

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

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I. COUNTRY REVIEWS

A. South Asia

Afghanistan

(February 2-8 and February 9-15, 2015)

- **Mounting insecurity in north province; Power based on elections determine legitimacy; Chinese Deputy Foreign Minister calls on Ghani; Ghani underlines China role for peace initiative; Ghani urges leaders not to forget Afghanistan.**

Security officials in Northern provinces are concerned over increasing number of armed groups. While talking to the media the officials said that the groups pose serious threat to security of the north zone. The officials said a crackdown was kicked off in Northern provinces to disarm the armed groups. In charge of the disarmament campaign, Abdul Manan Abid, said that more than 600 light and heavy weapons were collected from armed groups for the past nine months. He said the groups are active in north zone and often try to create insecurity there. According to him, the drive would continue and would disarm more gunmen. The acting police chief of northern Balkh province, Abdul Razaq Qadiri, said they have collected more than 100 weapons from armed groups in the province. He blamed ill control in borders as main reason behind increase in armed groups that create insecurity in Northern provinces, particularly Balkh. He suggested the security agencies to boost up their control in bordering areas as they are the main route for import of illegal weapons. A number of residents of northern Balkh and Kunduz provinces recently said that they have been fed up with insecurity and thus they want government's serious attention in this regard. However, the claim by the residents was rejected by security officials in the provinces.¹

According to President Ghani, Legitimacy in Afghanistan is now based on the elections, "Legitimacy in my country now comes from the ballot," Ghani said at the Munich Security Conference on February 8. Ghani stressed that the people of Afghanistan now want to have sustainable peace, enabling them and their children to leave normal lives. "Peace in the world firmly anchored in our great civilization and commitment to progress," Ghani said. According to Ghani, the country's security has been beefed up. The president also urged to fight against the Islamic State, al-Qaeda and other extremists.²

The Chinese Deputy Foreign Minister called on President Ashraf Ghani in the presidential palace on February 9, wherein they exchanged views on different issues including war on terror in the

¹ "Armed Groups Behind Mounting Insecurity In North", *Afghanistan Times*, February 1, 2015, at <http://afghanistantimes.af/armed-groups-behind-mounting-insecurity-in-north-official/>

² "Legitimacy of Power Based on Elections", *Out Look Afghanistan*, February 9, 2015, at http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=11643

region and the peace process in Afghanistan. Liu Jianchao told President Ghani that China is ready to support political stability in Afghanistan. He welcomed president Ghani's recent remarks at Munich Security conference over compact anti-terror efforts. President Ghani said that enhanced diplomacy is needed among parliamentarians, civil society activists and youth of the two countries. "We are in fight against the elements that are a common threat for security of Afghanistan and China, and the elements that kill innocent people," Ghani said. He added that the international community's cooperation is needed to fight the terror menace in the region. In the meantime, the Chinese Deputy Foreign Minister told a press conference in Kabul that his government would try all means to make the Afghan-led peace process successful. He said that China supports the reconciliation process which is led by Afghans and owned by the people of Afghanistan. "China is trying to engage all the parties concerned in order to bring everyone to the table of negotiations," he added.³

President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani on February 9 underlined extended Chinese cooperation with Afghanistan for peace efforts. Liu Jianchao, Chinese assistant foreign minister, called on the president at the Presidential Palace where both the dignitaries held wide ranging talks on bilateral relations, counter-terrorism and regional cooperation. Jianchao assured China's support to the political stability of Afghanistan and welcomed Ghani's recent remarks at Munich Security Conference over compact anti-terror efforts. According to Jianchao Afghanistan had a strategic importance and was a meeting point of regional economic and security cooperation. President Ghani also called for enhanced track-two diplomacy among parliamentarians, civil society activists and youth of the two countries. "We are in fight against elements posing threat to security and killing innocent people. We need international community's cooperation in this regard," he added. The Chinese assistant foreign minister was in Kabul to take part in the third round of trilateral dialogue among Afghanistan-Pakistan-China held on February 9. After Ghani's visit to China last October, Beijing has intensified efforts for peace talks and had even hosted a Taliban delegation.⁴

