

China: U.S. Seeking to 'Colonize Global Business'



A Lockheed Martin F-35 Lightning II lifts off during testing at Edwards Air Force Base in March 2013.

BEIJING (Dispatches) — Chinese state media on Friday accused the U.S. of seeking to “colonize global business” with moves against Huawei and other Chinese technology companies.

At a daily briefing Friday, foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang accused American politicians he didn't name of “fabricating various lies based on subjective presumptions and trying to mislead the American people.”

The China Daily, an English-language newspaper, said U.S. expressions of concerns about Chinese surveillance equipment maker Hikvision were for the self-serving aim of claiming the “moral high ground” to promote Washington's political agen-

da.

“In this way, it is hoping to achieve the colonization of the global business world,” the newspaper said.

The New York Times reported the U.S. Commerce Department might put Hikvision on its “entity list,” restricting its business with U.S. companies for its alleged role in facilitating surveillance in Xinjiang.

In South Korea, officials said they were discussing security issues related to its 5G, or fifth generation, cellphone networks with the U.S.

Washington considers Huawei, the world's leading supplier of telecom gear and No. 2 smartphone maker, a security threat.

The U.S. Senate Armed Services

Committee unveiled a draft bill on Thursday that targets China on several fronts, from stemming the erosion of the American military advantage against Beijing to countering the growing Chinese influence around the world.

The \$750-billion proposal would also authorize the U.S. military to buy more Lockheed Martin F-35 jets and fully fund a program to modernize the U.S. nuclear weapon arsenal.

The committee acknowledged that “our margin of military supremacy has eroded and is undermined by new threats from strategic competitors like China and Russia.”

The panel addressed what Congress sees as the threat from China, including stricter reporting of Beijing's “Belt and Road” international lending program.

The bill would require the creation of a list of Chinese institutions and companies with any links to its military, to be used for screening visa applications for students and researchers.

“A lot of universities just don't have the information about whether research they're conducting is under threat,” a senior committee aide told reporters.

Many U.S. universities work on research with military applications and U.S. officials worry about intellectual property theft from China.

China and the United States are increasingly becoming geopolitical adversaries as well as economic rivals.

North Korea: No Talks Unless U.S. Changes Position



North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un and U.S. President Donald Trump talk in the garden of the Metropole hotel during the second North Korea-U.S. summit in Hanoi, Vietnam February 28, 2019.

SEOUL (Dispatches) -- North Korea said on Friday an “arbitrary and dishonest” U.S. position had resulted in the failure to reach a deal during a second North Korea-U.S. summit, warning the nuclear issue would never be resolved without a new approach.

A spokesman for North Korea's foreign ministry accused the United States of trying to shift the blame for the breakdown of the summit between North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and U.S. President Donald Trump in February by raising a “completely irrelevant issue.”

“The underlying cause of setback of the DPRK-U.S. summit talks in Hanoi is the arbitrary and dishonest position taken by the United States, insisting on a method which is totally impossible to get through,” the unidentified spokesman said in a statement carried by the official KCNA news agency.

“The United States would not be able to move us even an inch with the device it is now weighing in its mind, and the further its mistrust and hostile acts toward the DPRK grow, the fiercer our reaction will be.”

The official was referring to North Korea by the initials of its official name

- the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The statement was the latest criticism of the United States since the failed summit in Vietnam, where Kim had sought sanctions relief in return for the partial dismantling of North Korea's nuclear program.

Trump called for a full roadmap for denuclearization including the transfer of bombs to the United States.

Tension has again mounted in recent weeks. The North fired short-range missiles early this month and Washington unveiled the seizure of a North Korean ship suspected of illicit coal shipments in breach of sanctions.

Kim has set a year-end deadline for the United States to show more flexibility, but Trump and other U.S. officials have brushed that aside, calling for Kim to take unilateral action on a commitment to denuclearize.

Nevertheless the United States offered a new method of calculation, the stalled nuclear talks would never be restarted, the foreign ministry spokesman said.

“And by extension, the prospect for resolving the nuclear issue will be much gloomier,” the official said.

Maduro: U.S. Set to Destroy Venezuela Food Program



Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro takes part in a broadcast regarding the government housing programs in the capital Caracas, May 16, 2019.

CARACAS (Dispatches) -- Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro says the United States is poised to destroy a military-run emergency food program which is feeding millions of people across the crisis-hit country.

Maduro said in a televised speech Thursday that Caracas would push ahead even though Washington was preparing sanctions to destroy the food program, known by its Spanish acronym as CLAP.

“Do what you want to do, Venezuela will continue with the Local Supply and Production Committees,” he said, referencing the full name of the CLAP program.

Unnamed sources told Reuters that the U.S. would unveil measures against the aid program, which will feed some six million families across Venezuela, within the next 90 days.

