

TEHRAN (Dispatches) – Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Navy Rear Admiral Ali Reza Tangsiri on Saturday outlined plans by the IRGC to hold a large-scale military exercise.

The massive naval war game will be launched in the near future and the latest military achievements and equipment of the navy will be unveiled, he said. Tangsiri further highlighted Iran's "full intelligence dominance" over the region.

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani and his Turkish counterpart Mustafa Sentop held talks in Antalya on Saturday on issues of mutual interest. The closed-door meeting between the two parliament speakers was held on the sidelines of the 12th Plenary Meeting of the Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA), which started earlier in the day. The assembly has been created as a forum to exchange views, ideas and experiences for developing common strategies and promoting peace in Asia and the world, according to its website.

Viewpoint

The Johnson Dilemma: To Save or Sink Britain

Mahathir: Malaysia Lost 'a Big Market' in Iran

DOHA (Dispatches) -- The American sanctions imposed on Iran violate the United Nations charter and international law, Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad told a conference in Qatar on Saturday.

"Malaysia does not support the reimposition of the unilateral sanctions by the U.S. against Iran," he told the Doha Forum, also attended by Qatar Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani.

Malaysia and other countries have lost a "a big market" because of the sanctions on Iran, he said.

"Such sanctions clearly violate the United Nations charter and international law; sanctions can only be applied by the United Nations in accordance with the charter," he added.

President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the U.S. from an international nuclear deal with Iran last year and unleashed a "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran.

The "toughest ever" sanctions target Iranians with the express aim of force Tehran into submitting to American demands.

On Wednesday, the Trump administration announced that it was targeting Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL) or E-Sail, and the country's major airline, Mahan Air.

The U.S. Treasury Department stressed that Washington's new sanctions will lead to the restriction of trade related to humanitarian goods. The announcement flew in the face of Washington's earlier claims that its sanctions did not affect Iran's access to humanitarian goods.

"U.S. persons will be prohibited from engaging in transactions involving Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL) or E-Sail, including transactions for the sale of agricultural commodities, food, medicine, or medical devices," the Treasury's guidelines on Iran sanctions read.

"In addition, non-U.S. persons that knowingly engage in certain transactions with IRISL or E-Sail, even for the sale to Iran of agricultural commodities, food, medicine, or medical devices, risk exposure to sanctions under additional authorities," it added.

Speaking on Thursday, U.S. Special Representative for

Iran Brian Hook boasted that American sanctions targeting Iran's oil sector have led to more than \$50 billion in revenue losses, have hindered Iran's refined-oil products and have undermined foreign investment.

"Both upstream and downstream investments in Iran's oil and gas sector have stopped," Hook said. "Foreign investors have almost entirely pulled out of Iran due to the risks and billions in investment has been lost," he added.

Iran's Foreign Ministry called in the South Korean ambassador last month to demand payment of 7 trillion won (\$6 billion) for oil it sold to the Asian country, Chosun Ilbo reported, citing officials it didn't identify.

Iran expressed "strong regret" over Seoul's failure to complete the payment, which has been deposited at two South Korean banks without being transferred to Iran's central bank for years due to U.S. sanctions against the Middle Eastern country, the newspaper said. It added that other Iranian authorities including the central bank also complained.

South Korea sent a delegation to the Middle East late last month and explained that the country will cooperate with the U.S. to successfully complete transfer of the payment, it added.

Fears of Mayhem as France Strike Continues

PARIS (AFP) -- France reeled under a crippling public transport strike for a 10th day Saturday aimed at forcing the government to scrap a pension revamp, as fears grew of travel mayhem during Christmas.

Train traffic was severely disrupted with only one out four high speed long-distance trains and three of 10 regional trains running across the country.

But Paris and its environs remained the worst hit. Nine metro lines in the capital remained closed and there were skeletal transport services between the city and its suburbs.

Only 60 percent of the city's bus services were running. Strikers have warned of similar disruptions on Sunday and Monday.

On Saturday, the managing director of the national rail operator SNCF Rachel Picard, told Le Parisien daily that "half of the passengers" would have trains to visit family for Christmas" but did not elaborate.

Unions are hoping for a repeat of 1995, when they forced a rightwing government to back down on pension reform after three weeks of metro and rail strikes just before Christmas.

India Children, Youth Festival Hosts Line-Up of Iran Titles



Iran's Women Team Improves in FIFA Rankings



Hezbollah Wants All Sides in Lebanon Government



U.S. Reeling From Iran's Downing of Drone



Members from the U.S. Air Force 7th Reconnaissance Squadron prepare to launch an RQ-4 Global Hawk October 24, 2018, at Naval Air Station Sigonella, Italy.