Ghani warned that terrorism remains a global threat, a point many other conference participants made. But Ghani's concern that the NATO coalition withdraw and events surrounding groups like the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and al-Qaeda in the Arab peninsula might cause Western allies to shift away from Afghanistan entirely and abandon its struggle with militant extremism was one that captured a worried sentiment shared by many Afghans. "We feel the threats, but it is important to remember that because of the threats that Libya and Syria are facing, Afghanistan must not be forgotten," stated Ghani. Over the past few months, the U.S. and a coalition of European and Arab nations have launched air strikes against ISIS, the president of Yemen was deposed and Islamists in Libya continued to gain ground. All around the Arab world, a rapid deterioration of political and social conditions appears compelled by an expanding brand of militant extremism. Recent attacks in France, Canada and Australia have fed the resurgent frenzy around the threat of international terrorism.⁵

³ "Chinese Deputy Foreign Minister Calls On Ghani", *Afghanistan Times*, February 9, 2015, at <http://afghanistantimes.af/chinese-deputy-foreign-minister-calls-on-ghani/>

⁴ "Ghani Underlines China Role For Peace Initiative", *Pajhwok*, February 10, 2015, at <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2015/02/09/ghani-underlines-china-role-peace-initiative>

⁵ "Ghani Urges Leaders Not to Forget Afghanistan", *Out Look Afghanistan*, February 11, 2015, at http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=11650

Pakistan

(February 2-8 and February 9-15, 2015)

- **Pakistan test-fires new cruise missile Ra'ad; Gas supply to textile sector hit by pipeline blast; Army Chief discusses Afghan border coordination with US commander; Pakistan proposes transit trade agreement to Turkmenistan; Sindh to refer 64 cases to military courts.**

Pakistan on February 2 conducted a successful flight test of the indigenously developed Air Launched Cruise Missile (ALCM) Ra'ad, ISPR reported. With a range of 350 kilometres, the Ra'ad missile enables Pakistan to achieve strategic standoff capability both on land and at sea. The state of the art Ra'ad cruise missile was built with "Cruise Technology" which has been developed by only a few countries in the world and gives the missile stealth capabilities. The low altitude missile has high manoeuvrability capabilities and can deliver nuclear and conventional warheads with pin-point accuracy. Director General Strategic Plans Division, Lieutenant General Zubair Mahmood Hayat congratulated the scientists and engineers on this achievement and termed the milestone as a major step towards strengthening Pakistan's full spectrum credible minimum deterrence capability. ⁶

The Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) drastically reduced supplies to the textile sector in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa after terrorists blew up a 24-inch diameter gas pipeline in Balochistan's Dera Bugti before dawn on February 2. The action was taken when the system suddenly lost 25 million cubic feet of gas. A massive fire caused by the blast led to suspension of supply to the compressor of the gas purification plant. The shortage of gas affected Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and some other parts of the country. ⁷

Pakistan's Army Chief, General Raheel Sharif on February 2 discussed coordination along Pak-Afghan border and regional security among other matters of mutual interest with the top United States commander in Afghanistan. A statement issued by the Inter-Services public Relations (ISPR) said General John F. Campbell, Commander Resolute Support Mission and United States Forces in Afghanistan called on Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Raheel Sharif at the General Headquarters (GHQ). "During the meeting, matters of mutual interest and regional security with particular emphasis on coordination along Pak-Afghan border were discussed," the statement added. ⁸

Pakistan has proposed to Turkmenistan to sign the transit trade agreement to establish trade linkages with the Central Asian countries, which may be extended further to Russia. The Ministry of Commerce will forward the draft of the proposed transit trade agreement to the Turkmen

⁶ "Pakistan Test-Fires New Cruise Missile Ra'ad", *The Express Tribune*, February 3, 2015 at <http://tribune.com.pk/story/831544/pakistan-test-fires-new-cruise-missile-raad/>

