

Over Syria Threat Russian Frigates in Mediterranean on Standby

SOCHI (Dispatches) – Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Wednesday that Russian military vessels with Kalibr cruise missiles would be on permanent standby in the Mediterranean to counter what he said was the terrorist threat in Syria.

The deployment shows how Russia has increased its military presence in the Middle East since it launched an intervention in Syria in 2015, turning the tide of the war in favor of its close ally, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

Russia has in the past fired Kalibr cruise missiles from frigates and submarines stationed in the Mediterranean Sea at terrorist targets to support Syrian army offensives.

Putin on Wednesday said only warships armed with Kalibr missiles would be on permanent standby, and

not submarines.

Announcing the deployment while addressing the Russian high military command at a meeting in the Black Sea city of Sochi, Putin said it was “due to the remaining terrorist threat in Syria.”

Moscow already has a permanent naval base at Tartus, on the Syrian coast, and an air base at Hmeimim in Syria.

Last month Russia hinted it would also supply advanced S-300 ground-to-air missiles to Assad despite objections from the Zionist regime, which has lobbied Russia hard not to transfer the missiles.

On Friday, however, in an apparent U-turn following a visit to Moscow by Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Russia said it was not in talks with Syria about supplying the



File photo shows a Russian Kalibr cruise missile launched from the Grad Sviyazhsk Missile Boat.

missiles. It said it did not think they were needed.

The Kremlin denied it had per-

formed a U-turn on the missile question or that any decision was linked to Netanyahu’s visit.

Bahraini Court Jails 115 Activists, Revokes Their Citizenship



The file photo shows anti-government protesters kneel in the street and gesture toward riot police in Bahrain’s capital, Manama.

MANAMA (Press TV) – A Bahrain court has sentenced more than a hundred citizens to jail and revoked their nationality as the ruling Al Khalifah regime presses ahead with its heavy-handed clampdown on the majority community in the

Persian Gulf kingdom.

Acting Head of Terror Crime Prosecution, Chief Prosecutor Hamad Shaheen, said that the Supreme Criminal Court found 115 Shia defendants guilty of forming of a “terrorist group” called Zulfiqar

Battalions, possession of explosive devices and flammable materials, training in the use of munitions, attempted murder of police officers and communication with a foreign state.

Fifty-three defendants received life imprisonment, three were sentenced to 15 years behind bars and fifteen others got seven years in prison.

The rest of the defendants were sentenced to jail terms ranging from three to five years.

Thousands of anti-regime protesters have held demonstrations in Bahrain on an almost daily basis ever since a popular uprising began in the country in mid-February 2011.

They are demanding that the Al Khalifah dynasty relinquish power and allow a just system representing all Bahrainis to

be established.

Manama has gone to great lengths to clamp down on any sign of dissent. On March 14, 2011, troops from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates were deployed to assist Bahrain in its crackdown.

Scores of people have lost their lives and hundreds of others sustained injuries or got arrested as a result of the Al Khalifah regime’s crackdown.

On March 5, 2017, Bahrain’s parliament approved the trial of civilians at military tribunals in a measure blasted by human rights campaigners as being tantamount to imposition of an undeclared martial law countrywide.

Bahraini monarch King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifah ratified the constitutional amendment on April 3 last year.

Egypt’s President Pardons Over 330 Mostly Youth Prisoners

CAIRO (Reuters) – Egypt’s President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi has pardoned more than 330 people, many of them youths jailed for demonstrating in recent years.

Sisi told a youth conference in Cairo broadcasted on state television, he had asked that the interior ministry ensure the pardoned youth prisoners be released within the coming hours.

“We signed off on more than 330 (pardoned), and I ask of the interior minister that these youth spend tonight in their home,” Sisi said.

Wednesday’s pardon will secure the release of 332 people, including two members of Egypt’s Destour Party and a number of prisoners with health problems, state-run news website Al-Ahram Gate reported.

A full list of those pardoned was not immediately available.

Since coming to power in 2014, Sisi has presided over a sweeping crackdown on opponents and liberal activists that rights groups say is the worst in their history.

He has issued pardons several times a year, including on major national holidays, often releasing students and young protesters.

Egypt in 2013 passed a law requiring interior ministry permission for any public gathering of more than 10 people, effectively ending the mass protests that helped unseat two presidents in the span of three years beginning in 2011.

Rights groups say the suppression of dissent continues.

Turkey’s Erdogan Vows to Take Effective Economic Control

ANKARA (Xinhua) – Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan vowed to take more effective control on economy, especially monetary policy, if he wins election next month.

Speaking during an official visit to London, the Turkish head of state repeated that he would lower interest rates after the crucial June 24 legislative and presidential elections, which will shift Turkey from decades-long parliamentary tradition to a presidential system.

