

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) -- The U.S. Senate passed a \$716 billion military policy bill, backing President Donald Trump's call for a bigger, stronger military and sidestepping a potential battle with the White House over technology from major Chinese firms.

As voting continued, the vote for the John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act, or NDAA, was 79-10 in the 100-member Senate. Since it was passed by the House of Representatives last week, it now goes to the White House, where Trump is expected to sign it into law.

TEHRAN (Dispatches) -- Iran on Friday strongly condemned recent airstrikes by a Saudi Arabia-led coalition that killed scores of people in the western Yemeni province of Hudaydah.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qasemi said the attacks are part of the "horrifying genocide" going on against the Yemeni people "to make up" for Saudi defeats on the battlefield. "This is nothing other than a serious war crime," he asserted.

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## Saudi Jets Kill Scores in Hudaydah as Zionists Wade In

SANAA (Dispatches) -- A senior UN official expressed alarm Friday at deadly Saudi strikes in Yemen's port city of Hudaydah including at the entrance to the war-ravaged country's largest hospital.

At least 55 people were killed and scores others wounded Thursday in a Saudi airstrike at the Al-Thawra hospital and the bombardment of a fish market in Hudaydah, according to medics and witnesses.

"This is shocking," said Lise Grande, the UN humanitarian coordinator for Yemen.

Hundreds of thousands of people depend on Al-Thawra, which is Yemen's largest hospital, she said. "Hospitals are protected under international humanitarian law. Nothing can justify this loss of life."

Saudi troops and mercenaries, backed by the UAE, have been conducting an offensive to capture Hudaydah from Houthi fighters and their allies in the Yemeni army, but announced last month they were pausing the assault.

The fighting around Hudaydah has raised UN fears of a new humanitarian catastrophe in a country already standing at the brink of famine and gripped by a deadly cholera epidemic.

"Every day this week we have seen new cholera cases in Hudaydah, and now this," Grande said.

"The impact of the strikes is appalling. Everything we are trying to do to stem the world's worst cholera epidemic is at risk."

According to local officials, the death toll was expected to rise due to the magnitude of the airstrikes, particularly on the hospital.

The Saudi aggression, launched in March 2015, has taken a heavy toll on the country's infrastructure, destroying many hospitals, schools, and factories.

The Saudi offensive in Hudaydah has ground into a stalemate in the face of stiff resistance by its residents and Houthi fighters.

Zionist Regime Coming to Saudi Help?

The occupying regime of Israel has for the first time publicly threatened to intervene militarily in the Bab el-Mandeb Strait which is under the de facto control of the Houthis.

Zionist PM Benjamin Netanyahu said he would order such an action as part of "an international coalition," Ha'aretz reported.

Netanyahu, however, claimed that its military action would be targeting Iran which has never made an assertion of trying to intervene in the strait.

"If Iran tries to block the Straits of Bab al-Mandeb, it will find itself facing an international coalition determined to prevent it from doing so," he said.

Saudi Arabia claimed last week that it had temporarily suspended all oil shipments through Bab el-Mandeb following attacks by Houthi fighters.

Saudi Energy Minister Khalid al-Falih said two Saudi very large crude carriers (VLCCs), each carrying two million barrels of oil, had been attacked in the Red Sea.

The Houthis said the targets were Saudi Arabia's Al-Dammam military frigate, and a boat deployed by the kingdom in the ongoing aggression against Yemen.

Market watchers also disputed Riyadh's allegations that its exports through Bab el-Mandeb had been halted.

Netanyahu, however, stuck to the Saudi version of the events in an address to a group of naval commanders as he warned of a coalition that "would include Israel in all its branches."

"Earlier this week, we witnessed a sharp clash with Iran's satellites who tried to sabotage international shipping in the Straits at the mouth of the Red Sea," he said.

Last month, Houthi leader Abdul-Malik al-Houthi said the Saudi coalition was implementing the Israeli agenda in the region.

In June, he said Zionist warplanes had been detected flying over the key Yemeni port city of Hudaydah which is currently subject to a Saudi and UAE blitzkrieg.

"Yemen is actually fighting against a Saudi-Zionist coalition," he said.

Several Western countries, the U.S. and the UK in particular, are widely known to be helping Saudi Arabia in the aggression, but the Zionist regime's public announcement of involvement in the conflict adds new dynamics to the turmoil.

## China Rejects U.S. Demand to Cut Iran Oil Imports



China is the world's top crude buyer and Iran's No. 1 customer.

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) -- The U.S. has been unable to persuade China to cut Iranian oil imports, Bloomberg reported on Friday, citing two officials familiar with the negotiations.

The rebuttal deals a blow to President Donald Trump's efforts to isolate the Islamic Republic after his withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear accord, it said.

Beijing has, however, agreed not to ramp up purchases of Iranian crude, according to the officials, who asked not to be identified because discussions with China and other countries continue.

