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SYLLOGE ON WEST ASIA

**FOCUS, NUCLEAR, MISSILES & OTHER
SECURITY ISSUES IN WEST ASIA**

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मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

IRAN

Iran launches isotope technology labs project

Islamic Republic News Agency, 1st August, 2021

Head of Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Ali Akbar Salehi inaugurated isotope technologies labs complex in Arak, Markazi Province. In the inauguration ceremony on Saturday, Salehi said that the research-production project was funded through the income of Arak Heavy Water Production Plant. He expressed hope that the products of the project would be mass-produced within 3 to 4 years.

<https://en.irna.ir/news/84422280/Iran-launches-isotope-technology-labs-project>

Iran Rejects Media Claim about Military Forces Entering Foreign Ships in Oman Sea

Fars News Agency, 4th August, 2021

The Iranian Foreign Ministry categorically dismissed rumors about the entry of the country's military forces into foreign ships passing in the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman, and warned against such false reports propagated by the western media. Khatibzadeh categorically dismissed as "untrue" the reports circulated by Western and Israeli media about the involvement of Iran's Armed Forces in the incident. The Iranian foreign ministry spokesman's remarks came after the British authorities claimed that the Panama-flagged Asphalt Princess oil tanker had been hijacked, and said they were "working on the assumption Iranian military or proxies boarded the vessel" in the Sea of Oman.

<https://www.farsnews.ir/en/news/14000513000334/Iran-Rejecs-Media-Claim-ab-Miliary-Frces-Enering-Freign-Ships-in-Oman>

President Raisi: Iran supports any diplomatic plan to help lift sanctions

Islamic Republic News Agency, 5th August, 2021

Iran's new President said in a swearing-in ceremony on Thursday that the incumbent government elected by the nation will stand up for the interests of the people and bring about justice, and that the new government will support any diplomatic effort or plan to help remove the sanctions. Recalling a fatwa by Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, he pointed out that Iran considers resorting to nuclear arms as forbidden, best known as haram in Islamic terms. The nuclear arms have no rule in defense strategies of the country, he further noted.

<https://en.irna.ir/news/84427868/President-Raisi-Iran-supports-any-diplomatic-plan-to-help-lift>

Iran Writes Letter to UNSC Chief to Call for Ending Artificial Maritime Incidents in Persian Gulf

Fars News Agency, 5th August, 2021

Deputy Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations Zahra Ershadi in a letter to the president of the UN Security Council stressed the need for stopping the suspicious artificial maritime incidents in the Persian Gulf, warning of harms to the regional peace and security. In her letter on Wednesday, Ershadi rejected the "unfounded" allegations leveled by Britain, Liberia and Romania that Iran had been behind the attack on the Israeli tanker, Mercer Street, off the coast of Oman without presenting any shred of evidence to substantiate their claims. "This unfounded claim, which was first raised, for obvious political purposes, by the Israeli regime immediately after the attack, is factually

wrong and politically and ethically irresponsible, and accordingly is categorically rejected," she said. On Tuesday, Britain, Romania and Liberia told the UN Security Council that it was "highly likely" that Iran used one or more drones to carry out the attack on Liberian-flagged oil tanker, which was managed by Israel, last week.

<https://www.farsnews.ir/en/news/14000514000285/Iran-Wries-Leer-UNSC-Chief-Call-fr-Ending-Arifcial-Mariime-Incidens>

Iran Calls for Annihilation of All Nukes

Fars News Agency, 8th August, 2021

Iran's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the Vienna-based International Organizations Kazzem Qaribabadi underlined his country's demand for annihilation of all nuclear weapons, describing it as a guarantee for a safe world. "Yesterday marked 76th anniversary of atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki which killed up to 226000 civilians. That was genocide and crimes against humanity," Qaribabadi wrote on his twitter page on the occasion of the anniversary of the US atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. "To have a safe and secure world, nuclear weapons should be destroyed totally," Qaribabadi said.