The Maduro government launched the plan in 2016 in response to a severe shortage of food, as the oil-rich

nation has been struggling under severe economic contraction, hyperinflation, power cuts, and shortages of basic items under harsh U.S. economic sanctions.

Under the program, the government sells boxes of food that include products such as rice, pasta, oil and powdered milk at subsidized prices.

Some of the products are imported from countries such as Turkey, Mexico, Colombia and Brazil. Russia and China have also sent humanitarian aid to the country on several occasions.

Washington has been actively seeking to undermine Maduro's government in a bid to replace him with opposition leader Juan Guaido.

Guaido, who heads the defunct National Assembly, pushed the country into a political crisis in January, when he suddenly declared himself as “interim president” of Venezuela, disputing the outcome of last year's election, in which President Maduro emerged victorious.

U.S. President Donald Trump as well as some of his Latin American and European allies immediately recognized Guaido and pledged to help him oust Maduro, even if it requires military action.

NATO Warns Russia of 'Full Range of Capabilities'



A general view shows a meeting of the North Atlantic Council during the NATO Foreign Ministers Meeting at the State Department in Washington, DC on April 4, 2019.

LONDON (Dispatches) -- The head of NATO told Russia and other potential foes Thursday that the Western military alliance was ready to use all means at its disposal to respond to alleged cyber attacks.

Jens Stoltenberg's warning came with the bloc's members on alert for alleged interference in European Parliament elections that kicked off in Britain and the Netherlands on Thursday.

Western allies accuse Russia of trying to sway the outcome of the 2016 U.S. presidential vote and using cyber technology to cripple the infrastructure of rival Ukraine -- charges Moscow flatly denies.

“For deterrence to have full effect, potential attackers must know we are not limited to respond in cyber space when we are attacked in cyber space,” Stoltenberg said during a joint press appearance in London with UK Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt.

“We can and will use the full range of capabilities at our disposal.”

Hunt said that Britain's National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) has shared details of allegedly malicious Russian activity with 16 of the 29 NATO members over the past 18 months.

He accused Russian “proxies” in 2014 of trying to tamper with the voting system and delaying the final results of a presidential election in Ukraine that followed the ouster of a

Moscow-backed leader.

The European Union last week adopted the power to impose “targeted restrictive measures to deter and respond to cyber attacks.”

Stoltenberg and Hunt refused to say what steps might be taken by NATO -- a Cold War-era military alliance that Russia still views as a top national security threat.

“We need to balance clarity about our determination to act with constructive ambiguity about exactly what we would do in specific circumstances,” Hunt said.

He called the new EU sanctions regime just one of the potential options.

Longstanding tensions between London and Moscow culminated in the poisoning last year of former Russian double agent Sergei Skripal on British soil.

Britain claims it has evidence that the attack was plotted by senior leaders in Moscow and carried out by members of Russia's military intelligence agency.

The Kremlin calls Britain's case inconclusive and politically motivated.

But it saw Western allies join forces and expel nearly 150 Russian embassy staff from around the world. Moscow immediately followed suit.

Stoltenberg's visit came as part of his preparations for a NATO summit London will host on December 3-4.

India's Modi, Pakistan's Khan Stress Need for Peace

NEW DELHI (AFP) -- Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Pakistani rival Imran Khan sent messages highlighting the need for “peace” Thursday after Modi's hawkish party won a new term in power.

While the nuclear-armed rivals launched cross-border airstrikes at each other barely three months ago, some analysts say the return of Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in a new landslide could help peace prospects.

Khan congratulated Modi on the win by the BJP, which has long taken a strong anti-Pakistan stance.

“Congratulate Prime Minister Modi on the electoral victory of BJP and allies. Look forward to working with him for peace, progress and prosperity in South Asia,” Khan tweeted.

“Thank you PM @ImranKhanPTI. I warmly express my gratitude for your good wishes. I have always given priority to peace and development in our region,” Modi responded, also on Twitter.

The messages came just hours after Pakistan said it had tested a surface-to-surface ballistic missile capable of carrying conventional and nuclear warheads.

India on Wednesday staged a new test of its BrahMos missile, the world's fastest cruise missile.

In February, India launched an airstrike inside Pakistan

accusing its neighbor of harboring a group that staged a suicide bomb attack on Indian troops in Kashmir.

Pakistan launched its own raid the next day amid fears of a war, but tensions have calmed since.

Muslim Pakistan had watched Modi's campaign warily, frequently accusing him of using events in the disputed Kashmir region as a ploy to gain votes.

In April, however, Khan said a Modi win could help settle the Kashmir showdown and his government has repeatedly stated it is open to dialogue with the rival.

Pakistanis consider Modi a hardliner, analysts say, but welcomed his win even so -- predicting it could lead to improved relations.