⁷ "Gas Supply To Textile Sector Hit By Pipeline Blast", *Dawn*, February 2, 2015 at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1160999/gas-supply-to-textile-sector-hit-by-pipeline-blast>

⁸ "Army Chief Discusses Afghan Border Coordination With US Commander", *The News*, February 3, 2015, at <http://www.thenews.com.pk/article-173826-Army-Chief-discusses-Afghan-border-coordination-with-US-commander>

officials within the next few days for further deliberations. This was discussed in a meeting by the Federal Minister for Commerce Engr. Khurram Dastagir Khan with the Ambassador of Turkmenistan in Pakistan Aladjan Movlamov, who called on the minister in Islamabad on February 3. The transit trade agreement with Turkmenistan will establish another trade corridor into the Central Asian states where goods will be traded with greater ease and in larger quantity. In the beginning of January, the first meeting of Pakistan-Afghanistan-Tajikistan Trilateral Transit Trade Agreement (PATTTTA) was held which proved fruitful. The three sides will meet again in February in Dushanbe with the first draft of the trilateral transit trade agreement and the final draft of agreement will be brought on table in March in Kabul where PATTTTA is expected to be signed. The two transit trade agreements will be the harbinger of a new era of trade cooperation between the two regions of South Asia and Central Asia.⁹

Sindh Chief Minister Syed Qaim Ali Shah has approved 64 cases to be referred to military courts for trial. The approval was accorded by the chief minister at a special meeting held on February 9. The cases including attack on convoy of Justice Maqbool Baqar on June 26, 2013, Airport attack case of June 8, 2014 and murder of Advocate Mubarak Raza Kazmi on July 23, 2014 were found fit for the trial by military courts. Briefing the chief minister about cases, the IGP Sindh said that 85 cases were referred to the legal committee for opinion. The committee, after going through these cases, approved 64 of them for trial by military courts. The chief minister directed the IGP to complete all formalities for sending these cases to military courts.¹⁰

Bangladesh

(February 9-15, 2015)

- **Plan for seamless transit of passenger, cargo and personal vehicles between Bangladesh, India, Bhutan and Nepal; UN expresses concerns about violence in Bangladesh; British High Commissioner meets Khaleda Zia; The Showcase Canada 2015 begins in Dhaka.**

Bangladesh, India, Bhutan and Nepal, have drawn up a draft plan for seamless transit of passenger, cargo and personal vehicles between the countries. The agreement will allow vehicles to ply designated routes in the four countries and reduce cost and time of unloading and loading of people and goods at the borders, making cross-border trade more efficient. This sub-regional move is an initiative parallel to the proposed SAARC Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA) and expected to be open also to other neighbouring countries. Reportedly, India, Bhutan and Nepal have accepted a Bangladesh recommendation to keep the membership of this sub-regional group open so that neighbouring countries like Myanmar and China can connect to the region.¹¹

⁹ "Pakistan proposes transit trade agreement to Turkmenistan", *The News*, February 4, 2015, at <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-35685-Pakistan-proposes-transit-trade-agreement-to-Turkmenistan>

¹⁰ "Sindh To Refer 64 Cases To Military Courts", *The Daily Times*, February 10, 2015, at <http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/national/10-Feb-2015/sindh-to-refer-64-cases-to-military-courts>

¹¹ Karim, Rezaul, "Big Step In Saarc Travel", *The Daily Star*, February 13, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/big-step-in-saarc-travel-64559>.