Teams of U.S. officials have been visiting capitals around the world to try to choke off sales of Iranian oil by early November, when U.S. sanctions are due to snap back into effect.

While the Trump administration has said it wants to cut Iranian oil exports to zero by Nov. 4, most analysts viewed that target as unlikely, Bloomberg said.

Francis Fannon, the assistant secretary of state for the Bureau of Energy Resources, was recently in China to discuss sanctions, according to a State Department spokesperson. The administration has warned

that even allies would face sanctions if they didn't show "significant" progress in reducing Iranian oil purchases by Nov. 4, ruling out broad exemptions or waivers.

The oil market has been speculating about how much of Iran's exports could be eroded by the U.S. sanctions, with analysts from BMI Research to Mizuho Securities predicting that China might boost its imports of supplies from the state and offset cuts by other nations. Countries including South Korea and Japan are reducing purchases from OPEC's third-largest producer before the deadline to avoid the risk

of buyers losing access to the U.S. financial system.

China -- the world's top crude buyer and Iran's No. 1 customer -- has said previously that it opposed unilateral sanctions and lifted monthly oil imports from the country by 26% in July. It accounted for 35% of the Iranian exports last month, according to ship-tracking data compiled by Bloomberg.

The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, led by Saudi Arabia, has pledged to fill any supply gaps in the market after Trump's complaints.

Iran's OPEC governor said on Tuesday Trump has apparently been duped by Saudi Arabia into believing that the kingdom can replace Iranian barrels cut from the market.

"It seems President Trump has been taken hostage by Saudi Arabia and a few producers when they claimed they can replace 2.5 million barrels per day of Iranian exports, encouraging him to take action against Iran," Hussein Kazempour Ardebili was quoted as saying by Reuters.

### India's Iranian Oil Imports Hit Record High

India's monthly oil imports from Iran surged by about 30% to a record 768,000 barrels per day (bpd) in July, as state refiners' intake surged ahead of U.S. sanctions in November, preliminary tanker arrival data obtained by Reuters showed.

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## Pompeo: North Korean Weapons Program Continues

SINGAPORE (Dispatches) -- Less than two months after a landmark U.S.-North Korea summit in Singapore, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo flew back to the city state on Friday and said North Korea's continued work on weapons programs was inconsistent with its leader's commitment to denuclearize.

Pompeo was asked en route to Singapore about his statement in the U.S. Senate last month that North Korea was continuing to make bomb fuel and reports that North Korea, led by Kim Jong Un, was building new missiles.

"Chairman Kim made a commitment to denuclearize," Pompeo told reporters. "The world demanded that they (North Korea) do so in the UN Security Council resolutions. To the extent they are behaving in a manner inconsistent with that, they are a) in violation of one or both the UN Security Council resolutions and b) we can see we still have a ways to go to

achieve the ultimate outcome we're looking for."

Pompeo thanked ministers of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) at a meeting in Singapore for their efforts in enforcing sanctions on North Korea.

In a landmark summit in Singapore on June 12, Kim and U.S. President Donald Trump committed in a broad statement to work toward denuclearization, but Pyongyang has offered no details as to how it might go about this.

Pompeo told a Senate committee hearing on July 25 that North Korea was continuing to produce fuel for nuclear bombs in spite of its pledge.

On Monday, a senior U.S. official said U.S. spy satellites had detected renewed activity at the North Korean factory that produced the country's first intercontinental ballistic missiles capable of reaching the United States.

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## Terrorists Attack Shia Mosque in Afghanistan

KABUL (Dispatches) -- Armed terrorists opened fire on a Shia mosque and set off at least one suicide blast Friday, killing at least 29 worshipers and injuring scores of others in southeastern Afghanistan, officials said.

The Taliban denied any links to the attack that occurred during Friday prayers in Gardez, about 50 miles south of Kabul, and there was no immediate claim of responsibility from others.

But militants linked to Daesh have carried out similar attacks in the past against Shia Muslims.

Sardar Wali Tabasum, a provincial spokesman, said two assailants launched the mosque attack. "One opened fire on the worshipers before the second one blew up explosives on his body," he said.

Abdullah Hasrat, a spokesman for the provincial governor, said at least 29 people were killed and 80

injured. Witnesses said the mosque was badly damaged.

President Ashraf Ghani condemned the attack, which he said was aimed at trying to create sectarian division in Afghanistan. Hundreds of Shia Muslims have been killed in strikes by Daesh terrorists in recent years in Afghanistan.

Attackers have struck a variety of targets in Afghanistan in recent weeks.

On July 15, a suicide bomber detonated an explosive outside a government office for rural projects, killing five people. On Thursday, the bodies of three foreign workers -- from India, Malaysia and Macedonia -- were found after they were apparently abducted and slain. The three men worked for Sodexo, one of the world's leading food and catering services.

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