

# China 'Outraged', Russia Says U.S. Playing With Fire



A Russian soldier walks near Russia's air defense system S-400 Triumf launch vehicles (C) at a military exhibition in Zhukovsky, outside Moscow, August 13, 2014.

BEIJING (Dispatches) -- China said Friday it was "outraged" over U.S. economic sanctions against a Chinese military agency and its director over the purchase of Russian fighter jets and surface-to-air missile equipment. China's foreign ministry demanded the U.S. cancel the measure, as Moscow also lambasted the sanctions and warned that the Trump administration was "playing with fire."

Washington says China's purchase of the weapons from Rosoboronexport, Russia's main arms exporter, violated a 2017 law, the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA), intended to punish the government of President Vladimir Putin for interfering in U.S. elections and other activities. U.S. State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert said in a statement that China's Equipment Development Department and director Li Shangfu made a "significant transaction" involving the purchase of Su-35 combat aircraft in 2017 and S-400 surface-to-air missile system-related equipment in 2018. Earlier on Friday, Russia also lashed out over the new sanctions, warning the U.S. was "playing with fire."

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov issued a statement saying the U.S. appeared to consider slapping sanctions on Russia a new national pastime, and dismissing their efficacy. "Each new round of sanctions proves our foe's complete lack of success in pressuring Russia with previous such attempts," Ryabkov said according to the Reuters news agency. "It would be not bad if they remembered about the concept of global stability which they are unthinkingly undermining by whipping up tensions in Russia-U.S. relations. Playing with fire is stupid and can become dangerous."

U.S. Ambassador to Moscow John Huntsman said that the relationship between the two countries was "stressed." "The months ahead will be key in stabilizing our relationship and deepening trust," Huntsman told a U.S. investment forum in Moscow. "We must work on replenishing the level of trust between our officials."

# Multiple People Shot in Syracuse Shooting



In this grab from video, people stand near an entrance to Upstate University Hospital after multiple victims shot in Syracuse, NY on September 20, 2018.

NEW YORK (Dispatches) -- Emergency services were responding to reports of a shooting of up to seven people, including children, in the city of Syracuse in the U.S. state of New York on Thursday. Police responded to a shooting shortly after 9 pm local time and found several people with gunshot wounds, the department said in a statement posted on Twitter by a producer for National Public Radio. News website Syracuse.com reported that the shooting took place at a family gathering to mark the death of a person who died of cancer earlier on Thursday. The website said that at least 10 shots had been fired in the shooting in downtown Syracuse, about 402 km northwest of New York City. The shooting occurred a day after a woman shot and killed four people in the U.S. state of Maryland before she was wounded and transferred to a hospital. The United States loses about 33,000 people to gun violence every year. Additionally, more than 100,000 people are shot each year in the country at a total cost of \$45 billion, according to a study published in the journal Health Affairs.

Amnesty International said in a scathing report last week that the gun violence situation in the United States has grown into a full blown "human rights crisis" amid inaction from the U.S. government. The report said "all aspects of American life have been compromised in some way by the unfettered access to guns, with no attempts at meaningful national regulation." "The U.S. government is prioritizing gun ownership over basic human rights. While many solutions have been offered, there has been a stunning lack of political will to save lives," said Margaret Huang, executive director of Amnesty International USA. "Our government has allowed gun violence to become a human rights crisis," she said. The issue of gun violence has become all the more polarizing under President Donald Trump, a Republican whose presidential campaign was funded partially by the National Rifle Association (NRA). Trump has been reluctant to address the growing issue in his speeches and following several high-profile mass shootings in the country.



LONDON (Reuters) -- British and French military jets were scrambled to investigate suspected Russian fighter aircraft flying over the North Sea Thursday. Colonel Cyrille Duvivier, a spokesman for the French Air Force, told Reuters one or several Russian planes were detected and that the actions were not hostile. "The usual response mechanisms were triggered: Rafale fighters took off in the late morning from the base of Saint-Dizier with a refueling plane and positioned themselves for possible intervention," Duvivier said. RAF jets regularly monitor Russian warplanes near UK airspace and they intercepted jets near Romania last month. Britain's Minister of State for the Armed Forces, Mark Lancaster, spoke about "an ever more assertive Russia" in a speech in London in July. He said the RAF has had to scramble jets more than 80 times over the last decade to intercept Russian military aircraft.