The United Nations is very much concerned about the violence and loss of lives in Bangladesh. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon is personally committed to the stability and positive development of Bangladesh, his spokesman Stéphane Dujarric said at a press briefing in New York on February 11. Referring to UN moves to mediate and solve the problems in Bangladesh, he said Assistant Secretary General Oscar Fernández-Taranco has been tasked by the secretary general to liaise with the government and he's doing just that.¹²

British High Commissioner Robert W. Gibson has urged all parties to consider confidence building measures that can defuse the current tension in Bangladesh and allow normal life to resume. Gibson made the call after meeting Khaleda Zia at her Gulshan office on February 11. It was the first ever meeting of any foreign envoy stationed in Dhaka with the BNP chief since January 3. Besides, the meeting took place at a time when law enforcers were not allowing any leaders and activists of the BNP-led 20-party alliance to meet Khaleda since February 1. Gibson said his country was committed to the future stability, development and prosperity of Bangladesh in which they were and would remain close partners.¹³

The Showcase Canada 2015 started in Dhaka on February 14, aiming to boost trade and investment between Bangladesh and Canada. Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed inaugurated the two-day event, organised by Canada Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CanCham) in association with the High Commission of Canada, at Sonargaon Hotel in Dhaka.¹⁴

Sri Lanka

(February 9-15, 2015)

- **President Sirisena visits Sri Lanka; Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera meets British Foreign Office Minister Hugo Swire; Samaraweera visits US; NPC adopts resolution on genocide; The Iranian Navy docks 33rd naval fleet at the port of Colombo.**

Sri Lanka's new president Maithripala Sirisena came to India on February 15 on his first foreign trip in office. President Sirisena was accompanied by his wife Jayanthi Pushpa Kumari.¹⁵

Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera had talks with British Foreign Office Minister Hugo Swire in London on February 9. Mangala Samaraweera was in the UK while on his way to the US.¹⁶

¹² "UN Chief Wants Stability", *The Daily Star*, February 13, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/un-chief-wants-stability-64573>.

¹³ "UK Envoy for Confidence Building to Defuse Tension", *The Daily Star*, February 12, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/uk-envoy-for-confidence-building-to-defuse-tension-64423>.

¹⁴ "Expo Spotlights Potential Of Canada-Bangladesh Trade", *The Daily Star*, February 15, 2015 at <http://www.thedailystar.net/expo-spotlights-potential-of-canada-bangladesh-trade-64799>.

¹⁵ "President Begins Key India Visit", *Colombo Gazette*, February 15, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/02/15/president-begins-key-india-visit/>.

¹⁶ "Mangala, Swire Hold Talks in UK", *Colombo Gazette*, February 9, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/02/09/mangala-swire-hold-talks-in-uk/>.

The Government of Sri Lanka says the just concluded visit to the United States by Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera, was successful. Samaraweera was in the U.S. to brief U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon on the efforts being taken by the new Government to address human rights concerns. The Minister also sought to mend ties with the U.S., which had been strained after the former Government refused to work with the U.S. on the human rights issue. During the two day visit to the U.S.A., the Minister held a range of meetings including with Secretary of State John Kerry, National Security Adviser Susan Rice, co-chairs of the Sri Lanka Caucus in the U.S. Congress, Chris Van Hollen and Robert Aderholt, Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Congressman Ed Royce and Ranking Member of the Committee, Congressman Eliot Engel. He also addressed a full house at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.¹⁷

The Northern Provincial Council (NPC) adopted a resolution on February 10, calling for an international investigation into alleged acts of genocide committed against the Tamils. In the resolution, the NPC urged the team appointed by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to investigate the war in Sri Lanka, to comprehensively investigate and report on the charge of genocide in its submission to the UN Human Rights Council in March 2015. It also said that the UN Security Council should refer the situation in Sri Lanka to the International Criminal Court for prosecutions based on war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide adding that alternatively or concurrently, domestic courts in countries that may exercise universal jurisdiction over the alleged events and perpetrators, including but not limited to the United States, should prosecute these crimes.¹⁸

The Iranian Navy's 33rd naval fleet has docked at the port of Colombo in Sri Lanka as Iran seeks to expand its naval presence in international waters. The Iranian flotilla, consisting of the Bandar Abbas auxiliary ship and Naqdi destroyer, arrived at the port, the largest in Sri Lanka as well as in South Asia on February 9 after travelling approximately 5,000 km.¹⁹

Maldives

(February 9-15, 2015)

- **The second Advanced Light Helicopter gifted by India is ready for deployment to the Maldives; An Aircraft of the Indian Navy is being employed in the search mission in the Maldives; Maldives wishes to buy patrol boats from Bangladesh.**

India has said that the second Advanced Light Helicopter (ALH) gifted by India is ready for deployment to the Maldives. This came in a press release by the High Commission of India in the

¹⁷ "Mangala's U.S. Talks "Successful"", *Colombo Gazette*, February 15, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/02/15/mangalas-u-s-talks-successful/>.

