

WASHINGTON (AP) — Top Democrats on Saturday rushed to defend Rep. Ilhan Omar after President Donald Trump retweeted video that was edited to suggest she was being dismissive of the significance of the worst terrorist assault on U.S. soil. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi scolded Trump for using the "painful images of 9/11 for a political attack" against the first-term Minnesota Democrat. And presidential candidate Elizabeth Warren, campaigning in New Hampshire, accused Trump of "trying to incite violence and to divide us, and every political leader should speak out against that."

TEHRAN (Dispatches) -- A fire at a refinery near Iran's Persian Gulf port of Bandar Abbas was quickly extinguished on Saturday, and there were no casualties, Iranian news agencies reported. "In less than 40 minutes, the fire was contained by firefighting teams. Fortunately, the incident did not cause any casualties," Ali-Reza Safa Isini, head of the provincial crisis management body, was quoted as saying by ISNA. The cause of the blaze and the extent of damage at the refinery, which has a capacity of about 300,000 barrels per day, are under investigation, Isini said.

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## Bahraini People Force Zionists to Cancel Visit

DUBAI (Dispatches) -- A delegation from the occupying regime of Israel that was due to attend a conference in Bahrain this week has pulled out due to security concerns, the organizers said on Sunday, after Bahrainis held an extensive campaign against the visit.

A spokeswoman for the Zionist regime's economy ministry said a planned visit to Bahrain this week by Israel's economy minister Eli Cohen had been "delayed because of political issues."

The occupying regime of Israel and the Persian Gulf Arab countries are in the midst of a diplomatic push aimed at forging an alliance against Iran. Their efforts have become increasingly public after years of mostly covert contact due to strong opposition to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories.

The group of around 30 Zionist business executives and regime officials was scheduled to participate in a congress organized by the U.S.-based Global Entrepreneurship Network (GEN) in Bahrain on April 15-18.

This prompted an outcry in Bahrain, with parliament joining calls on social media for the visit to be canceled and some minor street protests held in Manama.

"While we advised the Israeli delegation they would be welcome, they decided this morning not to come due to security concerns and a wish not to cause disruption for the other 180 nations participating," Jonathan Ortman, GEN president, said in a statement.

A source close to the matter told Reuters that three Zionist speakers had canceled because they were unable to obtain visas while the rest of the delegation had "decided not to go."

The Bahraini regime said the delegation had been invited at the sole initiative of the Global Entrepreneurship Network. "Our responsibility is to ensure a safe and supportive environment for the attending delegations," the regime said in a statement.

Last week a group of Bahraini lawyers tried unsuccessfully to get a court to stop immigration authorities from issuing visas to the delegation, while parliament condemned the visit. "Bahrain's parliament announces that the people of Bahrain rejects any Israeli presence on its territory and its lands and any decision allowing this presence is unacceptable," lawmakers said in a statement.

The occupying regime of Israel has formal diplomatic relations with only two Arab states, neighboring Egypt and Jordan. But a Zionist cabinet minister visited Abu Dhabi's Grand Mosque last year and fellow Persian Gulf state Oman hosted PM Benjamin Netanyahu on a surprise trip, the first time an Israeli leader had visited the Sultanate in 22 years.

TEHRAN (Dispatches) -- Iran will ask the international community to take a position on the U.S. designation of its Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist organization, Foreign Minister Muhammad Javad Zarif said Sunday. Iran condemned U.S. President Donald Trump's step last week as illegal. The IRGC is a powerful popular force established after the 1979 Islamic Revolution to protect Iran. "Today ... we will send messages to foreign ministers of all countries to tell them it is necessary for them to express their stances, and to warn them that this unprecedented

## Zarif Says Sending Messages to All FMs Iran Warns Countries of Dangerous U.S. Measure



Protesters in Tehran rally after Friday prayers on April 12, 2019 to support the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps and condemn the U.S. government's blacklisting of the popular force.

and dangerous U.S. measure has had and will have consequences," Zarif was quoted as saying by state news agency IRNA. Zarif said he had also sent letters to United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and the United Nations Security Council to protest against "this illegal U.S. measure". Tehran retaliated against Washington's move by designating the regional United States Central Command (CENTCOM) as a terrorist organization. Relations between Tehran and Washington took a turn for the

worse last May when Trump pulled out of a 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and six world powers, reached before he took office, and reimposed sanctions. The United States has already blacklisted dozens of entities and people for affiliations with the IRGC, but had not previously targeted the organization as a whole. IRGC commanders have repeatedly said that U.S. bases in the Middle East and U.S. aircraft carriers in the Persian Gulf are within range of Iranian missiles. Tehran has also threatened to block oil shipments through the