<https://www.farsnews.ir/en/news/14000517000261/Iran-Calls-fr-Annihilain-f-All-Nkes>

Iran Voices Deep Concern about Developments in Afghanistan

Fars News Agency, 9th August, 2021

Iran on Monday voiced deep concern about the recent insecurities and unrest in Afghanistan, resulted from clashes between the Taliban and government forces. "Iran is deeply concerned about the developments

in Afghanistan," Foreign Ministry Spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh told reporters in a press conference in Tehran. "For the past four decades, Iran has hosted its Afghan brothers and sisters and has never had anything but a kinship view of the Afghan people, and this humanitarian view has existed and will continue," he added.

<https://www.farsnews.ir/en/news/14000518000456/Iran-Vices-Deep-Cncern-ab-Develpmens-in-Afghanisan>

Nuclear talks perspective

Islamic Republic News Agency, 10 August, 2021

Iran has made it clear that the framework set by Majlis legislation called 'Strategic Action Plan to Lift Sanctions and Protect Iranian Nation's Interests' is the main component in laying down the agenda for new round of negotiations. The statements made by Supreme Leader of Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei stated in his last meeting with former President Hassan Rouhani and his cabinet giving a conclusion on the six rounds of talks held in Vienna, Austria show that continuation of talks based on the previous format is out of the picture. Given the announced approach by President Ebrahim Raisi in his inauguration speech last week putting emphasis on pursuing the issue through diplomatic efforts, the main option for Iran would naturally be to resume talks with a new agenda.

<https://en.irna.ir/news/84432857/Nuclear-talks-perspective>

Israeli Submarine Arrives in Red Sea in Covert Mission

Fars News Agency, 10th August, 2021

An Israeli Dolphin-class submarine has arrived in the Red Sea via the Suez Canal

since last Wednesday in a suspicious mission amid tensions with Iran. The submarine might pass through the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait and head towards the Persian Gulf. A report released by the Persian-language Nour News website, close to Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), said on Tuesday that the Dolphin-class submarine had "secretly" entered the Red Sea via the Suez Canal last Wednesday (August 4). Two Israeli destroyers crossed the canal on the same day, apparently escorting the submarine, it added. The move came after an attack on an Israeli tanker off the coast of Oman earlier in the month and attempts by the regime and its allies, the US and the UK, to accuse the Islamic Republic of involvement in the incident. Tehran has vehemently rejected the claims.

<https://www.farsnews.ir/en/news/14000519000194/Israeli-Sbmarine-Arrives-in-Red-Sea-in-Cver-Missin>

Commander: Iran's New Destroyer Ready for Mission

Fars News Agency, 10th August, 2021

Commander of the Iranian Navy Rear Admiral Hossein Khanzadi announced that the fully home-made destroyer 'Dena' will join the country's naval fleet soon. "Presence of the naval fleets of the Army's strategic Naval Force in international waters, while hoisting the holy flag of the Islamic Republic of Iran and ensuring the security of sea lines in line with protection of Iran's interests, is a manifestation of the country's power and pride," Rear Admiral Khanzadi said during a visit to the Navy's third operational zone in Konarak on Tuesday. "The all-Iran-made destroyer Dena, which is an epic of intelligence and talent of Iranian engineers and

technologists, will soon join the third naval zone of the Navy based in Konarak in order to improve the naval capacity of the Army's Navy," he added. "Dena destroyer will be dispatched to sail the international waters and towards the Gulf of Aden, Bab al-Mandeb Strait, and the Red Sea to ensure the security of the Iranian navy in various maritime routes," Khanzadi, said, addressing a virtual ceremony to celebrate the joining of the destroyer as well as the Shahin minehunter to the Iranian naval fleet.

<https://www.farsnews.ir/en/news/14000519000422/Cmmander-Iran's-New-Desryer-Ready-fr-Missin>

Spokesman: Iran Concerned About Increasing Tensions, Violence in Afghanistan

Fars News Agency, 13th August, 2021

Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh in a statement voiced concern over the increasing tensions and violence in neighboring Afghanistan.

Khatibzadeh called for paying attention to the lives of people and civilians in Afghanistan. Khatibzadeh's remarks came as the Taliban militants have gained control over the Herat Province. The Iranian foreign ministry spokesman underlined that the Taliban should be committed to ensuring the complete safety and health of diplomats and diplomatic facilities. "The Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs is in touch with the Consulate General of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Herat," Khatibzadeh added.

