loyal to its promises but it is explicitly telling the whole world, Europe, America, the West and the East that we will not talk about our country's weapons and defense with anyone." "We will build and store any amount of weapons and missiles needed by the country. It is none of anybody's business what decision the Iranian people have made for their defense. We will not talk about the precision (of missiles) and our defensive power with anyone," he said.

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U.S. Revives Cold War Fleet to Counter Russia

WASHINGTON (Dispatches)--The United States Navy is re-establishing its Second Fleet, responsible for the northern Atlantic Ocean, nearly seven years after it was disbanded as the Pentagon puts countering Russia at the heart of its military strategy. The news came as new U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Friday defended the "muscular diplomacy" practiced by President Donald Trump as a way to solve thorny global issues "peacefully, without ever firing a shot." "Our National Defense Strategy makes clear that we're back in an era of great power competition as the security environment continues to grow more challenging and complex," Chief of U.S. Naval Operations Admiral John Richardson said on Friday. "Second Fleet will exercise operational and administrative authorities over assigned ships, aircraft and landing forces on the East Coast and northern Atlantic Ocean,"

Richardson said. The command, which will be based in Norfolk, Virginia, will initially have 15 personnel and will eventually grow to over 200 people, officials said. A number of decisions, like who would command Second Fleet and what assets it would include, have not yet been made. In 2011, the fleet was disbanded for cost-saving and organizational structure reasons. Tensions between Moscow and Washington have increased. Earlier this year, the U.S. military said in a new national defense strategy that countering Russia, along with China, would be a priority, the latest sign of shifting priorities. In presenting the new strategy, which will set priorities for the Pentagon for years to come, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis called China and Russia "revisionist powers" that "seek to create a world consistent with their authoritarian models."

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North Korea: U.S. Ruining Détente Ahead of Summit

PYONGYANG (Dispatches) -- With just weeks to go before President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un are expected to hold their first-ever summit, Pyongyang on Sunday hit out at what it called "misleading" claims that Trump's policy of maximum political pressure and sanctions are what drove the North to the negotiating table. The North's official news agency quoted a Foreign Ministry spokesman warning the claims are a "dangerous attempt" to ruin a budding detente on the Korean Peninsula after Kim's summit late last month with South Korean President Moon Jae-in. At the summit, Kim agreed to a number of measures aimed at improving North-South ties and indicated he is willing to discuss the denuclearization of the peninsula, though exactly

what that would entail and what conditions the North might require have not yet been explained. Trump and senior U.S. officials have suggested repeatedly that Washington's tough policy toward North Korea, along with pressure on its main trading partner China, have played a decisive role in turning around what had been an extremely tense situation. Just last year, as Kim was launching long-range missiles at a record pace and trading vulgar insults with Trump, it would have seemed unthinkable for the topic of denuclearization to be on the table. But the North's statement on Sunday seemed to be aimed at strengthening Kim's position going into his meeting with Trump. Pyongyang says Kim himself is the driver of the current situation.

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