¹⁸ "NPC Adopts Genocide Resolution", *Colombo Gazette*, February 10, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/02/10/npc-adopts-genocide-resolution/>.

¹⁹ "Iran Naval Flotilla Docks In Lanka", *Colombo Gazette*, February 10, 2015 at <http://colombogazette.com/2015/02/10/iran-naval-flotilla-docks-in-lanka/>.

Maldives, following recent rumours regarding the India-Maldives defence and security co-operation. "The second ALH was given in December 2013 again on the request of the Government of Maldives to further strengthen coastal and EEZ surveillance. The High Commission refuted claims about India's refusal to train Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF) soldiers operating the helicopter, and said that it has been India's constant endeavour to ensure that Maldives is self-sufficient in operating the assets gifted by India. In this regard, India said that one flight engineer and one technician from the MNDF have completed the ALH technical courses in November 2014, and two slots for ALH pilot training have also been offered to MNDF in 2015. The High Commission further refuted claims that the crew of Kurangi, the first ALH gifted by India, flew across some areas of Maldives without orders, and said that the Indian crew members who provide technical support are under the operational control of MNDF, and can fly Kurangi only on authorisation by MNDF. Reportedly, Maldives has rejected India's offer to train helicopter pilots, and instead suggested that the two new helicopters be operated by Indian pilots, as is done presently.²⁰

Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF) has said that an aircraft of the Indian Navy is being employed in the search for the three people who remain missing after a landing craft known as "Coral Craft" was discovered capsized near Baa atoll.²¹

Maldives has expressed interest in buying patrol boats from Bangladesh. Reportedly, Maldives' National Defence Force (MNDF) Chief of Defence Major General Mohamed Shiyam said this to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina while paying a courtesy call on her at Jatiya Sangsad Office on February 10, as part of his ongoing visit to Bangladesh.²²

B. East Asia

China

(February 9-15, 2015)

- **Chinese Premier meets the Prime Minister of Greece; Xi Jinping and Barack Obama talk over telephone; China calls for early resolution of Ukraine crisis; China calls for early resolution of crisis in Yemen; Chinese Foreign Minister visits Pakistan, Iran and UAE.**

The Chinese Premier Li Keqiang met with the Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras on February 11. They discussed the bilateral relations and decided to work on ways to improve the existing

²⁰ "India: Second Helicopter Ready For Deployment", *SunOnline*, February 12, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/27711>.

²¹ "Indian Aircraft Assists MNDF's Search Operation Following Landing Craft Capsize", *SunOnline*, February 13, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/27731>.

²² "Maldives Proposes Buying Patrol Boats From Bangladesh", *SunOnline*, February 12, 2015 at <http://www.sun.mv/english/27702>.

²³ "Chinese, Greek Heads Of Gov't Discuss Bilateral Cooperation", *China Daily*, February 12, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-02/12/content_19573096.htm, accessed on February 16, 2015

relationship. During the meeting Li said that, "China treasures bilateral friendship and continues to expand pragmatic cooperation with Greece".²³

On February 11, the Chinese President Xi Jinping held telephonic conversation with the President of the United States, Barack Obama. Xi accepted the invitation of the United States President to visit the United States in September 2015.²⁴

According to the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying, China is happy with the global efforts to resolve the Ukraine crisis. Hua said that, "We expect to hear good news of parties concerned reaching important consensus on settling the crisis as soon as possible, in order to promote peace and stability of the conflict area in Ukraine".²⁵

