

# Kremlin: U.S. Plan to Quit Nuclear Treaty Dangerous



Delegations, led by Russia's Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu (R) and U.S. National Security Adviser John Bolton (2nd L), meet in Moscow, October 23, 2018.

MOSCOW (AFP) — The Kremlin said Tuesday that a landmark nuclear arms treaty Washington says it wants to quit had its weak points, but that the U.S. approach of talking about leaving it without proposing a replacement was dangerous.

President Vladimir Putin was due to discuss the matter in Moscow later Tuesday with U.S. President Donald Trump's national security advisor, John Bolton.

Bolton visited Moscow a day after Russia said it would be forced to respond in kind to restore the military balance with the United States if Trump followed through on his

threat to quit the treaty and began developing new missiles.

Signed by then-U.S. President Ronald Reagan and reformist Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev in 1987, the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty required elimination of all short- and intermediate-range land-based nuclear and conventional missiles held by both countries in Europe.

Its demise could raise the prospect of a new arms race and of Europe once again hosting U.S. land-based ballistic and cruise missiles, something that would make it a target for Moscow.

Gorbachev, now 87, has warned that

unraveling it could have catastrophic consequences. Countries such as Poland have, however, backed Trump's move.

Bolton has said he thinks the treaty is outdated because it does not cover countries such as China, Iran and North Korea which he says remain free to make intermediate-range ballistic missiles and cruise missiles.

"We have this very unusual circumstance where the United States and Russia are in a bilateral treaty, whereas other countries in the world are not bound by it," Bolton told the Ekho Moskvy radio station Monday.

The RIA news agency cited a Russian diplomatic source as saying that Bolton had used a series of meetings with Russian government officials Tuesday to complain about China's economic and military policies.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said he expected Bolton to explain the U.S. stance to Putin.

"Of course there are weak points (in the treaty), but tearing up the agreement without plans for anything new is what we don't welcome," Peskov told reporters on a conference call.

"To first reject the document and then (talk of) ephemeral possibilities to conclude a new one is a dangerous stance."

Russia and the United States have long accused each other of violating the terms of the treaty, something they both deny.

Trump's withdrawal announcement is causing particular concern in Europe which was the main beneficiary of the INF treaty as a result of the removal of Pershing and U.S. cruise missiles from Europe and of Soviet SS-20 missiles from the European part of the then Soviet Union.

# China Opens Bridge Linking Hong Kong to Mainland



An aerial view taken on October 22, 2018, shows a section of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge (HKZM) in Hong Kong.

ZHUHAI, China (AP) — China Tuesday opened the world's longest sea-crossing bridge linking Hong Kong to the mainland, a feat of engineering carrying immense economic and political significance.

Chinese President Xi Jinping presided over a ceremony in the city of Zhuhai to open the 55-kilometer-long bridge linking it to the semi-autonomous regions of Hong Kong and Macau. Digital fireworks exploded on a screen behind him as leaders of the three cities watched.

The \$20 billion bridge took almost a decade to build while incurring major delays and cost overruns. It includes an undersea tunnel allowing ships to pass through the Pearl River delta, the heart of China's crucial manufacturing sector.

Its opening will cut travel time across the delta from several hours to just 30 minutes, something China hopes will bind the region together as a major driver of future economic growth. Heavily regulated traffic using permits issued under a quota system will begin flowing on Wednesday.

The bridge forms a physical link between the mainland and Hong Kong, an Asian financial hub that was handed over from British to Chinese control in 1997 with the assurance it would maintain its own legal and economic system for 50 years.

That carries major political significance for Xi's administration, which has rejected calls for political liberalization in Hong Kong, sparking fears Beijing will clamp down further on civil liberties before the end of the "one country, two systems" arrangement in 2047.

The bridge's opening also comes a month after the inauguration of a new high-speed rail link from Hong Kong to mainland China that runs along a different, shorter route. That line has vastly decreased travel times but also raised concerns about Beijing's growing influence because mainland Chinese law applies within part of the line's Hong Kong terminus.