<https://www.farsnews.ir/en/news/1400052000306/Spkesman-Iran-Cncerned-Ab-Increasing-Tensins-Vilence-in-Afghanisan>

Iran to Attend Military Competitions with China, Russia

Fars News Agency, 15th August, 2021

The Iranian Navy will attend the 2021 International Military Competitions, which are slated to be held in several countries, including Iran. In Iran and China, competitions are planned to be held in the field of diving and air defense units. In the competitions, hypothetical enemy targets will be targeted at sea and naval rescue operations will be carried out. The International Military Competitions entitled "Sea Cup" is held every year in the coastal waters of the Republic of Azerbaijan with the participation of four Caspian littoral states (Iran, Russia, Kazakhstan and the Republic of Azerbaijan). The Islamic Republic of Iran is hosting the International Military Competitions for the first time this year. The two-stage naval drills are also designed to improve naval commanders' skills in organizing combat operations and managing forces in battle.

<https://www.farsnews.ir/en/news/14000524000649/Iran-Aend-Miliary-Cmpeiins-wih-China-Rssia>

IRAQ

Joint Ops denies any camps for drones outside the state authority

Iraqi News Agency, 7th August, 2021

Joint Operations Command denied on Saturday, the existence of camps for drones in deserted areas outside the authority of the state. "Certainly, there are no camps for drones outside the authority of the state," said the spokesman for the joint operations, Major General Tahsin al-Khafaji, to Iraqi News Agency (INA). Al-Khafaji added that "the state is the one who controls the country's skies," noting that "no plane can fly except with official approvals

from the Joint Operations Command," "The security forces are doing a great job in all the desert areas," noting that "Ain al-Assad base contains squadrons of Iraqi planes roaming the desert," he included.

<https://ina.iq/eng/13233-joint-ops-denies-any-camps-for-drones-outside-the-state-authority.html>

Iraqi Forces Launch Large-Scale Security Operation in Jalawla

Iraqi News Agency, 12th August, 2021

Diyala Operations Command of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) announced on Thursday, the start of a large-scale security operation to search and inspect north of Jalawla district in Diyala province. The commander of Diyala Ops of PMF, Talib al-Moussawi, said in a statement received by the Iraqi News Agency (INA), that the joint forces from the army and the PMF launched this morning two-pronged operation to search and secure Zour Sheikh Baba, north of Jalawla district and Alwand River on its northern and southern banks.

<https://ina.iq/eng/13317-iraqi-forces-launch-large-scale-security-operation-in-jalawla.html>

Iraqi forces launch a large-scale security operation in areas north of Baghdad

Iraqi News Agency, 14th August, 2021

The Security Media Cell (S.M.C) announced on Saturday the launch of a large-scale security operation in areas north of Baghdad. A statement by SMC, received by the Iraqi News Agency (INA), stated that, According to accurate intelligence information, Baghdad Operations Command, supported by Army Air Forces, and the International Coalition air support, began at 600 o'clock this morning, a wide security operation in areas north of

Baghdad, to pursue ISIS terrorist gangs. The operation carried out by units from the Special Forces, the Federal Police, the Popular Mobilization forces as well as other security services, SMC reports.

<https://ina.iq/eng/13353-iraqi-forces-launch-a-large-scale-security-operation-in-areas-north-of-baghdad.html>

ISRAEL

Iran's Revolutionary Guard drone commander behind ship attack

Jerusalem Post, 5th August, 2021

Saeed Ara Jani, head of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' UAV Command, was behind the attack on the Israel-linked Mercer Street ship, Foreign Minister Yair Lapid and Defense Minister Benny Gantz revealed in a briefing with diplomats from UN Security Council member states on Wednesday. "Ara Jani is the head operator of the IRGC Air Force's UAV system, which struck the Mercer Street," Gantz told the ambassadors. "He provides the supplies, training, plans and is responsible for many acts of terror in the region." Iran struck an oil tanker with connections to Israel near Oman on July 29, killing two crew members on board. It was the first deadly attack in the continuing maritime war-between-wars and has led Jerusalem to accuse Tehran of "sowing violence and destruction."

