

US Security Chief Worried About Al Shabaab Threat



U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The U.S. homeland security chief said on Sunday he takes seriously a threat made by Somali-based militants against shopping malls, including the Mall of America in Minnesota, and urged people going there to be careful.

Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson was reacting to a video released by al Shabaab appearing to call for attacks on Western shopping areas, specifically mentioning Mall of Amer-

ica, the West Edmonton Mall in Canada and London's Oxford Street.

"This latest statement from al Shabaab reflects the new phase we've evolved to in the global terrorist threat, in that you have groups such as al Shabaab and ISIL publicly calling for independent actors in their homelands to carry out attacks," Johnson told CNN.

"We're beyond the phase now where these groups would send

foreign operatives into countries after being trained some place," Johnson said.

Asked specifically about the threat to Mall of America, one of the world's largest shopping complexes, he said: "Anytime a terrorist organization calls for an attack on a specific place, we've got to take that seriously."

"I would say that if anyone is planning to go to the Mall of America today, they've got to be particularly careful."

New Nuclear Leak Detected at Japan Fukushima Plant

TOKYO (PRESS TV) - The operator of the Japanese tsunami-hit Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant says sensors have detected a

new leak of highly radioactive water into the sea.



The aerial photo shows the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear complex in Okumamachi, northern Japan.

new leak of highly radioactive water into the sea.

Tokyo Electric Power Co (TEPCO) said on Sunday that the sensors had detected contamination levels of 50 to 70 times more than the already high radioactive rate at the plant, in water pouring into a nearby bay.

The sensors, which detected the fresh leak earlier in the day, were reportedly rigged to a gutter that poured rain and ground water at the plant into the bay.

"We have shut the gutter (from pouring water to the bay). We are currently monitoring the sensors at the gutter and seeing the trend," an unnamed TEPCO spokesman said.

The levels fell later in the day to about 10 to 20 times more than normal levels.

TEPCO said the cause of the rise in the contamination levels is not yet known.

The reactor unit 5 was offline but loaded with fuel rods when the plant was damaged by a massive earthquake and tsunami back in March 2011. A nine-magnitude earthquake triggered a tsunami that inflicted heavy damage on the six-reactor Fukushima plant. The cooling systems of the plant's reactors were knocked out, leading to meltdowns and the release of radioactive material.

More than 18,000 people were left dead or missing in the disaster.

48 Dead in Bangladesh Ferry Accident

DHAKA (Reuters) - At least 48 people died in Bangladesh on Sunday when a passenger ferry capsized after colliding with a trawler on the river Padma with more than 100 people aboard, police said.

Rescuers managed to save at least 50 passengers and were still searching for more survivors, regional police official Bidhan Tri-

Low-lying Bangladesh, with extensive inland waterways and slack safety standards, suffers regular ferry disasters, with deaths sometimes running into the hundreds.

The bodies retrieved so far from the water include a baby, Tripura said. Police have seized the trawler and arrested two of its crew, he said.

Another police team, assisted by

firemen and the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority, is trying to salvage the ferry, he said.

Divers were also trying to retrieve any bodies trapped inside the vessel, he said.

The ferry was heading to Paturia from Daulatdia in Rajbari, located on the opposite bank of the river and 136 km (85 miles) northwest of Dhaka.

Russia to Export Weapons Worth \$15bn in 2015

MOSCOW (PRESS TV) - Russia says its target of exporting weapons worth billions of dollars in 2015 will be met despite the Western sanctions imposed on Moscow over the crisis in Ukraine.

"The plan for the export of armaments worth about USD 15 billion this year will undoubtedly be fulfilled," said Anatoly Isaikin, the chief of Russia's state-run arms agency, Rosoboronexport, on Sunday.

"We outperformed our planned indicators under the program of military output deliveries last year and we'll fulfill this year's program as well," he added.

Isaikin made the remarks at the IDEX-2015 International Defense Exhibition in the United Arab Emirates' capital city of Abu Dhabi.

Back in January, Russian President Vladimir Putin (above) said his country's arms sales exceeded USD 15 billion in 2014, with new orders standing at nearly USD 14 billion.

Russia plans to expand its arms sales to markets in the Asia-Pacific region, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, he said.



Anatoly Isaikin, the chief of Russia's state-run arms agency Rosoboronexport

Moscow has recently intensified military ties with its allies after neighboring Ukraine announced its plan to take part in a multinational military alliance with two NATO members Poland and Lithuania. Reports also say Kiev seeks NATO membership.

Russia is the world's second-largest weapons exporter after the United States.

The European country has been hit with a series of sanctions by the US and the European Union (EU), which accuse Moscow of supporting pro-Russia forces in eastern Ukraine. Russia categorically denies the allegation.

Ukraine Rebels Order Weapons Pull-Back

KIEV (Reuters) - Pro-Moscow rebels said they would start to withdraw heavy weapons from the front line in eastern Ukraine on Sunday but the government in Kiev said armored columns had crossed the border from Russia to reinforce the separatists.

The Ukrainian military said the rebels were pressing on with attacks on government forces near Mariupol, a port in government hands that is seen as the rebels' next major target.

