

South Korea, U.S. to Suspend Military Drills: Yonhap



U.S. President Donald Trump, left, talks with South Korean President Moon Jae-In at the presidential Blue House on November 7, 2017 in Seoul.

SEOUL (Reuters) -- South Korea and the United States are expected to announce the suspension of "large-scale" military drills this week, with the provision that they would restart if North Korea failed to keep its promise to denuclearize, news agency Yonhap said on Sunday.

Citing an unnamed government source, the South Korean news agency said the suspension was likely to affect only major joint exercises, not more routine military training.

U.S. President Donald Trump surprised officials in Seoul and Washington when he pledged to end "war games" after his summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un

in Singapore last week.

Immediately after the announcement, U.S. forces in Korea said they had received no guidance on stopping any drills, and South Korean officials said they were trying to figure out which exercises Trump was referring to.

However, in a sign Seoul may be open to suspending drills, South Korean President Moon Jae-in said on Thursday his government would need to be flexible when it came to applying military pressure on North Korea if it was sincere about denuclearization.

Moon said South Korea would carefully consider joint military drills with the United States and he asked his officials to cooperate

with the United States on the issue, his office said in a statement at the time.

Yonhap also reported on Sunday that during military talks between the two Koreas on Thursday, South Korean officials asked their northern counterparts to relocate artillery 30 to 40 kilometers away from the heavily fortified military demarcation line that divides the two countries.

The South's defense ministry denied it made such a request, Yonhap said.

The talks, the first in more than a decade, held in the border village of Panmunjom in the demilitarized zone (DMZ), followed an inter-Korean summit in April at which leaders of the two Koreas agreed to defuse tensions and cease "all hostile acts".

North and South Korea failed to reach any concrete agreement during those talks, officials said.

North Korea proposed to Seoul to disarm, on a trial basis, the Joint Security Area in Panmunjom, the only site in the DMZ where both countries' soldiers stand almost face to face, the South's presidential spokesman said on Friday.

About 28,500 U.S. troops are stationed in South Korea, a legacy of the Korean War, which ended in 1953 in an armistice that left the two Koreas technically still at war.

Boko Haram Bombings Kill Dozens in Nigeria



Smoke rises after a bomb blast at a bus terminal in Jos, Nigeria, May 20, 2014.

KANO (AFP) -- Suspected Boko Haram militants killed at least 31 people in a twin suicide bomb attack on a town in northeast Nigeria, a local official and militia leader told AFP on Sunday.

Two blasts ripped through the town of Damboa in Borno state on Saturday evening targeting people returning from celebrating the Eid al-Fitr holiday, in an attack bearing all the hallmarks of Boko Haram.

Following the suicide bombings, the Takfiri terrorists fired rocket-propelled grenades into the crowds that had gathered at the scene of the attacks, driving the number of casualties higher.

"There were two suicide attacks and rocket-propelled grenade explosions in Damboa last night which killed 31 people and left several others injured," said militia leader Babakura Kolo.

Two suicide bombers detonated their explosives in Shuwari and nearby Abachari neighborhoods in the town around 10:45 pm (2145GMT), killing six residents, said Kolo, speaking from the state capital Maiduguri, which is 88 kilometers from the town. "No one needs to be told this is the work of Boko Haram," Kolo said.

A local government official, who

spoke on the condition of anonymity, confirmed the death toll.

"The latest death toll is now 31 but it may increase because many among the injured may not survive," said the official.

"Most of the casualties were from the rocket projectiles fired from outside the town minutes after two suicide bomber attacked," he said.

The Takfiri group has deployed suicide bombers, many of them young girls, in mosques, markets and camps housing people displaced by the nine-year insurgency which has devastated Nigeria's northeast.

On May 1 at least 86 people were killed in twin suicide blasts targeting a mosque and a nearby market in the town of Mubi in neighboring Adamawa state.

Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari came into power in 2015 vowing to stamp out Boko Haram but the extremists continue to stage frequent attacks, targeting both civilians and security forces.

The militants stormed the Government Girls Technical College in Dapchi on February 19, seizing over 100 schoolgirls in a carbon copy of the abduction in Chibok in 2014 that caused global outrage.

Greece, Macedonia Sign Deal to End Name Row



Prime Minister Zoran Zaev of Macedonia, fourth from left, offered his tie to his Greek counterpart, Alexis Tsipras, after the signing ceremony on June 17, 2018.

PSARADES, Greece (Dispatches) -- Greece and Macedonia on Sunday signed a historic preliminary agreement to rename the country the Republic of North Macedonia, ending a row that has poisoned relations between the two neighbors since 1991.

"This is a brave, historic and necessary step for our peoples," said Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras.

"Our two countries should step out of the past and look to the future," said Macedonia Prime Minister Zoran Zaev.

The accord begins to unravel

one of the world's longest - and arguably most arcane - diplomatic disputes, which began 27 years ago with Macedonia's declaration of independence but whose roots date back centuries.