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) – Iran's downing of an intruding U.S. drone earlier this year has had a catastrophic impact on its military capabilities, with America left with just two more of the massive, costly unmanned vehicle, the Navy says.

A statement published by the U.S. Naval Institute's news outlet said that following the downing, two more of the Navy's most advanced spy drones recently suffered crashes in the Middle East.

An RQ-4A Broad Area Maritime Surveillance Demonstrator (BAMS-D) "struck foreign object debris (FOD) during takeoff while

supporting operations in the U.S. Fifth Fleet area of responsibility" on November 26, the Navy said. No personnel were injured, but the incident "resulted in damage to the port side of the aircraft," according to the statement.

This drone model, also known as the Global Hawk, is estimated to cost some \$180 million and was previously involved in a 2012 crash during a training flight in Maryland. CNN reported at the time that the U.S. Navy had acquired five of the aircraft.

More recently, the Global Hawk was shot down by Iran in a dra-

matic surface-to-air missile strike over the Strait of Hormuz in June. The United States Naval Institute estimated that the attack, coupled with the latest loss, leaves the Navy with only two more of its original fleet of five drones that the Pentagon was reportedly having second thoughts about.

Citing current and former U.S. military officials, Foreign Policy reported last month—prior to the latest incident—that the Air Force was looking to retire 21 of its own 35 RQ-4 Global Hawks. The proposal has been reportedly submitted to the Office of the Secretary

of Defense and came as the newer MQ-4C Triton was set to replace the system.

The reported move also, however, came amid the growing capabilities of near-peer competitors like Russia and China, as well as increasingly powerful tools being developed by other powers like Iran, Newsweek said.

The Islamic Republic held a massive air defense war games exercise last month covering an area roughly the size of the U.S. state of California. The drills, which a senior Iranian military official touted as utilizing "world-class" and "cutting-edge" anti-aircraft systems, were held just as the U.S. Navy's Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln sailed through the same Strait of Hormuz where the Pentagon drone was downed over the summer, the magazine wrote.

Iranian Army Air Defense Brigadier General Alireza Sabahifard said his forces would "practice the toughest and most realistic combat conditions" and that the war games would take place especially in the Strait of Hormuz.

He added: "I advise enemies not to put us to the test, because conducting such a test and entering the sky of the Islamic Republic of Iran, as shown in the past, will lead to no achievements for them, except humiliation."

The critical waterway is considered the world's most important maritime oil chokepoint and has been a flashpoint for worsening

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Tens of Thousands Protest Xenophobia in Italy

ROME (AFP) -- Tens of thousands of members of Italy's youth-driven Sardine Movement on Saturday rallied in Rome, as part of their campaign to battle xenophobia and shake up the country's politics.

The "Sardines" have become a symbol of protest against far-right firebrand leader Matteo Salvini, who served as interior minister and deputy prime minister in Italy's previous coalition government and cracked down on immigration.

In Rome's immense San Giovanni Square, retiree Roberto Piperno was among those joining the crowd, which sang the anti-fascist anthem Bella Ciao, a staple of the movement's demonstrations.

He turned out because he did not want to see "hatred propagated" and to do nothing would make him "ashamed to be Italian", he said.

Taking aim at "populism", 32-year-old Mattia Santori, a founder of the movement, told the crowd the idea was to "bring out a new energy through a much freer and more spontaneous form" than a traditional political party "that will not be hierarchical" but

would instead set "broad directions".

One demonstrator held up a giant sardine model, while others brandished drawings and posters.

The movement, only a month old, started in Bologna when a rally organized by four unknown activists to denounce Salvini's discourse of "hatred and division" drew a crowd of 15,000, surprising everybody.

Since then, they have staged a series of rallies drawing tens of thousands in Milan, Florence, Naples and Palermo.

"The first was against Salvini and then it became a reaffirmation of democracy: we are anti-fascist, pro-equality, against intolerance, against homophobia," Mattia Santori, one of the movement's founders, told AFP.

Santori, a researcher in economics, and the other co-founders -- Andrea Garreffa, a 34-year-old tourist guide and Roberto Morrotti, a 31-year-old engineer, say they want to make politics "cool".

The movement's representative in the Italian capital is Stephen Ogongo, a 45-year-old journalist of Kenyan origin. He set up the

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