

Japan to Raise Iranian Crude Insurance

TOKYO (Dispatches) -- Japan is expected to increase its maximum insurance cover for tankers carrying Iranian crude in fiscal 2015-16 (April-March), due to an increase by the International Group of P&I Clubs and a weakening of the yen against the U.S. dollar, Platts reported. The anticipated hike in the insurance, set to come into effect 1st April, follows a decision by the International Group of P&I Clubs to increase its maximum reinsurance cover by 2.5% year on year in its 2015-16 fiscal year, which started last Friday, sources told Platts.

Navy Chief Due in Kazakhstan

TEHRAN (Tasnim) -- Iranian navy commander Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari plans to pay an official visit to Kazakhstan on Sunday to hold talks on ways to boost defense cooperation between the two neighboring countries. Heading a high-ranking delegation, the Iranian navy commander plans to meet with his Kazakh counterpart, General Zhandarbek Zhanzakov, as well as other senior officials of the Central Asian country. During his trip to Kazakhstan, Sayyari will also hold talks with Kazakh Defense Minister Imangali Tasmagambetov.

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By: Kayhan Int'l Staff Writer  
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Egypt Sentences Brotherhood  
Leaders to Death

CAIRO (Dispatches) -- An Egyptian court listed the Palestinian group Hamas as a terrorist organization, judicial sources said on Saturday, part of a sustained crack-down on the resistance movement in the most populous Arab state.

In a separate case earlier in the day, a court sentenced the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood's top leader Muhammad Badie to life in prison while other members received the death penalty.

Hamas is an offshoot of the Brotherhood, which the authorities have also declared a terrorist group in Egypt and have repressed systematically since the army ousted one of its leaders, Muhammad Mursi, from the presidency in 2013.

While a court ruled in January that Hamas' armed wing was a terrorist organization, Saturday's broader ruling against the entire group has potentially greater consequences for the already strained relationship between Cairo and Hamas, which dominates the Gaza Strip on Egypt's border.

"The Egyptian court's decision to list the Hamas movement as a terror organization is shocking and is dangerous, and it targets the Palestinian people and its factions of resistance," Hamas said in a statement after the ruling.

"It will have no influence on the Hamas movement," Hamas said.

After the January decision against Hamas' Qassem Brigades, a source close to the armed wing signaled the group would no longer accept Egypt as a broker between it and the occupying regime of Israel.

Cairo has for many years played a central role in engineering cease-fires between the Zionist regime and Hamas, including a truce reached between the sides in August that ended a 50-day Gaza war.

A spokesman for the Egyptian government declined to say what actions the government would take to enforce the ruling.

"When a final judgment is issued, we will discuss this," Hosam al-Qawish said.

In the other case, Badie, the top leader of the now-banned Muslim Brotherhood, was among 14 who were sentenced to life, alongside deputy leader Khairat el-Shater and leading figure Muhammad el-Beltagy.

Four lower-level members were sentenced to death for inciting violence that led to the killing of protesters demonstrating outside a Brotherhood office days before Mursi's ouster.

Two of those sentenced to death and three sentenced to life were tried in absentia.

The death sentences are subject to appeal and many of the defendants are already serving lengthy sentences on other charges.

Badie has already been sentenced to multiple life terms, and was one of hundreds given the death sentence in a mass trial that drew international criticism of Egypt's judicial system.

President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, who as army chief toppled Mursi, describes the Brotherhood as a major security threat.

The movement says it is committed to peaceful activism.

Iranian and Italian FM's Say:  
Nuclear Talks at 'Sensitive Point'



Iran's FM Muhammad Javad Zarif, right, makes a gesture during a joint news conference with his Italian counterpart Paolo Gentiloni in Tehran.

TEHRAN (Dispatches) -- Iran's top nuclear negotiator said Saturday that "scaremongering" by the occupying regime of Israel's PM Benjamin Netanyahu won't stop the Islamic Republic and world powers from reaching a final nuclear deal.

Foreign Minister Muhammad Javad Zarif said the world should not allow the hardline Zionist leader to undermine peace. He was referring to Netanyahu's planned speech at the U.S. Congress next week on the emerging nuclear deal.

"Through scaremongering, falsification, propaganda and creating a false atmosphere even inside other countries, (the Zionist regime) is attempting to prevent peace," Zarif told reporters during a joint news conference with his Italian counterpart, Paolo Gentiloni. "I believe that these attempts are in vain and should not impede reaching a (nuclear) agreement."

Netanyahu's planned address has further strained his relationship with the Obama administration, as America is a key ally to the occupying regime of Israel. Netanyahu's speech in the U.S. also comes ahead of March elections in Israel.

"Netanyahu is opposed to any solution and (his planned speech in U.S. Congress) signifies his attempts to use an untrue issue and a fabricated crisis to

cover up realities in our region, including the occupation and suppression of the Palestinian people, violation of rights of Palestinians and continuation of invasive policies," Zarif said.

Iran and the U.S., Russia, China, Britain, France and Germany reached an interim accord in November 2013. Now, negotiators hope to reach a rough draft of a deal on Iran's nuclear program by the end of March and a final agreement by June 30.

"We have announced many times that as long as general issues are not agreed upon, there will not be any agreement," Zarif said.

He emphasized that there would be no deal unless the sides reach an agreement on all issues.