Zaev and several of his ministers arrived by speedboat at the picturesque fishing village of Psarades under a sunny sky, on the southern bank of Lake Prespa that is one of the natural boundaries between the two countries.

An economist and former mayor of Strumica, Zaev made rapprochement with Greece a priority to secure his country's membership of the European

Union and NATO, blocked by Athens for years.

After the signature, Tsipras was to cross over to the Macedonian side of Lake Prespa for lunch, becoming the first Greek prime minister to visit the neighboring state.

Since 1991, Athens has objected to its neighbor being called Macedonia because it has its own northern province of the same name, which in ancient times was the cradle of Alexander of Macedon's empire.

The two premiers, born just months apart in 1974, have bucked strong hostile reactions at home to push ahead with the agreement.

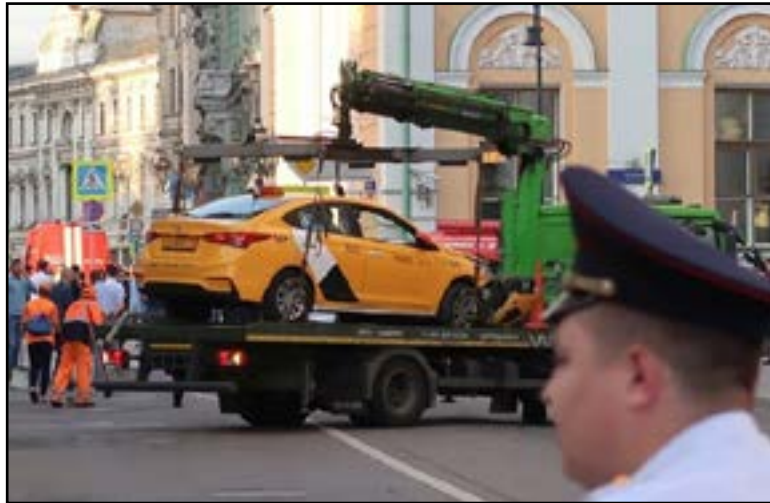
Tsipras has been accused of treachery by Greek hardliners, and on Saturday defeated a vote of censure against his government amid protests and clashes with police outside parliament.

In Macedonia, President Gorge Ivanov plans to exercise a one-time veto option to block the deal that the nationalist opposition has called a "capitulation".

The Macedonian parliament is scheduled to start debating the agreement next week.

The accord still needs to be approved by Macedonia's parliament and then pass a referendum.

Suspect in Taxi Crash in Moscow Says Fell Asleep



A damaged taxi, which ran into a crowd of people, is evacuated in central Moscow, June 16, 2018.

MOSCOW (AP) -- The suspect in a taxi crash near Red Square that injured two Mexican World Cup fans and six other pedestrians told interrogators that he fell asleep at the wheel, Moscow police said Sunday.

City police released a video Sunday of an interrogation session with a man identified as the Kyrgyz taxi driver, in which he says he briefly dozed off and accidentally hit the gas. It was unclear whether the man spoke under duress.

The man says he hadn't slept in 20 hours and wasn't drunk, and ran away after the accident because he was afraid that angry bystanders would kill him. He was later detained.

Videos circulating on Russian social media and some news websites after the incident showed the taxi veering onto the sidewalk Saturday and striking pedestrians. The accident took place on Llinka Street, about 200 meters from Red Square and Moscow's famous GUM shopping arcade, an area popular with tourists.

Viktoria Geranovich, who works nearby and filmed the fleeing driver on her phone, described her shock at the crash. "I called the ambulance right away," she

said. "I was trembling. It is not a thing you see every day, when a taxi drives right into the crowd."

Moscow police would not comment on whether the crash would affect security measures for the World Cup, which is being held in 11 Russian cities over the next month. Among the security concerns has been the possible use of vehicles as weapons.

A spokeswoman for FIFA told The Associated Press that the World Cup organizers regretted what happened, but referred security questions to Moscow authorities because the crash took place outside stadiums or fan venues. The spokeswoman, who was not authorized to be publicly named, said World Cup organizers were in regular contact with local authorities about security.

Global soccer fans in Moscow shared information about the crash but didn't appear to let it dampen their enthusiasm. "It is pretty horrible that something like that has happened," said Mexican supporter Julio Dominguez. But he added "there are crazy people everywhere."

Fellow fan Fernando Ibarra said, "We hope our countrymen are OK! Big hug to the families too. Viva Mexico!"