In Zhuhai, however, sentiments revolved around economic growth and national pride. Airline pilot Liu Gang said he'd been eagerly anticipating the opening of the bridge, calling it a symbol of the mainland's increasingly close ties with Hong Kong and Macau.

Luo Fengzhi, who works in real estate, cited the bridge as evidence of China's growing economic and engineering prowess.

"For Chinese people, this makes them feel proud," she said. "I hope that every patriotic Chinese person can come and see this great feat of engineering, and I welcome foreigners to come and see for themselves as well."

# Thousands Evacuated as Hurricane Reaches Mexico



A general view of Mazatlan is seen through a window of a plane as Hurricane Willa approaches the Pacific beach resort of Mazatlan, Mexico October 22, 2018.

MAZATLAN, Mexico (Reuters) — Thousands of people were evacuated, buildings boarded up and classes canceled on Mexico's Pacific coast as Hurricane Willa threatened to batter tourist resorts with high winds and heavy rains on Tuesday.

Residents on Monday night sealed off windows and doors with large wooden planks on hotels facing the historic downtown boardwalk of Mazatlan, a popular coastal city in the state of Sinaloa, as tourists strolled nearby and palm trees swayed in a light breeze.

Forecast to be one of the most powerful hurricanes to enter Mexico from the Pacific in recent years, Willa is expected to strike a few miles south of Mazatlan as soon as Tuesday afternoon.

At a gas station on the city's outskirts, a steady line of cars queued up to refuel and shop at the neighboring convenience store.

Station attendant Zulema Pardo said residents had been streaming through for hours to stock up on basic items, buying enormous jugs of water and gasoline, and leaving the bread shelf completely empty.

"People are really scared," she said. "People are crazy and worked up."

Late on Monday the storm was advancing about 85 miles (140 km) west of Las Islas Marias islands opposite Nayarit, the state south of Sinaloa, according to the Miami-

based National Hurricane Center (NHC).

Several other tourist getaways in Nayarit, as well as the beach resort of Puerto Vallarta in Jalisco state, also lie near the path of the storm, which is forecast to bring a "life-threatening storm surge, wind and rainfall," the NHC said.

Willa, which on Monday had been a Category 5 on the five-step Saffir-Simpson scale, was blowing maximum sustained winds of near 145 miles per hour (230 kph) on Monday night with higher gusts, the NHC said.

Headed northward, Willa is forecast to weaken after hitting the coast, the hurricane center said.

Antonio Echevarria, governor of Nayarit, said more than 10,000 people were being evacuated and schools would be closed. He warned locals not to defy the storm.

"Let's not play the macho. Let's not act like superheroes," he said. "It's a very strong hurricane, very potent, and we don't want any tragedies."

Sinaloa also canceled classes in much of the state.

Up to 18 inches (45 cm) of rainfall could pummel the storm zone, the NHC said. Even buildings up to 500 meters (1,640 feet) from the coastline could lose power and suffer physical damage, Mexico's National Meteorological Service (SMN) said.

# Turkey Warns Greece Against Shifting Maritime Border



A Turkish coast guard ship patrols in the Aegean Sea off the Turkish coast, April 20, 2016, part of a NATO naval presence meant to monitor illegal naval movement between Turkey and Greece.

ISTANBUL (Reuters) — Turkey warned Greece Tuesday it would not tolerate a shift in the Greek maritime border, a few days after Athens said it planned to extend its territorial waters to 19 km to the west of the country.

Territorial waters are a sensitive issue between the two neighbors, who are separated by the Aegean Sea. Turkey and Greece have been at odds over their respective continental shelves for decades.

Turkey has previously warned it could not preclude military action to defend its interests.

Former Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Kotzias, who resigned last week, said Saturday that Athens planned to extend

its territorial waters in the Ionian Sea, which flanks the west coast of the country. The planned measure would not affect the Aegean region, off Greece's eastern and southern coasts.

Turkey's foreign ministry, however, said that it had noted statements from Athens of plans for the gradual expansion of Greek territorial waters.