<https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/iran-revolutionary-guard-drone-commander-behind-ship-attack-675823>

Gantz Says Israel Is Prepared to Strike Iran, 'Hope We Won't Get Dragged Into It'

Haaretz, 5th August, 2021

Defense Minister Benny Gantz said on Thursday that Israel is prepared to attack

Iran, as tensions run high following an attack on an Israeli-linked tanker off Oman this week, which Israel, the United States and the United Kingdom blamed on Tehran. In an interview with Israeli news website Ynet, Gantz added that "Iran is seeking to present Israel with a multi-faceted challenge," saying both Israel and the international community must act to curb Iran's actions. Israeli strikes on Wednesday and early Thursday in Lebanon, in response to rocket fire by militant groups, were "warning shots," Gantz said. "It's obvious we are capable of doing a lot more, and we hope we won't be dragged into it."

<https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/gantz-says-israel-capable-of-striking-iran-hope-we-won-t-get-dragged-into-it-1.10088740>

Israel launches airstrikes in Lebanon as blaze from rocket engulfs northern hill

Times of Israel, 5th August, 2021

The IDF renewed retaliatory strikes at military targets in Lebanon late Wednesday, in response to rocket fire that sparked blazes that were still tearing through forested hillsides in northern Israel some 12 hours later. Israeli fighter jets targeted the Lebanese border areas from which the rocket fire originated, in addition to other terror infrastructure, the army said. The air force also struck a site that was used to fire rockets at Israel in the past. Hezbollah-affiliated Al-Manar television reported that Israeli jets struck an area in the outskirts of the southern Lebanese town of Aishiya. "IDF attacks will continue and even intensify in the face of terror attacks against the State of Israel and its citizens," the army said in a statement.

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-renews-counterstrikes-as-fire-from-lebanese-rocket-engulfs-northern-hillside/>

Bennett, CIA Director Burns talk Iran

Jerusalem Post, 11th August, 2021

As Iran is enriching uranium at 60% and blocking IAEA access to nuclear sites, PM Naftali Bennett and CIA director Burns discuss the Islamic State. Prime Minister Naftali Bennett and CIA Director William Burns discussed Iran and other regional issues in a meeting in Jerusalem on Wednesday. "The situation in the Middle East, with an emphasis on Iran, and the possibility of broadening and deepening regional cooperation" were on the agenda, the Prime Minister's Office said.

Mossad chief David Barnea, incoming National Security Adviser Eyal Hulata, Bennett's Military Secretary Brig.-Gen. Avi Gil and his Diplomatic Adviser Shimrit Meir also took part in the meeting.

<https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/bennett-cia-director-burns-talk-iran-676409>

JORDAN

Iranian-Backed Iraqi Militia Leaders Threaten To Target U.S. Forces In Jordan, Add: Expelling U.S. Forces From The Region Is Feasible; Israel Is Our Number-One Enemy

MEMRI TV, 9th August, 2021

In a BBC Arabic TV (U.K.) report, which was aired on August 19, 2021, leaders of pro-Iran militias talk about their activity on both sides of the Syria-Iraq border. Ahmad Al-Maksusi, Secretary-General of the Sayiid Al-Shuhada Brigades militia, said that the Iraqi militias were the ones who targeted American forces in Al-Tanf base in Syria. He said that the militias will operate wherever necessary, and hinted that they might retaliate against Jordan for allowing uses forces to send drones that killed PMU operatives from its territory.

<https://www.memri.org/tv/pro-iran-militia-leaders-bbc-resistance-factions-goals-iraq-pmu-syria-operate-elsewher-israel-enemy-islam>

LEBANON

Lebanese Villagers Seize Control Of Hizbullah Rocket Launcher: Hizbullah Is Launching Rockets Right Next To Our Homes!

MEMRI TV, 6th August, 2021

On August 6, 2021, Hizubllah attempted to launch rockets at northern Israel from Chouaya, a Druze village in southern Lebanon. Druze residents of the village took over the rocket launcher and shouted: "Hizbullah is launching [rockets] next to our homes." Villagers exclaimed that local security forces, who they refer to as the "dogs of our region" defend the Hizbullah militants more than they defend the children of their own Druze sect. Footage of the events was uploaded to various online platforms.