“They (the people) will hold the president accountable when they fall into difficulties because of monetary policies,” said Erdogan in an interview with Bloomberg television.

Analysts are warning that the Turkish economy is overheating despite a spectacular growth rate of 7.4 percent in 2017 but amid a double-digit inflation and unemployment combined with a continuing depreciation of

the Turkish lira.

The Turkish currency, which has lost more than 13 percent of its value since the start of the year, plunged on Tuesday to its lowest ever point against the U.S. dollar.

Erdogan admitted during the interview that investors may be “uncomfortable” because of his future great role in policy making, but said that it was a must.

The Turkish strongman has always been in favor of low interest rates, arguing that this was the way to curb inflation.

Last week he said in Ankara that high interest rates are “the mother and father of evil,” fueling concern that he would not allow the Central Bank to hike rates.

Turkey has been through difficult times in the past few years: a coup attempt in 2016 and a controversial constitutional referendum in 2017 that concentrated executive powers in

the hands of President Erdogan who is ruling Turkey for 16 years.

The war in neighboring Syria has also had a serious impact on Turkish economy. The country’s budget deficit has meanwhile suffered the effects of fiscal amnesty and massive payout to old age pensioners ahead of the June elections.

Meanwhile, Turkey’s two major public banks have cut mortgage rates this week, heading Erdogan’s call for easing housing loans because construction is one of the pillars of the Turkish economic growth since Erdogan came to power in 2003.

Erdogan, who faces five other candidates, currently tops opinion polls for the presidential elections. But he has to reach the 50 percent-plus-one level of support to win the race in the first round of voting and avoid a run-off election two weeks after June 24.

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was appointed White House national security adviser.

Bolton in the past has suggested the U.S. government should push for a change in government in Iran. Johnson said government change in Iran was not a policy Britain should pursue.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said the best way to address concern about Iran’s role in the region and its ballistic missile program is within the framework of the nuclear deal, even after the United States pulled out.

“The question is whether you can talk better if you terminate an agreement or if you stay in it... we say you can talk better if you remain in it,” Merkel told lawmakers in the Bundestag lower house of parliament on Wednesday.

The European ministers also brought up in the talks their “concerns” over Iran’s ballistic missile program and regional activities, diplomats said. But senior Iranian official Ali Akbar Velayati said in Tehran that Iran’s defensive missile program was not negotiable.

European diplomats acknowledged that the EU support, however sincere, risked looking hollow after Trump reimposed an array of wide sanctions last week on Iran that will hit European companies investing there.

“Let’s not fool ourselves that there are dozens of things we can do,” said a senior European diplomat. “We don’t have much to threaten the Americans.”

President Hassan Rouhani said on Wednesday Iran will not surrender to U.S. pressures, a day after Washington imposed new sanctions on the Islamic Republic.

“They think they can make the Iranian nation surrender by putting pressures on Iran, by sanctions and even threats of war... The Iranian nation will resist against the U.S. plots,” Rouhani was quoted as saying by the ISNA news agency.

Rouhani also said Trump expected Tehran to leave the nuclear deal after the U.S. withdrawal. “Trump played his first card, but miscalculated the second move... as Iran did not follow that plan,” he said.

North... (Continued From Page One)

“We shed light on the quality of Bolton already in the past, and we do not hide our feeling of repugnance towards him,” vice minister Kim said.

The North Korean statement, as well its cancellation of the talks with the South due to U.S.-South Korean military exercises, mark a dramatic reversal in tone from recent months when both sides embraced efforts to negotiate.

North Korea had announced it would publicly shut its nuclear test site next week.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Sunday the United States would agree to lift sanctions on North Korea if it agreed to completely dismantle its nuclear weapons program.

However, Kim Kye Gwan’s statement appeared to reject that, saying North Korea would never give up its nuclear program in exchange for trade with the United States.

“We have already stated our intention for denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and made clear on several occasions that precondition for denuclearization is to put an end to anti-DPRK hostile policy and nuclear threats and blackmail of the United States,” Kim said.

North Korea has always defended its nuclear and missile programs as a necessary deterrent against aggression by the United States, which keeps 28,500 troops in South Korea, a legacy of the 1950-53 Korean War.

North Korea has long said it is open to eventually giving up its nuclear arsenal if the United States withdraws its troops from South Korea and ends its “nuclear umbrella” security alliance with Seoul.

The United States has insisted on complete, verifiable, and irreversible dismantling of North Korea’s nuclear weapons and the facilities needed to build the weapons as soon as possible.

Asian stock markets dipped after North Korea called off the talks with the South. Cancellation of the Singapore summit could see tension flare again even as investors worry about China-U.S. trade friction.