Strait of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf if the United States tries to strangle Iran's economy by halting its oil exports. Iran's oil minister said on Sunday that the supply-demand balance in the global oil market is fragile due to U.S. sanctions on Iran and Venezuela and tensions in Libya, and warned of consequences for increasing pressures on Tehran. Iraqi resistance groups, which have been a major partner in the national army's sweeping counter-terrorism operations, threw their weight behind the IRGC on Saturday. Representatives of the Iraqi resistance groups visited the residence of the Iranian consul general in the holy city of Najaf, delivering a statement in which they expressed their solidarity with the Iranian force. They also recalled the IRGC's contribution to Iraqi forces' years-long anti-terror drive and commended its role in preventing several Iraqi states from falling into the hands of Daesh. A spokesman for the Badr Organization denounced Washington's move against the IRGC as "laughable", saying the label is "coming from the number one sponsor of terrorism, America." A spokesman for the Fatah (Conquest) alliance also denounced the U.S. designation, saying, "We reject this action from America and say we have honor to be in the Islamic resistance that fought and beat terrorism."

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## American, European Military Generals: U.S., Russia Risk Stumbling Into Conflict

WASHINGTON (AP) — It has the makings of a new Cold War, or worse.

The deep chill in U.S.-Russian relations is stirring concern in some quarters that Washington and Moscow are in danger of stumbling into an armed confrontation that, by mistake or miscalculation, could lead to nuclear war.

American and European analysts and current and former U.S. military officers say the nuclear superpowers need to talk more. A foundational arms control agreement is being abandoned and the last major limitation on strategic nuclear weapons could go away in less than two years. Unlike during the Cold War, when generations lived under threat of a nuclear Armageddon, the two militaries are barely on speaking terms. "During the Cold War, we understood each other's signals. We talked," says the top NATO

commander in Europe, U.S. Army Gen. Curtis Scaparrotti, who is about to retire. "I'm concerned that we don't know them as well today."

Scaparrotti, in his role as Supreme Allied Commander Europe, has met only twice with Gen. Valery Gerasimov, the chief of the Russian general staff, but has spoken to him by phone a number of other times.

"I personally think communication is a very important part of deterrence," Scaparrotti said, referring to the idea that adversaries who know each other's capabilities and intentions are less likely to fall into conflict. "So, I think we should have more communication with Russia. It would ensure that we understand each other and why we are doing what we're doing."

He added: "It doesn't have to be a lot." The United States and Russia, which together control more

than 90 percent of the world's nuclear weapons, say that in August they will leave the 1987 treaty that banned an entire class of nuclear weapons. And there appears to be little prospect of extending the 2010 New Start treaty that limits each side's strategic nuclear weapons.

After a period of post-Cold War cooperation on nuclear security and other defense issues, the relationship between Washington and Moscow took a nosedive, particularly after Russian forces entered the former Soviet republic of Georgia in 2008. Tensions spiked with Russia's annexation of the Crimea in 2014 and its military intervention in eastern Ukraine. In response, Congress in 2016 severely limited military cooperation with Russia.

The law prohibits "military-to-military cooperation" until the secretary of defense certifies that Russia "has ceased its oc-

cupation of Ukrainian territory" and "aggressive activities." The law was amended last year to state that it does not limit military talks aimed at "reducing the risk of conflict."

Relations frayed even further amid U.S. allegations that Russia interfered in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, although President Donald Trump has doubted Russian complicity in what U.S. intelligence agencies assert was an effort by Moscow to boost Trump's chances of winning the White House. After a Helsinki summit with Putin in July, Trump publicly accepted the Kremlin leader's denial of interference.

Marine Gen. Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said in an interview Friday that Russian behavior is to blame for the strained relationship.

"It's very difficult for us to have

## 'Unpredictable Way' Ahead If U.S. Pressures Iran

TEHRAN (Dispatches) -- Iran's oil minister said on Sunday that U.S. sanctions on Iran and Venezuela and tensions in Libya have made the supply-demand balance in the global oil market fragile, and warned of consequences for increasing pressures on Tehran.

Oil prices have risen more than 30 percent this year on the back of supply cuts led by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and U.S. sanctions on oil exporters Iran and Venezuela, plus escalating conflict in OPEC member Libya.

"Oil prices are increasing every day. That shows the market is worried," Bijan Zangeneh was quoted as saying by Tasnim news agency.

"Venezuela is in trouble. Russia is also under sanctions. Libya is in turmoil. Part of U.S. oil production has stopped. These show the supply-demand balance is very fragile," Zangeneh said.

"If they (the Americans) decide to increase pressures on Iran, the fragility will increase in an unpredictable way," he added.

Zangeneh said one of the consequences of pressure on Iran was a rise in fuel prices in the United States.

"Mr. Trump should choose whether to add more pressure on Iran or keep fuel prices low at gas stations in America," Zangeneh was quoted as saying by the oil ministry's news agency Shana.

The U.S. reimposed sanctions on Iran in November after pulling out of a 2015 nuclear accord between it and six world powers.

Iranian exports of crude oil and condensate surged to levels near before sanctions in March, surprising market observers and affording the country an important victory in the U.S. "economic war" on Tehran.

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