"It is not possible to tolerate steps where there is no bilateral agreement on the Aegean where the two countries have mutual shores," Foreign Ministry spokesman Hami Aksoy said in a statement.

The statement recalled a 1995 declaration of Turkey's parliament which had authorized action, not excluding

military action, to safeguard Turkish interests.

"(Parliament's) declaration...dated 8 June 1995 has the necessary political warning in this context and it still maintains its validity today," the statement added.

That view had been conveyed to Greece's ambassador in Turkey, it said.

As a signatory to the UN Convention of the Law of the Sea, Greece has said it can extend its territorial waters to 19 km from its coast from nine kilometers at present, though it has not sought to do so in waters stretching towards Turkey.

Greece and Turkey are at loggerheads over matters ranging from sea boundaries to air space jurisdiction and the ethnically-divided eastern Mediterranean island of Cyprus.

The long frozen Cypriot conflict has come into sharper focus after the discovery of natural gas in the sea around Cyprus, and attempts by its internationally-recognized government to license oil majors for exploration. Verbal sparring over jurisdiction is common; last week, Turkey accused Greece of harassing a Turkish research vessel in the area. Greece denied this.

The leaders of the two Cypriot sides, Greek Cypriot Nicos Anastasiades and Turkish Cypriot Mustafa Akinci, are due to have talks in Nicosia, Cyprus's partitioned capital, on Oct. 26.

It will be their second meeting since the collapse in July 2017 of negotiations to end a conflict dating to Turkey's 1974 occupation of northern Cyprus in response to a brief Greek-inspired military coup.

# Imran Khan Makes New Peace Offer to India

RIYADH (AFP) — Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan Tuesday vowed to hold peace talks with arch-rival India following elections in the neighboring country, after a similar offer from the former cricketer was "rebuffed".

Khan made the announcement during a speech at a Saudi Arabian investment conference where the newly minted leader launched a charm offensive targeting potential investors as Pakistan seeks to secure funds amid a yawning balance of payment crisis.

"When I won the elections and came to power the first thing I tried to do was extend a hand of peace to India," Khan told the crowd at the Future Investment Initiative (FII) in Riyadh, saying the overture was later "rebuffed" by Delhi.

"Now what we are hoping is that we wait until the elections then again we will

resume our peace talks with India," he added, referring to upcoming nationwide polls scheduled to take place by mid-May.

In September India pulled the plug on a rare meeting between its foreign minister and her Pakistani counterpart on the sidelines of a UN summit -- a move that was termed "arrogant" by Khan and unleashed a barrage of insults from both sides.

India has long accused Pakistan of backing militants in Kashmir, a Himalayan territory divided between the two countries but claimed in full by both since independence in 1947.

Delhi has stationed about 500,000 soldiers in the portion of Kashmir it controls, where separatist groups demand independence or a merger with Pakistan.

Khan's call for peace talks comes as his administration is desperately

seeking funds from "friendly" countries, including Saudi Arabia, to shore up Pakistan's deteriorating finances.

The prime minister's attendance at the FII comes as leading policy-makers and corporate chiefs shunned the conference in response to the death of journalist Jamal Khashoggi at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul.

During his address at the FII Khan confirmed that Pakistan was also in talks with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) over a new bailout.

Since taking power in August Khan has also sought loans from allies such as China and Saudi Arabia, promised to recover funds stolen by corrupt officials, and embarked on a series of high-profile populist austerity measures.

But help has been in short supply and economists' warnings have grown increasingly urgent.



SAN FRANCISCO (Guardian) — Silicon Valley technology corporations including Amazon, Palantir and Microsoft make millions from U.S. immigration enforcement, according to a new report. They provide tools that aid surveillance, detention and deportation of individuals targeted by Donald Trump's anti-immigrant agenda, according to a paper published Tuesday by a coalition of immigrant rights groups. The report outlined ways Immigration and Customs Enforcement (Ice) has expanded its reach, with infrastructure from tech companies that have faced growing internal and external pressure to cancel their contracts. "During this time of continued escalated abuse by Ice and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), we've been frustrated, scared and shocked by the level of secrecy around how many of these tech contracts are procured," said Jacinta Gonzalez, an organizer with Mijente, one of the not-for-profit groups behind the report. "These technologies are being used in real time, and so many companies are profiting."