Kim Kye Gwan’s statement came only hours after North Korea denounced the U.S.-South Korean military exercises as a provocation and pulled out of the talks with the South.

Earlier KCNA denounced the “Max Thunder” air combat drills, which it said involved U.S. stealth fighters and B-52 bombers.

American stealth F-22 fighters were spotted in South Korea earlier in May, but a spokesman for the U.S. military command in South Korea said no B-52s were scheduled to take part in the drills.

Neither B-52s or B-1B bombers were present at last year’s Max Thunder drills, according to a South Korean defense ministry official. The drills would go on as planned and were not aimed at any third party, the ministry said.

Cancellation of the first meeting between a serving U.S. president and a North Korean leader, would deal a major blow to what would be the biggest diplomatic achievement of Trump’s presidency.

Kim Kye Gwan derided Bolton’s suggestion that discussions with North Korea should be similar to those that led to components of Libya’s nuclear program being shipped to the United States in 2004.

“The world knows too well that our country is neither Libya nor Iraq which have met miserable fate,” Kim said.

“It is absolutely absurd to dare compare the

Iranians... (Continued From Page One)

DPRK, a nuclear weapon state, to Libya which had been at the initial stage of nuclear development.”

The doubt thrown over the summit comes a week after Trump abandoned the 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and six world powers.

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Rouhani said, “The Palestinian people have resisted for 70 years, and will continue to do so.”

Turkey has told the Israeli consul general in Istanbul to leave the country temporarily, state media said Wednesday, the latest of a series of tit-for-tat expulsions.

The Turkish foreign ministry has told the consul to leave Turkey “for a period of time,” the state-run Anadolu news agency said.

Turkey had already withdrawn its ambassador in Tel Aviv for consultations and told the Israeli ambassador to Ankara to leave, while the occupying regime ordered the Turkish consul in Jerusalem Al-Quds to leave for an unspecified period of time.

The row, which on Tuesday saw President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Zionist counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu exchange bitter jibes on Twitter, threatens a 2016 deal on normalizing ties after a long-running crisis.

Turkey has expressed outrage over the massacre by Israeli forces and also blamed tensions on the U.S. decision to move its embassy for Occupied Palestine to Jerusalem Al-Quds from Tel Aviv.

Erdogan will on Friday host an emergency summit meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in Istanbul which he has said will send a “strong message to the world” on the issue.

The 2016 reconciliation deal ended a dispute over the May 2010 deadly storming of a Turkish ship by Israeli commandos that saw relations downgraded.

Erdogan this week hit out at the occupying regime of Israel for “genocide” and told Netanyahu he is leading an “apartheid” regime while having the “blood of Palestinians” on his hands.

Netanyahu meanwhile told Erdogan that as a leading supporter of Palestinian Hamas “there’s no doubt he’s an expert on terror and slaughter.”

In a tweet titled “Reminder to Netanyahu”, Erdogan then rejected that Hamas is a terror group, saying it is a “resistance movement that defends the Palestinian homeland against an occupying power.”

After talks with British Prime Minister Theresa May on Tuesday, Erdogan warned that history “will not forgive” Israel or the United States for moving the American embassy to Jerusalem Al-Quds in defiance of the Islamic world.

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Qasemi touched upon the U.S. government’s abuses and excessive demands as it uses different policies and levers to exert force and threatens other countries to advance its destructive policies. “Global reactions to the United States’ withdrawal from the JCPOA showed well that the U.S. president’s illogical and unwise decision which runs counter to all international regulations has affected the credibility and increased the isolation of the US government and caused irreparable damage to the American people. The move also further proved that the great Iranian nation is right to regard the United States and its administrations as unreliable,” he said.

Leader’s... (Continued From Page 2)

Javad Zarif travelled to Brussels earlier this week on the final leg of a whirlwind diplomatic tour, which also took him to Beijing and Moscow. On Tuesday, Velayati said Iran will not renegotiate the nuclear deal or negotiate over its missile program.

He also warned the occupying regime of Israel that it would face a “stronger response” if it repeated strikes on Syria.

Last week, the United States withdrew from a 2015 deal between Iran and world powers over Tehran’s nuclear program, and the Zionist regime fired at targets in Syria in response to what it called an Iranian missile attack into the occupied territory.

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data as if they were connected to the public network directly.

Jahromi’s remarks came after the Telegram messaging app was blocked over security grounds and the company’s refusal to cooperate with Iran.

Head of Iran’s Civil Defense Organization Brigadier General Gholam Reza Jalali said in January the enemy was seeking to spy on Iranians through using cyberspace and social media networks. He said the volume of information obtained by the U.S. and other countries through the social media networks was huge, warning that if the enemies gained access to the information they wanted, they could establish political, cultural and social dominance over Iran.