ISLAMABAD (AP) -- Pakistan says Prime Minister Imran Khan has written to his Indian counterpart, seeking to resolve outstanding disputes between the two nuclear-armed nations, including issues such as the divided region of Kashmir. The foreign ministry's spokesman, Mohammad Faisal, tweeted Thursday that Khan's letter reciprocated Indian Premier Narendra Modi's sentiments earlier this month for a "meaningful and constructive engagement." Khan also asked in his letter that the two countries' foreign ministers hold a meeting on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York later this month. India's external affairs ministry has responded positively about that meeting. Pakistan and India have fought two of their three wars since independence in 1947 over the disputed Himalayan region of Kashmir, divided between the two countries but sought by each in its entirety.

VATICAN CITY (Reuters) -- Pope Francis has accepted the resignation of two more Chilean bishops, bringing to seven the number who have stepped down since a sexual abuse scandal swept the nation's Roman Catholic Church. A Vatican statement on Friday said the two were Bishop Carlos Eduardo Pellegrin Barrera of the diocese of San Bartolome de Chillan, and Bishop Cristian Enrique Contreras Molina of the diocese of San Felipe. In both cases, Francis appointed other bishops as commissioners, known as Apostolic Administrators, to run the dioceses until further notice. Francis accepted the resignations of five other bishops in June, a month after all of the country's bishops offered to step down en masse during an emergency meeting with the pope over allegations of a cover-up of sexual abuse in the Latin American country.

TOKYO (Reuters) -- Prime Minister Shinzo Abe won a ruling party leadership vote on Thursday, setting him on track to become Japan's longest-serving premier and try to cement his legacy, including by revising the pacifist constitution. If Abe, who resigned abruptly after a troubled 2006-2007 term, stays in office through November 2019, he will have exceeded the 2,886 days marked by Taro Katsura in the early 20th century. "I want to tackle constitutional reform together with all of you," Abe told his Liberal Democratic Party after the vote. First, however, he has the immediate challenge of a likely summit with U.S. President Donald Trump next week, when he will face pressure to cut Japan's \$69 billion surplus with its key ally, nearly two-thirds from auto exports.

LONDON (Reuters) -- British foreign minister Jeremy Hunt said Thursday that the international community should consider referring the treatment of Rohingya in Myanmar to the International Criminal Court unless those responsible are tried and held accountable in the country. "If there is not going to be accountability and justice in Burma, then the international community needs to look at all options including ICC referral," Hunt said on Twitter, posting during a visit to Myanmar. "The latter would need the support of the security council which it may not get so we need to look at other options too."

BERLIN (Reuters) -- Support for Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservative bloc has slumped to a new low, and the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) would be the second-biggest party if an election were held right away, a poll showed Friday. The ARD DeutschlandTrend survey put support for Merkel's conservative alliance -- her Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and its Bavarian allies, the Christian Social Union (CSU) -- at 28 percent, down one point from Sept. 6 and at a record low. Merkel, who has led Germany since 2005, only narrowly averted the collapse of her coalition government in June after a row between the CDU and the CSU over immigration policy. The conservative sister parties and their Social Democrat junior coalition partners agreed to oust the head of the BfV domestic agency over accusations that he harbored sympathies to the far-right.

# Korean Leaders Join Hands on Peak of Sacred Volcano



South Korean President Moon Jae-in, second from right, and his wife Kim Jung-sook, right, stand with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, second from left, and his wife Ri Sol Ju on the Mount Paektu in North Korea, Sept. 20, 2018.

PYONGYANG (Dispatches) -- The leaders of the rival Koreas took to the road for the final day of their summit Thursday, standing on the peak of a beautiful volcano considered sacred in the North, their hands clasped and raised in a pose of triumph. Their trip to the mountain on the North Korean-Chinese border, and the striking photo-op that will resonate in both Koreas, followed a day of wide-ranging agreements they trumpeted as a major step toward peace. However, their premier accord on the North's pursuit of nuclear-tipped missiles that can accurately strike the U.S. mainland contained a big

condition: Kim Jong Un stated that he would permanently dismantle North Korea's main nuclear facility only if the United States takes corresponding measures. Kim and South Korean President Moon Jae-in flew separately to an airport near Mount Paektu on Thursday morning where they then met up and drove to the mountain. Members of the Kim family are referred to as sharing the "Paektu Bloodline," and the volcano is emblazoned on the national emblem and lends its name to everything from rockets to power stations. Many South Koreans also feel