“The expectation in Pakistan is that there will be an incremental improvement in Pakistan-India relations as Modi's attitude would be more relaxed,” retired Pakistani general Talat Masood told AFP.

“If you want to focus on the economy, (if) you want to focus on the regional cooperation and for a better image internationally, it is important to have good regional relations with neighbors,” he said.

The Kashmir fuse continues to burn, however. Pakistani and Indian forces regularly fire over the Line of Control -- the de-facto border dividing Kashmir -- leaving civilian dead on both sides.

News in Brief

MADRID (Reuters) -- The Spanish parliament's governing body on Friday suspended the lawmaker rights of the four jailed Catalan members of parliament while they face trial over the northeastern region's failed 2017 independence bid, lower house speaker Meritxell Batet said. It was not immediately clear what would happen to the seats as it's up to the four lawmakers to decide if they want to leave them empty for now or if they'd rather resign and pass the position to a fellow politician. If the seats are left empty, the total number of lawmakers would drop which, in a deeply fragmented parliament, may work in favor of acting Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, who could then be reelected without the backing of the Catalans.

LONDON (AFP) -- The Justice Department on Thursday charged WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange with violating the U.S. Espionage Act by publishing military and diplomatic files in 2010, rejecting his claim that he is a journalist. The department unveiled 17 new charges against Assange, accusing him of directing and abetting intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning in stealing secret U.S. files, and also recklessly exposing confidential sources in the Middle East and China who were named in the files. The charges against Assange, now 18 in total, reject his claim that he was simply a publisher receiving leaked material from Manning, an action that is protected under the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment guaranteeing freedom of the press. A new indictment alleges that Assange actively conspired with Manning to steal the hundreds of thousands of classified files “with reason to believe that the information was to be used to the injury of the United States or the advantage of a foreign nation,” the Justice Department said.

WASHINGTON (AFP) -- Democratic congressional leader Nancy Pelosi says Donald Trump is angry that her party is not rushing to impeach him, as the relationship between the rivals reaches new lows. Thursday was the second straight day of a very public war of words between Trump and the speaker of the House of Representatives, who earlier questioned the president's mental fitness for office and expressed hope that those close to Trump would stage an intervention “for the good of the country.” Trump responded by branding Pelosi “crazy Nancy,” in what appeared to be the first time he has ascribed a pejorative nickname to the woman who is his congressional nemesis. According to Pelosi, Trump's strategy is to get his opponents to commit themselves to impeachment -- a process that would almost certainly pass in the House, and then fail in the Republican-controlled Senate, ultimately energizing Trump's core voters during his re-election bid. “The White House is just crying out for impeachment,” she told journalists.

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (AP) -- An outbreak of nasty storms spawned tornadoes that razed homes, flattened trees and tossed cars across a dealership lot, injuring about two dozen people in Missouri's capital city and killing at least three others elsewhere in the state. The tornado cut a path about 3 miles long and a mile wide from the south end of Jefferson City north toward the Missouri River, said police Lt. David Williams. Emergency workers reported about two dozen injuries, Williams said, and around 100 of people went to shelters. Hospitals reported treating injuries such as cuts and bruises. There were no immediate reports of any deaths or missing people in the capital city of about 40,000, and it appeared everyone was accounted for after door-to-door checks that were nearly complete Thursday evening, police Lt. David Williams said.

BERLIN (AP) -- Protesters were holding rallies in several European Union countries to demand tougher action against global warming, as the 28-nation bloc votes to fill the European Parliament. Thousands attended a rally Friday in Berlin, where mostly young people waved banners with slogans such as “There is no planet B” or “Plant trees, save the bees, clean the seas.” Many protesters will be too young to vote when Germans cast ballots Sunday in the European Parliament election, but are pressing family and older friends to consider the world's long-term future. Clara Kirchhoff said the election for the EU's 751-seat assembly was particularly important for tackling climate change on a continental level. The 17-year-old said “there's no point in Germany doing a lot for the climate and others not pulling their weight.”

AMSTERDAM (Reuters) -- Dutch mainstream, EU-supporting political parties made gains in the first test of the European Parliament election, according to an exit poll that showed a surprise Labour victory and a weak showing for euroskeptics in the Netherlands. The Netherlands and Britain were the first of 28 member states to vote in the EU election on Thursday. Irish and Czech voters were casting their ballots on Friday and the other 24 countries were due to vote on Sunday. In Britain, where results will not be released until Sunday, opinion polls showed Prime Minister Theresa May's Conservative Party hemorrhaging support to veteran euroskeptic Nigel Farage's newly formed Brexit Party. May said on Friday she would resign as party leader on June 7 amid deep paralysis on Brexit. Dutchman Frans Timmermans, a vice president of the executive European Commission who is now the leading center-left candidate to head that body, defied opinion polls with a surprise victory for his Labor Party, the Ipsos exit poll showed.