<https://www.memri.org/tv/lebanon-villagers-seize-control-hizbullah-rocket-launcher-next-homes>

Hezbollah says it fired rockets after Israeli airstrikes

Ya Libnan, 6th August, 2021

The Iran- backed militant Hezbollah group said it fired a barrage of rockets near Israeli positions close to the Lebanese border on Friday, calling it retaliation for Israeli airstrikes on southern Lebanon a day earlier. Israel said it was firing back after 19 rockets were launched from Lebanon, and Prime Minister Naftali Bennett swiftly convened a meeting with the country's top defense officials. "We do not wish to escalate to a full war, yet of course we are very prepared for that," said Lt. Col. Amnon Shefler, spokesman for the Israel

Defense Forces. It was the second straight day of rocket fire from Lebanon. But where Hezbollah took responsibility for Friday's shelling, it was unclear who was responsible for the attacks early Thursday, Shefler said.

<https://yalibnan.com/2021/08/06/hezbollah-says-it-fired-rockets-after-israeli-airstrikes/>

Hezbollah hegemony over state at root of Lebanon's problems: Saudi FM

Ya Libnan, 7th August, 2021

Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah said on Wednesday that Hezbollah's insistence on "imposing its hegemony over the state is at the root of Lebanon's problems." "Lebanon is facing challenges in forming an effective government and we are concerned that the Beirut blast probe has not led to tangible results," he added. He said: "Any help presented to the current or future Lebanese government hinges on it implementing serious and tangible reforms." He made his remarks as Lebanon commemorated the first anniversary of the massive explosion at Beirut's port.

<https://yalibnan.com/2021/08/07/saudi-fm-hezbollah-hegemony-over-state-at-root-of-lebanons-problems/>

Israel PM: Lebanon responsible for attacks, Hezbollah or not

Ya Libnan, 8th August, 2021

Israel's prime minister said Sunday he holds the Lebanese government responsible for rocket fire launched from its territory, whether the Hezbollah militant group launched the weapons or not. Prime Minister Naftali Bennett's comments came days after one of the heaviest flareups in

violence between Israel and Hezbollah in several years and indicated Israel could expand its response if the rocket fire continues.

"The country of Lebanon and the army of Lebanon have to take responsibility (for) what happens in its backyard," Bennett told his Cabinet. Over several days last week, militants in Lebanon launched a barrage of rockets into Israel, drawing rare Israeli airstrikes in Lebanon. On Friday, Hezbollah fired additional rockets toward Israel, and Israel responded with heavy artillery shelling.

<https://yalibnan.com/2021/08/08/israel-pm-lebanon-responsible-for-attacks-hezbollah-or-not/>

US imposes new restrictions on Iran-backed militias in Lebanon, Iraq, Syria

Ya Libnan, 10th August, 2021

The US announced new restrictions Monday against Iran-backed militias based in Lebanon, Iraq and Syria, the State Department said. Monday's announcement said that restrictions were issued on members of Iraq's Hezbollah, Russia-based and Syria-based companies.

Measures were also taken against Lebanon's Iran-backed Hezbollah. "No department or agency of the US government may procure or enter into any contract for the procurement of any goods, technology, or services from these foreign persons, except to the extent that the Secretary of State otherwise may determine," the statement read. The new measures will remain in place for two years.

<https://yalibnan.com/2021/08/10/us-imposes-new-restrictions-on-iran-backed-militias-in-lebanon-iraq-syria/>

Hezbollah has hundreds of km of inter-regional tunnel network, report

Ya Libnan, 15th August, 2021

The Jerusalem Post has revealed that Hezbollah has a large-scale inter-regional tunnel network stretching across Lebanon designed to move personnel and weapons, according to a new report released by the ALMA Center over the weekend. According to the report, titled “Land of Tunnels” and authored by Maj. (res.) Tal Beeri, [Hezbollah](#) began its tunnel project after the Second Lebanon War in 2006 with the help of the North Koreans and Iranians and “is much larger than the Hamas ‘metro’ project in the Gaza Strip.” The network supposedly connects the Beirut area, Hezbollah’s central headquarters, the Bekaa area used by the group as its logistical operational rear base, to southern Lebanon. According to the report by ALMA Center, which researches security challenges facing Israel on its northern front, the tunnels allow for “hundreds of fully equipped combatants to pass stealthily and rapidly underground.”

