

TEHRAN (Dispatches) – Defense ministers of Iran and Pakistan on Wednesday explored avenues for the expansion of cooperation between the two neighbors to strengthen regional peace and stability.

In a telephone conversation with his Pakistani counterpart Pervez Khattak, Iran's Brigadier General Amir Hatami highlighted Iranian authorities' emphasis on enhancing ties with Pakistan, and hoped that the political will of the two sides under Pakistan's new government would make up for past shortcomings.

VIENNA (Dispatches) -- Iran's ambassador to Vienna-based international organizations, Kazem Gharibabadi, said the remaining parties to the 2015 nuclear deal should ensure that the deal would serve the Islamic Republic's interests. "While Iran has continued its cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in an effective way based on goodwill, unfortunately, our interests have not been fully served based on what has been mentioned in the nuclear deal," Gharibabadi told an IAEA Board of Governors meeting Wednesday.

**Viewpoint**

## The Killing Fields of Afghanistan

## Iran Computer Scientists Awarded 4 Medals in Japan



## Iran Beat Uzbekistan 1-0 in First Post-World Cup Match



## Saudi-Arabia Resumes Air Strikes on Yemen's Hudaydah



## 9/11 Lawsuit May Wreck Ambitious Saudi Plans

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) -- A lawsuit alleging Saudi involvement in the 9/11 attack is overshadowing Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman's economic and political plans.

Saudi Arabia is attempting to move its economy away from dependence on oil, to deconstruct its image as a Wahhabi society and portray its autocratic rulers as reformists.

In 2016, the U.S. Senate overruled then-President Barack Obama to pass Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act (JASTA), a law allowing civil lawsuits by victims of "international terrorism" to proceed in U.S. courts against sovereign states.

The bill opened the door for the families of the 9/11 victims to go after Saudi Arabia over its alleged role in the attacks.

While Riyadh maintains that it has nothing to do with the Al-Qaeda militants, U.S. District Judge George Daniels in New York gave a green light in March for a lawsuit against the Saudi government to proceed.

Beyond damaging the kingdom's image, the court case threatens Saudi economic interests, namely the plans to sell a 5 percent stake in Saudi Aramco, the state's oil company.

Lawyers had warned the kingdom against listing Aramco's initial public offering on the New York Stock Exchange, the Financial Times reported last year.

Saudi Arabia has denied that it is suspending the sale, which aims to raise \$100 billion in cash to boost other sectors of the economy. But the IPO's delay is apparent.

"This dampens the Saudi wish to invest in the United States, considering that investments in the United States is one of the pillars of the Saudi economic diversification plan," Imad Harb, director of research and analysis at Arab Center Washington DC, told Middle East Eye.

"Economic relations do spill over to political relations. This is why Saudi Arabia is very concerned about it."

He added that the lawsuit also harms the U.S. public's perception of the kingdom, not only relating to its alleged involvement in the attacks, but also because it opens the door for discussing the current state of affairs in Saudi Arabia, including human rights abuses.

Andrew Maloney, a lawyer for the 9/11 victims' families, said the legal proceedings are in the stage of discovery - gathering documents from the Saudis and other parties.

If the Saudis refuse to cooperate with the court, Maloney explained, they would be considered in default.

Saudi assets in the U.S. are abundant and would be up for grabs if the plaintiffs win.

Saudi rulers have cozied up to Donald Trump, and Prince bin Salman has particularly received praise from the U.S. president.

"Even if the president didn't want us to do it, he really couldn't stop us... The Saudis are mistaken if they're relying on the president to protect them here; it's not possible," Maloney said.

Maloney said the 9/11 Commission report leaves open a large portion of the Saudi government that could be held liable, including Saudis who may not be considered high-level officials.

If a faction of mid-level Saudi officials had been conspiring with the hijackers, it would make the entire government liable, Maloney said.

The lawyer suggested that the report does not tell the entire story.

"The (Saudi) Ministry of Islamic Affairs in the United States and other parts of the world had government officials who conspired with Al-Qaeda to support them and to support the 9/11 hijackers," Maloney said.

"The 9/11 Commission back in 2003 and 2004 either didn't pursue, didn't want to pursue, covered up for the Saudis or just never got around to finishing the investigation. That's where we picked it up, and we've collected a lot more information and evidence since then."

He added that the FBI may have sealed information on Saudi involvement that the plaintiffs are seeking.

The most damning allegations in the lawsuit are around contacts by Saudi officials with hijackers Khalid al-Mihdhar and Nawaf al-Hazmi, who arrived to the U.S. and settled in southern California in January 2000.

According to the 9/11 Commission report, the two militants were "ill-prepared" for a mission in the United States: they were not fluent in English and had not spent any "substantial time" in the West. The investigation found that it was "unlikely" that Mihdhar and Hazmi came to the United States without arranging in advance to receive assistance from individuals in the U.S.

The plaintiffs say those individuals were allegedly two Saudi officials in Los Angeles and San Diego: Fahad al-Thumairy and Omar al-Bayoumi.

Thumairy was the head of a Saudi-funded mosque in Los Angeles (Continued on Page 7)

# Rouhani: U.S. in Worst Situation Globally



President Emmanuel Macron of France, left, talks to a sidelined U.S. President Donald Trump as G20 leaders pose in Hamburg, Germany, on July 7, 2017.