BEDFORD, N.Y. (Dispatches) — The FBI and local police responded to an address near the home of George Soros after an object that appeared to be an explosive was found in a mailbox, according to authorities. The Bedford Police Department said it responded to the address in the hamlet of Katonah at 3:45 p.m. Monday after an employee of the residence opened the package. The person placed the package in a wooded area and called police, who alerted the FBI and the Bureau of Alcohol, Firearms and Explosives. Bedford police said the FBI's terrorism task force was investigating. The FBI's New York field office said on Twitter that it was "conducting an investigation at and around a residence in Bedford, NY. There is no threat to public safety, and we have no further comment at this time." Soros, a billionaire who made his fortune in hedge funds, has invested heavily in liberal campaigns, angering many countries. Recently, critics have accused him of secretly financing a caravan of Central American migrants to make their way north toward Mexico and the U.S. Others have accused him of being a Nazi collaborator during World War II, when he was a child in Hungary.

TAIPEI (Time) — The U.S. Navy sailed two warships through the Taiwan Strait for the second time since July, a show of force that threatens to further exacerbate tensions with China. Two U.S. vessels sailed through the Taiwan Strait from waters near Eluanbi, the southern tip of Taiwan island, toward the north, Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense said in a statement on its website. U.S. Pacific Fleet spokesman Commander Nate Christensen said the guided-missile destroyer USS Curtis Wilbur and the guided-missile cruiser USS Antietam took part in the passage operation "in accordance with international law." The transit coincides with a period of rising tension between Taiwan and China, which considers the island one of its provinces. Since the election of Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen from a pro-independence party in 2016, Beijing has cut off formal communication with Taipei and stepped up military exercises in the area.

MOSCOW (Dispatches) — Russian President Vladimir Putin has signed a decree setting the stage for "special economic measures" in response to what the document calls Ukraine's "unfriendly actions" against Russian citizens and companies. In the decree signed and posted on the Kremlin website, Putin instructs the government to draft a list of Ukrainian firms and individuals to be targeted for economic sanctions. The decree also orders the government to outline the sanctions and says it can be cancelled if Ukraine lifts all restrictions it has imposed against Russian citizens and companies. Like the United States and the European Union, Kyiv has imposed sanctions on Russian tycoons, companies, and other entities in response to Moscow's seizure of the Crimean Peninsula in March 2014 and its support for armed separatists in eastern Ukraine. In June, Putin signed a law on countermeasures against the United States and other countries that have sanctions against Russia.

PARIS (AP) — French police have moved into a makeshift migrant camp outside the northern port city of Dunkirk to clear out an estimated 1,800 people seeking to cross the English Channel to Britain. The local prefecture said on Tuesday that migrants will be sent to reception centers in northern France where authorities will check if they want to seek asylum. The camp in Grande-Synthe is a way-station for migrants, most of them Iraqi Kurds, where human traffickers are known to operate. It was the latest periodic clean-out of the camp. Last September and June, hundreds of migrants were evacuated from the camp and a local gymnasium. France's new interior minister Christophe Castaner will visit Grande-Synthe later in the day to meet with police forces.

BRUSSELS (Reuters) — Belgium's energy production is plunging as its nuclear reactors are taken offline for repairs, with the power shortfall this winter seen as a test of the country's ability to cope when the reactors are phased out from 2022. Four nuclear reactors at Doel near Antwerp and three at Tihange in Liege, all operated by Electrabel, part of France's Engie, produce about half of Belgium's electricity when they are fully operational. Six of the seven all built between 1975 and 1985 with an original lifespan of 40 years are currently closed for repairs and maintenance, reducing their combined 6 gigawatts capacity by nearly two-thirds. They are expected to come back online between late November and June. Grid operator Elia has warned it may have to ration electricity during the high-demand winter months, while fears of a supply shortage that could see lights go out and trains stand still have pushed power prices to record highs.