<https://yalibnan.com/2021/08/15/hezbollah-has-hundreds-of-km-of-inter-regional-tunnel-network/>

SAUDI ARABIA

Coalition intercepts, destroys Houthi drone targeting Saudi city

Saudi Gazette, 1st August, 2021

The Arab Coalition forces led by Saudi Arabia have intercepted and destroyed an explosive-laden drone launched by the Iran-backed Houthi militia, targeting the Kingdom’s southern region. In a statement early Sunday, the Coalition to Restore Legitimacy in Yemen said that the Iranian-backed militia fired the weaponized UAV

at the southern Saudi city of Khamis Mushait along the border with Yemen. The coalition added that its forces are taking operational measures to protect civilians and civilian facilities from hostile acts, according to a statement carried by state TV Al-Ekhbariya.

<https://www.saudigazette.com.sa/article/609356/SAUDI-ARABIA/Coalition-intercepts-destroys-Houthi-drone-targeting-Saudi-city>

Saudi Arabia working with US to safeguard maritime navigation in Gulf: Prince Faisal

Saudi Gazette, 3rd August, 2021

Saudi Arabia’s Foreign Minister Prince Faisal Bin Farhan said on Tuesday that the Kingdom is working with the United States to ensure the safety and security of global maritime navigation. He also said that Saudi Arabia is discussing with Washington issues that concern the two countries, including Iran, and its obstruction to navigation, pointing out that Tehran poses a threat to international maritime operations in the Arabian Gulf. Speaking about Iran’s nuclear program during the webinar, Prince Faisal said: “The biggest challenge is to reach an agreement that will prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon.” The Saudi foreign minister added that Iran is a negative actor in the region and it provides the Houthi militia with weapons to threaten navigation, and the militia is continuing to target civilians in Saudi Arabia and Yemen despite ceasefire offers.

<https://www.saudigazette.com.sa/article/609441/SAUDI-ARABIA/Saudi-Arabia-working-with-US-to-secure-maritime-navigation-in-Gulf-Prince-Faisal>

Saudi Arabia intercepts, destroys two Houthi drones targeting Khamis Mushait

Saudi Gazette, 9th August, 2021

The Arab Coalition forces led by Saudi Arabia have intercepted and destroyed two explosive-laden drones launched by the Iran-backed Houthi militia, targeting the Kingdom's southern region. In a statement early Monday, the Coalition to Restore Legitimacy in Yemen said that the Iranian-backed militia is deliberately targeting civilians in the Kingdom. "The Houthi militia deliberately targeted civilians and civilian infrastructure. We are dealing with the threats firmly to protect civilians from hostile attacks," the Arab Coalition said in a statement. The latest attack on the southern city of Khamis Mushait comes more than a week after a hostile attempt by the Iran-backed Houthis to attack a Saudi commercial vessel with a drone was thwarted.

<https://www.saudigazette.com.sa/article/609607/SAUDI-ARABIA/Saudi-Arabia-intercepts-destroys-two-Houthi-drones-targeting-Khamis-Mushait>

Saudi, Indian naval forces begin joint drills in Indian Ocean

Saudi Gazette, 10th August, 2021

The Royal Saudi Naval Forces (RSNF), represented by the Eastern Fleet, and Indian Naval Forces kicked off "Indian Ocean" joint drills on Tuesday in the Arabian Gulf. This exercise aims to exchange experience between the two sides and to ensure freedom of navigation and security in the Arabian Gulf. In a statement, Commander of the Eastern Fleet Vice Admiral Majed Bin Hazza Al-Qahtani affirmed that the "Indian Ocean" exercise is the first of its kind between the Saudi and Indian naval forces, adding that these maneuvers seek to

enhance military cooperation in the field of naval operations between Saudi Arabia and India.