TEHRAN (Dispatches) -- Iran's President Hassan Rouhani said on Wednesday that the U.S. is currently going through one of the darkest chapters in its history both at home and on the international scene, where it has lost even the support of its traditional allies.

Addressing a cabinet meeting, Rouhani said the situation in the United States is quite different from the past.

"Today, there are few researchers, intellectuals and experts in the U.S. that share the same opinions as those at the White House, and some of them even explicitly refer

to American rulers as idiots. This has rarely happened in U.S. history."

Rouhani said U.S. allies do not politically side with Washington anymore and even the country's traditional allies have "proudly" distanced themselves from America.

"This is while they once were proud to be with the United States," he said, adding only a few "ill-famed" countries are currently supporting Washington.

"The U.S. is today in its worst situation globally, and even international organizations such as

UNESCO, the UN, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the International Criminal Court do not approve of American policies."

Referring to Washington's stepped-up pressure against Iran following its withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal, Rouhani said the Islamic Republic is facing an "unsolicited" economic war by those who have no respect for international law.

On Monday, U.S. National Security Adviser John Bolton threatened sanctions against the ICC should The Hague-based court pro-

ceed with its bid to launch an investigation into alleged war crimes by U.S. forces in Afghanistan or conduct any probe into Israeli atrocities or violations by other U.S. allies.

Last year, the U.S. quit UNESCO, accusing the UN cultural agency of "anti-Israeli bias."

Back in May, U.S. President Donald Trump pulled his country out of the 2015 Iran deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), despite objections from the other signatories to the accord.

Trump introduced the first wave of anti-Iran sanctions in August and threatened that the second wave would "ratchet up to yet another level" in November.

Nevertheless, the IAEA has repeatedly confirmed Iran's full compliance with the JCPOA, which has been endorsed by UN Security Council Resolution 2231.

Iran's Foreign Minister Muhammad Javad Zarif slammed the U.S. threats on Tuesday.

"The U.S. threatens to impose sanctions on the ICC & even prosecute its judges in American courts. Where is the outrage?" he wrote on his Twitter account. "The boorishness of this rogue U.S. regime seems to know no bounds. When will the international community say enough is enough & force U.S. to act like a normal state?"

Bolton's speech was an extraordinary rebuke also decried by human rights groups that complained it was another Trump administration

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## Biggest Russian Drill With China Rattles NATO

BUCHAREST (Dispatches) -- Romania, Turkey and Poland have expressed concern about what they call Russia's "increasing and visible offensive military posturing," near NATO borders.

The foreign ministers of the three NATO members on the eastern flank issued a statement condemning "the repeated violation of NATO airspace, the continued military buildup in Crimea and Kaliningrad" and "continued violation of obligations and commitments on arms control."

Their statement accused Russia of using hybrid tactics that have "serious implications for the regional security and beyond."

Russia on Tuesday launched its largest military exercise since the Cold War, mobilizing 300,000 troops that will also involve thousands of Chinese forces, amid worsening relations with the West.

Romanian Foreign Minister Teodor Melescanu met his Turk-

ish counterpart Mevlut Cavusoglu and Polish Foreign Minister Jacek Czaputowicz in Bucharest to discuss regional security issues.

China and Russia have staged joint drills before but not on such a large scale, and the Vostok-2018 (East-2018) exercise signals closer military ties.

Vostok-2018 is taking place at a time of heightened tension between the West and Russia, and NATO has said it will monitor the exercise closely, as will the United States which has a strong military presence in the Asia-Pacific region.

Russia's Ministry of Defense broadcast images on Tuesday of columns of tanks, armored vehicles and warships on the move, and combat helicopters and fighter aircraft taking off.

In one clip, marines from Russia's Northern Fleet and a motorized Arctic brigade were shown

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## European Parliament Votes to Sanction Hungary

STRASBOURG (Reuters) -- The European Parliament voted Wednesday to sanction Hungary for flouting EU rules on democracy, civil rights and corruption in an unprecedented step that left Prime Minister Viktor Orban isolated from powerful allies.

Hungary said it would seek legal ways to challenge the 448-197 vote it described as "petty revenge."

Delivering more than the two-thirds majority required as many of Orban's allies in the conservative party deserted him, the vote, however, has little chance of ending up with the ultimate penalty of Hungary being suspended from voting in the EU. If nothing else, its Polish ally would veto that.

But the 197 votes cast against the parliament's first bid to launch the punitive process of the EU treaty's Article 7 highlighted the substantial minority of European opinion who see Orban as a crusader for the rights of nation states and eth-

nic majorities against rules of civic behavior agreed in Brussels.

Since sweeping to power in 2010, Orban, once a campaigner against Hungary's Soviet Communist overlords, has used his parliamentary majority to pressure courts, media and non-government groups in ways his opponents say breach EU rules.

He has also led opposition to German Chancellor Angela Merkel and others who want Europe to take in more Muslim refugees.

"Today's European Parliament decision was nothing else but a petty revenge of pro-immigration politicians against Hungary," Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto told a news conference in Budapest. "The decision was made in a fraudulent way, and contrary to relevant rules in European treaties."

As abstaining votes had not been counted, he said that changed the outcome of the vote.

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