BENHAZI, Libya (AFP) -- The self-styled Libyan National Army loyal to strongman Khalifa Haftar announced Sunday a "major offensive" to drive rival groups from the country's northeastern oil crescent. Armed groups on Thursday attacked the Ras Lanuf and Al-Sidra terminals held by Haftar's forces around 650 kilometers east of Tripoli. "We have launched a major offensive supported by the army and air force to drive out the militias of (Ibrahim) Jadhran and his allies", LNA spokesman Ahmad al-Mesmari told AFP. Jadhran's Petroleum Facilities Guard controlled the terminals for years following the 2011 ouster and killing of longtime Libyan strongman Muammar Gaddafi, but were eventually forced out by the LNA. The LNA controls most of eastern Libya and is opposed to an internationally recognized government based in Tripoli, which has itself condemned Thursday's militia attacks. On Thursday, Jadhran said in a video that he had formed an alliance to retake oil terminals seized by Haftar's forces in September 2016.

BANGKOK (AP) -- The official agency that had managed the vast wealth of Thailand's royal family has announced that its assets have formally been turned over to King Maha Vajiralongkorn Bodindradebayavarangkun, who assumed the throne after the death of his father in 2016. An undated announcement seen Saturday on the website of the Crown Property Bureau says that assets it has been administering will be put in the same category as the monarch's personal assets and managed together at his discretion. Forbes magazine's 2011 rankings of the world's richest people had estimated the fortune of the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej at more than \$30 billion, including the holdings of the Crown Property Bureau. King Vajiralongkorn last year had already asserted personal total control over the bureau. Some holdings in two major companies controlled by the bureau had already been transferred earlier to the new king's personal control.

VALENCIA, Spain (AP) -- The Aquarius charity-run rescue ship arrived in the Spanish port of Valencia Sunday, a week after Italy refused to let it dock with 629 migrants on board. Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez offered to take the ship in, meaning it had to travel an extra 700 nautical miles after plucking the migrants from unstable boats off the coast of Libya. There are now 106 migrants on the vessel, after two ships from Italy's coast guard and navy shared out the passengers to make the long journey safer.

LONDON (Reuters) -- British Prime Minister Theresa May said Sunday it was important to ensure that parliament could not block Brexit, defending her approach to passing the legislation that will end Britain's membership of the European Union. "We need to recognize the role of parliament, but ensure that the government's hands can't be tied in negotiations and that parliament does not overturn the will of the people," May told the BBC.

ZAGREB (AFP) -- A Turkish-flagged cargo ship was sinking off the Croatian coast Sunday and its 13-member crew was being taken off with no pollution detected for now, the Croat transport ministry said. The evacuation of the crew - including 11 Turkish and two Indian nationals - started at 0405 GMT and no one was injured. The ship was sinking north of Vis island in the center of the Adriatic, a ministry statement said, adding that precautions were being taken to prevent pollution. The ship carrying 3,000 tons of sinter magnesite, used in the production of high-temperature resistant materials, as well as 70 tons of fuel and lubricants, it added.

LISBON (AP) -- Portugal's president and prime minister have attended a Mass in a rural town to mark the anniversary of a wildfire that killed 66 people. President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa and Prime Minister Antonio Costa joined other government members and scores of local people Sunday at a small church in Pedrogao Grande, which is located about 200 kilometers northeast of Lisbon. A fire that began near the town of 4,000 people grew into one of Portugal's biggest blazes of 2017, an unprecedented year for deadly wildfires that brought 116 deaths. At Pedrogao Grande, 47 people died in their cars as they fled the flames. The president also was unveiling a memorial monument and meeting with survivors. The Portuguese government says it is working to upgrade the country's firefighting capabilities.

France, Germany 'Very Close' to Eurozone Reform Deal

PARIS (AFP) -- Paris and Berlin are very close to an agreement on eurozone reform after months of divisions, French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire has said.

"An agreement is close at hand," Le Maire said on Twitter late Saturday after final negotiations on the subject with this German counterpart in the northern German city of Hamburg.

The minister added that he hoped an agreement could be finalized on Tuesday, when German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron are scheduled to meet near Berlin.

Paris and Berlin are racing to bridge the gap between Macron's vision of grand European Union reforms and Chancellor Angela Merkel's

more prudent approach by a crunch eurozone summit on June 29.

"There are two or three remaining issues" to sort out, a European source close to the negotiations told AFP. "But these are clearly defined and limited."

The source added that "real progress had been made on the sensitive issues that remained to be decided, especially regarding the eurozone budget."

Germany and other northern European states have balked at Macron's calls to give the eurozone its own big budget, fearing the more fiscally prudent north will have to pick up the tab for overspending by the more profligate south.

Earlier this month, Merkel made some concessions, agreeing to support

Macron's call for an investment fund to help poorer European countries catch up in the areas of science, technology and innovation.

But the size of the fund remains a major bone of contention, with Merkel saying it should be "at the lower end of the double-digit billions of euros range", while Macron has called for a budget amounting to "the equivalent of several points of the GDP of the eurozone".

The French president is on a drive to reconcile Europeans with the EU after years of austerity and mass migrant flows have helped fuel the rise of anti-immigrant and nationalist parties.

He has championed EU reform proposals such as a common finance minister and budget.