<https://www.saudigazette.com.sa/article/609675/SAUDI-ARABIA/Saudi-Indian-naval-forces-begin-joint-drills-in-Indian-Ocean>

SYRIA

Iran's Revolutionary Guards dig tunnels in city of Palmyra

Al-Monitor, 2nd August, 2021

The Iranian-backed Fatemiyoun Brigade and Hezbollah al-Nujaba have started digging tunnels linking their headquarters and posts in the city of Palmyra in the center of the Syrian Desert. Excavations began from ammunition depots and military points on the eastern outskirts of the city last week. Al-Mohrar Media Network quoted agencies as saying the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) covered the undisclosed costs and expenses of the drilling operations, and secured manual and automated drilling equipment. The operation aims to move to the strategic town of al-Sukhna and its neighboring villages in the second phase, after the completion of the tunnel network in the city of Palmyra. The operation also aims to increase protection of headquarters and warehouses and to avoid US airstrikes. An Iranian military source told Al-Monitor on condition of anonymity, "Iranian forces have been digging military tunnels in the areas under their control for more than three years. The objective is to link military headquarters together."

<https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/07/irans-revolutionary-guards-dig-tunnels-city-palmyra#ixzz75oHeO9Qb>

Russia: US military presence in Syria illegal

Syrian Arab News Agency, 10th August, 2021

Russia has reiterated that the US military presence in Syria is illegal, adding that Washington's interpretation of resolution No. 2254 is "ridiculous and ironic". Earlier, Wayne Maroto, Spokesman for the illegitimate so-called "International Coalition" which is led by the US under the pretext of fighting terrorism, claimed in a tweet that "the US forces are deployed in Syria under the international law and the Security Council's resolution No. /2254/ which was issued in November 2015."

<http://www.sana.sy/en/?p=244713>

TURKEY

Turkey neutralized 137 PKK terrorists in July

Anadolu Agency, 3rd August, 2021

A total of 137 PKK and YPG/PKK terrorists were neutralized this July by Turkish security forces in both domestic and cross-border operations, based on official reports and data. Turkish authorities often use "neutralize" in statements to imply that the terrorists in question surrendered or were killed or captured. Counter-terrorism operations were carried out during the month by the Turkish Armed Forces as well as the Security General Directorate, gendarmerie, and the National Intelligence Organization (MIT), according to information compiled by Anadolu Agency.

<https://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkey/turkey-neutralized-137-pkk-terrorists-in-july/2322462>

Russia delighted with increasing Turkish cooperation in defense

Daily Sabah, 6th August, 2021

Yuri Pilipson, the Russian Foreign Ministry's Fourth European director, said his country values Turkey's purchase of the S-400 Russian air defense systems despite foreign political pressure, and that he sees tremendous potential in the two countries' cooperation. "We are monitoring the developing Turkish-Russian collaboration with great satisfaction, including the domain of military and technical cooperation. Implementation of joint projects, particularly the supply of S-400 Triumf systems to Ankara in 2019, shows the determination of both countries to advance collaboration in this domain. We see an important potential in this," said Pilipson.

<https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/russia-delighted-with-increasing-turkish-cooperation-in-defense>

Turkey's defense minister, Pakistani premier discuss bilateral, global issues

Anadolu Agency, 11th August, 2021

Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan met visiting Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar in the capital Islamabad on Wednesday to discuss a range of issues, including Ankara's ongoing efforts for a political solution in Afghanistan. Stressing the need for a negotiated political settlement, Khan expressed hope that Afghan leaders would recognize "the importance of international convergence on the way forward and achieve an inclusive, broad-based and comprehensive political settlement," according to a statement from

the Pakistani premier's office. Islamabad, he said, will continue to make "every effort to help advance the Afghan peace process and to realize a political solution."

<https://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkey/turkeys-defense-minister-pakistani-premier-discuss-bilateral-global-issues/2331287>

Erdoğan says he could meet with leader of Taliban

Daily Sabah, 11th August, 2021

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said late Wednesday that he could meet with the leader of the Taliban as part of efforts to end the fighting in Afghanistan. The Turkish authorities are working to set talks with the Taliban, he added. "Turkey's relevant institutions are currently working until we have some talks with the Taliban. Maybe even I can be in a position to receive the person who will be their leader," Erdoğan said during a joint TV interview broadcast live on CNN Turk and Kanal D. If the Taliban is not taken under control, "it will not be possible for us to achieve peace in Afghanistan," he asserted. "The latest developments and the situation of the Afghan public are really, really troubling," Erdoğan said.

<https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/erdogan-says-he-could-meet-with-leader-of-taliban>