China has asked interested parties to solve the dispute in Yemen through dialogue. The Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying said that, "China pays high attention to the major political changes in Yemen". This was in response to Yemen's Shiite Houthi group's unilateral announcement to dissolve the parliament and form a presidential council.²⁶

The Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi paid official visit to Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Iran from February 12 to February 16, 2015. The primary aim of the visit has been to improve the existing bilateral relations.²⁷

Japan

(February 9-15, 2015)

- **Japan and the US to offer a joint declaration to commemorate the 70th anniversary of World War II; Japan not to renew its currency swap agreement with South Korea; Japanese PM Abe assures to bring about drastic reform; Japan renames its ODA charter.**

Both Japan and the US are currently preparing a joint document to commemorate the 70th anniversary of World War II. This document is to be issued during Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's visit to Washington in late April and early May this year, ahead of Abe's statement on the anniversary in August. The joint declaration is reportedly a part of Tokyo's plan to convey to the world that even though during the World War II, Japan and the US were adversaries, due to the two countries' shared commitment towards democratic values, they have now developed a close alliance. The declaration is also meant to warn both China and South Korea against forging

²⁴ "Xi Has Phone Talks With Obama", *China Daily*, February 12, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2015-02/12/content_19561440.htm, accessed on February 16, 2015

²⁵ "China Welcomes Mediation Efforts In Solving Ukraine Crisis", *China Daily*, February 11, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2015-02/11/content_19560161.htm, accessed on February 16, 2015

²⁶ "China Calls For Dialogue In Yemen", *China Daily*, February 10, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2015-02/10/content_19547776.htm, accessed on February 16, 2015

²⁷ "Chinese FM To Visit Pakistan, UAE, Iran", *China Daily*, February 09, 2015 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-02/09/content_19533771.htm, accessed on February 16, 2015

any kind of united front vis-à-vis Japan due to their conflicts with Tokyo over historical issues.²⁸

Japan has recently decided not to renew its currency swap agreement with South Korea once the current arrangement comes to end on February 23 this year. The swap arrangement worth \$10 billion was reached in 2001. Its main objective was to ensure that the central banks of the two countries have enough access to dollar funds to deal with market instability. However, Japan's decision not to extend the term of the current swap arrangement could deteriorate its already strained relations with South Korea further.²⁹

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, in his policy speech at the Diet on February 12, expressed his resolve to bring about "the most drastic reforms" since the end of the World War II. By reforms he basically indicated policy change in order to break entrenched "bedrock" regulations. In his speech, Abe briefly touched upon reforms in agricultural cooperatives, labour laws, economic revitalization, etc. However he did not speak much about the development of security legislation, constitutional revision, etc.³⁰

On February 10, the Japanese cabinet renamed Japan's official development assistance (ODA) charter as the "development cooperation charter". It is the first time since 2003 that the ODA policy has been revised. The move is to highlight Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's emphasis on "proactive pacifism". Interestingly the revised ODA policy is to help Japan in providing financial assistance to overseas militaries in a non-combat capacity. It will also be instrumental in extending development cooperation carried out in collaboration with local government as well as private companies.³¹

South Korea

- **South Korea and Japan is to hold joint events to commemorate 50th anniversary of diplomatic ties.**

Despite the ongoing tension between South Korea and Japan, both the countries have recently decided to hold joint events in order to commemorate the 50th anniversary of normalizing their diplomatic ties. The move is expected to deepen cooperation and exchanges between the people of the two countries and help them in pursuing a new future.³²

²⁸ "Japan, US Cooperating On Joint Document To Mark 70th Anniversary Of War's End", *The Asahi Shimbun*, February 15, 2015, at http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201502150019

²⁹ "Japan To End Currency Swap With S. Korea", *The Asahi Shimbun*, February 14, 2015, at http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201502140040

³⁰ "A Confident Abe Plans Drastic Reform", *The Yomiuri Daily*, February 13, 2015, at <http://the-japan-news.com/news/article/0001930141>