The top Iranian nuclear negotiator said the sides certainly made "some serious progress" in Geneva, expressing hope the negotiating sides would also make progress next week on other issues, especially the lifting of sanctions.

"In that case, we will draw it up in the form of a comprehensive and accurate deal," said Iran's diplomacy chief.

Nuclear talks between representatives from Iran and the United States were held in Geneva, Switzerland, on February 22 and 23 and the two sides held three rounds of negotiations in two days in an attempt to narrow their differences ahead of a key July 1 deadline for reaching a comprehensive deal.

Political directors from Iran and the P5+1 group's foreign ministries will hold a fresh round of talks about Tehran's nuclear program in Montreux, Switzerland, on March 5, EU spokeswoman, Catherine Ray, said on Friday.

A series of bilateral meetings will also be held prior to the planned high-level talks between negotiators from Iran and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany, she added.

'British Airways Spied on  
Own Staff'

LONDON (Independent) -- British Airways paid £1m to hush up the details of a spying operation in which the phones and emails of its own cabin staff were allegedly improperly accessed during a bitter dispute with Britain's largest union.

under the carpet, echoes the £1m that Rupert Murdoch's News Group Newspapers paid to settle the first legal cases relating to its voicemail interceptions, including the claim of Gordon Taylor, the chief executive of the Professional Footballers' Association.

The payment was made to stop the union, Unite, suing BA over the operation by specialist investigators based at Heathrow. Unite claimed the private communications of 10 BA staff, some of whom were also union officials, were accessed during a period in 2011 when the airline faced renewed strike action.

When Unite discovered the communications of its representatives at BA had been accessed, it hired the lawyer Daniel Taylor to begin legal action and represent cabin staff who had been targeted.

The decision to deploy the airline's in-house investigators, many of them former Scotland Yard and security services personnel, was taken at the highest level within BA, according to information given to The Independent. The use of effective espionage against members of a major UK union, by a flagship UK company worth close to £12bn, raises new questions about the scale of use of private investigators inside Britain's largest companies.

BA, now part of International Airlines Group (IAG), maintained that as it owned the computers and mobile phones used by many of its staff, it had been acting entirely within the law when it took the decision to "monitor" communications of some staff.

The £1m payment by BA, designed to brush potentially damaging disclosures about its activities

Some of the details acquired by the BA investigators were described to The Independent as "highly personal" and having little to do with the central issues being discussed.

Although Daniel Taylor is understood to have brought the claims close to an out-of-court settlement, his firm, Taylor Hampton, was dismissed

It Takes Only \$25 to Slip Into Syria Via Turkey

KARKEMISH, Turkey (Dispatches) -- If the three Brooklyn men arrested Wednesday on charges of aiding and plotting to join ISIL had boarded flights to Turkey, they likely would have made it to Syria with ease.

For a wannabe foreign militant, the last step of the journey is simple: All it takes to cross from Turkey into Syria these days is a smuggler and about \$25.

As the international community rallies to crack down on the ISIL group and bumps up security at home in the wake of deadly terrorist attacks, Turkey's militant "highway" is still as porous as ever. Just last week, three London schoolgirls traveled to Turkey and disappeared into Syria after allegedly messaging a female ISIL recruiter on Twitter.

Despite Turkey's insistence that it's doing all it can to secure the 500-mile-long border, smugglers, militants and refugees say that

Turkish criminal gangs and bribed Turkish paramilitary police have created an environment where anyone can cross into Syria, for a price.

"When (the Turks) close one area, they open up another," Jasim Qalthim, a 30-year-old smuggler in this Turkish border town of Karkemish, told The WorldPost. "They could make it harder if they wanted."

The devoted father has lost count of how many people he's smuggled into ISIL territory. Their faces blur together. But he'll always be haunted by one instance in particular, when he smuggled a young Saudi man into ISIL-held Jarabulus, only to have the man's father show up in Turkey, begging Qalthim to cross the border and bring back his son.

Some smugglers "buy" a particular section of the border for a half an hour at a time from an ISIL "emir", or prince, who controls the border guards, he says.

"He's originally Turkish -- Abu Ali," Qalthim explained, sitting in his dilapidated home as his children watched Batman on a flickering screen with Arabic subtitles. "All the soldiers are afraid of him. One time, he closed the border for 10 days, just because he was angry. He controls everything. He makes huge money and buys weapons and ammunition for ISIL."

Qalthim hates the extremist group that has claimed large swaths of Iraq and Syria. But times are tough, and he says his family would go hungry if he didn't work as a smuggler. Plus, the border is so close, and the work so easy.

Turkey insists it has tightened the border and ramped up security, and now checkpoints are commonplace on key roads in southeast Turkey, where armed security personnel stop cars and check trunks for smuggled goods like oil and ciga-

rettes. But attempting to reel in human smuggling is like cleaning up debris after a nuclear strike, says Turkey expert Aaron Stein, an associate fellow at the London-based Royal United Services Institute.

Turkey actively facilitated the passage of militants between September 2011 and March 2014 in order to bolster the fight against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, he explains, but things changed last spring. The United States got more deeply involved, calling out Turkey on its porous border, and the ISIL became an unmanageable problem.

"I think (Turkey knows) about the smuggling, but cleaning this mess up may not be possible," Stein said.

"As for the military, if the true extent of the corruption on the border was made public, it would be incredibly embarrassing. You have bent officers taking bribes to let

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