drawn to the volcano, which, according to Korean mythology, was the birthplace of Dangun, the founder of the first ancient Korean kingdom, and has long been considered one of the most beautiful places on the peninsula. Moon departed for South Korea later Thursday, as the leaders bask in the glow of the joint statement they settled Wednesday. Compared to the vague language of their two earlier summits, Kim and Moon seem to have agreed on an ambitious program meant to tackle soaring tensions last year that had many fearing war as the North tested a string of increasingly powerful weapons. Kim promised to accept international inspectors to monitor the closing of a key missile test site and launch pad and to visit Seoul soon, and both leaders vowed to work together to try to host the Summer Olympics in 2032. But while containing several tantalizing offers, their joint statement appeared to fall short of the major steps many in Washington have been looking for - such as a commitment by Kim to provide a list of North Korea's nuclear facilities, a solid step-by-step timeline for closing them down, or an agreement to allow international inspectors to assess progress or discover violations. It also was unclear what "corresponding steps" North Korea wants from the U.S. to dismantle its nuclear site.

# Second Swiss Canton to Vote on Banning Burqa

GENEVA (Dispatches) -- A second Swiss canton will vote Sunday on whether to introduce a regional "burqa ban", a controversial law that would prohibit all face-covering garments in public spaces. St. Gallen is expected to follow the example of the southern canton of Ticino, where a law was introduced two years ago which appeared to be aimed at burqas and other Muslim veils. A text stipulating that "any person who renders themselves unrecognizable by covering their face in a public space, and thus endangers public security or social and religious peace will be fined" was adopted by lawmakers in St. Gallen late last year. That law passed the regional parliament with support from the populist right and centre parties -- but the issue is being put to the people after the Green Party and Young

Socialists demanded a referendum. The text, first drafted following uproar in the canton over a girl who wore a full-face veil to school, is problematic, according to Fredy Fassler, a socialist in charge of security and justice in St. Gallen. It does not define when a woman wearing a burqa constitutes a danger, and critics "worry the sanctions will be unpredictable and arbitrary", he told daily newspaper Le Temps. Switzerland's government last year opposed an initiative aimed at creating a nationwide burqa ban, saying it should be up to the regions to determine if such measures are appropriate. All Swiss voters will eventually cast ballots on the issue after the populist right-wing Swiss People's Party gathered the 100,000 signatures needed to put any subject to a referendum.

The anti-Muslim measures have already been taken in several European countries, including France, Denmark, Belgium and Spain, citing "security" concerns for imposing the restrictions. France became the first in the European Union to ban the public wearing of burqa in April 2011. A law took effect in Belgium in July that year that banned any clothing that obscured the identity of the wearer in public. The Netherlands also passed its own laws on the issue back in June, banning face coverings, including burqas and niqabs, in public spaces such as schools, hospitals, public transport and government buildings. The ban, which targets Muslim women, has sparked concerns, with many saying it could dissuade Muslim women from entering public spaces, including schools.

# Malaysia's Ex-PM Najib Hit With 25 New Charges



Former Malaysia's prime minister Najib Razak (C) is escorted by police to the courthouse in Kuala Lumpur on September 20, 2018.

KUALA LUMPUR (Reuters) -- Malaysian prosecutors charged former Prime Minister Najib Razak with 21 counts of money laundering and four counts of abuse of power on Thursday over hundreds of millions of dollars received in his personal bank account. The charges bring the total number against Najib to 32 as investigators ramp up a probe into how billions went missing from scandal-plagued 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) - a state fund that he founded and chaired. Najib has pleaded not guilty to all the charges. Charges have piled up on Najib since he unexpectedly lost a general election in May to Mahathir Mohamad, who reopened the 1MDB investigation. Prosecutors said Najib used his position as prime minister, finance minister and chairman of 1MDB to obtain funds totalling about 2.3 billion ringgit (\$556.23 million) between 2011 and 2014. Najib has faced money laundering allegations since the Wall Street

Journal reported in 2015 that \$681 million was transferred to a personal bank account of the then-prime minister. A year later, the U.S. Department of Justice confirmed the transfer and said the funds originated from 1MDB. It also said a total of \$4.5 billion was stolen from the Malaysian fund. Despite growing calls to step down, he clung to power by cracking down on dissent and the media. But Najib has come under close scrutiny since the election defeat to his former mentor. Earlier this year, prosecutors brought a total of seven charges, involving money laundering, criminal breach of trust and abuse of power, relating to funds of about 42 million ringgit that allegedly flowed from SRC International, a former 1MDB unit, into his personal bank account. The SRC trial will begin in February. 1MDB is being investigated by at least six countries, including Singapore, Switzerland and the United States, over alleged money laundering and graft.