Spokesman Andriy Lysenko said a military train carrying 60 armored vehicles including tanks had arrived in the town of Amvro-siivka from Russia on Saturday. A convoy of military equipment had later crossed the border near No-

voazovsk, east of Mariupol on the Sea of Azov.

He said fighting was in progress at the village of Shyrokyne, east of Mariupol.

"The fight continues. Our soldiers are holding their positions," Lysenko said, adding that there had been a total of 44 attacks by separatists across the conflict zone in the past 24 hours.

In the city of Kharkiv, three people were killed and 10 wounded on Sunday when an explosive device was thrown from a car into a crowd attending a peace rally, a Ukrainian regional prosecutor said.

The blast, which police called a terrorist act, occurred near a metro station as a crowd of participants in the rally passed by.

DPRK Denounces U.S. "Human Rights" Racket

PYONGYANG (Press Release) - A spokesman for the Foreign Ministry of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) denounced the U.S. for making desperate efforts to fan up the atmosphere of pressure upon the DPRK while taking issue with it over the non-existent "human rights" issue, KCNA reported on Sunday.

In Washington on Feb. 17 the U.S. held a "conference on human rights" against the DPRK under the absurd pretext of the first anniversary of the "report of the UN Commission of Inquiry" (COI) on the human rights situation in the DPRK.

It was reported that the U.S. staged a farce malignantly slandering the DPRK, repeating the tattered false data, with the "envoy for the human rights issue in north Korea" in the U.S. Department of State, former and incumbent persons of the department and U.S. Congress, the former chairman of the COI and its "spe-

cial rapporteur" and "defectors from the north" attending.

It has already been brought to light that the "report of COI" and the "human rights resolution" of the UN General Assembly which were cooked up by the U.S. last year were forcibly adopted on the basis of the false testimonies of "defectors from the north".

The inhuman tortures by the CIA of the U.S. and other human rights abuses in the U.S. were disclosed, sparking off big astonishment and resentment of the international community.

The U.S., driven into the tight corner at home and abroad, is kicking up the persistent "human rights" racket against the DPRK in order to escape its poor plight and shift the international accusations and attack onto others.

DPRK is fully ready for any confrontation with the U.S. and will shatter the reckless "human rights" racket by the hostile forces through our toughest reaction.



Malé, Maldives (Reuters) - Police in Maldives arrested former president Mohamed Nasheed on Sunday after a court said he might flee the country to avoid hearings on terrorism charges, leading to clashes between his supporters and authorities.

Nasheed, Maldives' first democratically elected president, had been facing criminal charges over his order to arrest a top judge in January 2011. Nasheed stepped down in early 2012, saying he had been overthrown in a coup.

Last week the prosecutor-general withdrew the original charges against Nasheed, but issued an arrest warrant on Sunday under new charges of terrorism relating to the same incident of the arrest of the judge four years ago. The first hearing will be on Monday.

Police used teargas to disperse protesters from Nasheed's Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) as he was taken from his home.

"I call on the public to do all that is necessary to stop the harassment meted out to me and other politicians to save Maldives," Nasheed told reporters in Male while being taken to a detention center on a separate island.

Last week Nasheed asked India to intervene in case President Abdulla Yameen, to whom Nasheed lost the last election in 2013, imposed emergency rule.

CANBERRA (PRESS TV) - Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott says his country needs to reconsider its immigration laws in reaction to the deadly siege in Sydney last December.

He made the remarks on Sunday in the city as he released the first report conducted by officials from the federal government and the government of New South Wales into the incident.

"Plainly, the system has let us down," he said, adding, "This monster should not have been in our community," referring to the hostage taker identified as Man Haron Monis who held 18 people at gunpoint during a 17-hour siege in Australia's largest city's Lindt cafe on December 15.

The siege ended after Monis was shot and killed. Two of the hostages were also killed.

Authorities say Monis, also known as Mohammad Hassan Manteqi, was an Iranian-born who had escaped to Australia in 1996.

Iran's police chief Brigadier General Ismail Ahmadi Moqaddam said Tehran had in 2000 asked Australia to extradite Monis on fraud charges, but Canberra failed to do so as there was no extradition treaty between the two countries.

At the time of the siege, the hostage taker was on bail on a charge over the murder of his ex-wife. He had also been charged with dozens of sexual assaults.

CAIRO (PRESS TV) - A court in Egypt has acquitted a former oil minister, who served under ex-dictator Hosni Mubarak, of charges of selling cheap gas to Israel.

The Cairo court exonerated Sameh Fahmi and five other former oil officials in a retrial on Saturday, after they were convicted in 2012 for selling Israel natural gas at below the market price, and were sentenced to between 3 and 15 years in prison.

The defendants had been found guilty of harming the country's interests by signing a deal to sell gas to Israel for 1.5 dollars per British thermal unit, almost nine times lower than the market price.

The ruling comes as a large number of Mubarak-era officials have recently been cleared in retrials after being initially convicted.

In November last year, an appeals court absolved Mubarak and his Interior Minister Habib al-Adly of charges of killing peaceful protesters during the 2011 revolution, which resulted in Mubarak's ouster.

The former dictator was also exculpated during the same trial of charges of exporting cheap gas to Israel.

Following the court order, Egyptians took to the streets to protest the ruling.