³¹ "Japan ODA Programme Gets New Name, May Provide Aid To Foreign Militaries", *Mainichi Daily*, February 11, 2015, at <http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20150211p2a00m0na008000c.html>

³² "Seoul, Tokyo to Hold Joint Events to Mark 50th Anniversary of Diplomatic Ties", *The Korea Herald*, February 13, 2015, at http://www.koreaherald.com/common_prog/newsprint.php?ud=20150213001109&dt=2

C. Southeast Asia

Southeast Asia

(February 9-15, 2015)

- **ASEAN Defence Chiefs met at an Informal gathering; ASEAN CAP 10 CEO Summit; Japan's 2 Trillion Yen ODA to ASEAN; Clashes between the Kokang Rebels and Myanmar Army; US-Singapore Strategic Partnership Dialogue; EXIM Bank of Korea to provide loan assistance to Cambodia and Laos; Free Malaysian Visa for Indian Tourists.**

The 12th ASEAN Chiefs of Defence Forces Informal Meeting (ACDFIM-12) was held in Kuala Lumpur on February 10, 2015. In the meeting the participants focused on various issues ranging from defence cooperation programmes to emerging security challenges in the region, including cyber security and maritime security in the East Sea/ South China Sea. They reiterated that Code of Conduct on South China Sea is important to bring stability in the region. They mentioned that ASEAN armies will continue working together, share information and conduct joint training and drilling activities. Laos has been appointed as the chair of ASEAN Military Operational Informal Meeting and the ACDFIM-13 for the year 2016 in the meeting. The ASEAN defence chiefs signed a joint statement to conclude the meeting which mentioned about a proposal to encourage the meeting of a formal ASEAN Chiefs of Defence Forces Meeting (ACDFM) and to form an ACDFM Plus and an ACDFM Standing Secretariat.³³

Malaysian Prime Minister mentioned in the ASEAN CAP 10 CEO Summit that the existing economic disparity between ASEAN countries needs to be lessened through a more equitable developmental model. He focused on the importance of infrastructure investments by private sector, especially the business houses and investment firms. He further mentioned that private sector involvement is necessary to create a business-conducive environment and implementation of the ASEAN Economic Community. Besides infrastructure, investment in education and human resource development are also important, mentioned the Malaysian prime minister. Malaysia will host the 26th ASEAN Summit in April in Kuala Lumpur.³⁴

Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs' First Country Assistance Planning Division, International Corporation Bureau's Deputy Director, Ritsuko Suzuki, mentioned in a press conference with ASEAN journalists that Japan has plan to give 2 Trillion Yen in Official Development Assistance programme to ASEAN countries over the next 5 year period. A large portion of this ODA will be spent on restoration activities for the typhoon Yolanda's victims in Tacloban. Apart, 200 billion

³³ "Vietnam Proposes Solutions To Enhance Military Role In Regional Security", *Vietnam Net*, February 11, 2015, available at <http://english.vietnamnet.vn/fms/government/123341/vietnam-proposes-solutions-to-enhance-military-role-in-regional-security.html>, accessed on February 19, 2015

³⁴ "Stress on Equitable Development to Narrow Economic Gap in Asean – Najib", *Borneo Post Online*, February 13, 2015, available at <http://www.theborneopost.com/2015/02/13/stress-on-equitable-development-to-narrow-economic-gap-in-asean-najib/>, accessed on February 19, 2015.

yen will be spent on strengthening ASEAN-Japan disaster management cooperation assistance and training for 1,000 personnel using Japan's expertise and technologies. Maritime security, health system, women empowerment will be Japan's focus area as far as its cooperation in ASEAN region is concerned.³⁵

In the Kokang region, located in Northern Myanmar, bordering China, clashes between the Myanmar army and rebels resulted in killing of dozens of rebels and arrest of eight. Reports indicated that the Kokang rebels launched an attack on the Myanmar army few days back in Laukkai, the capital city of the region and that caused the recent clash between the two parties. The New Light of Myanmar reported that the airstrikes led to the killing of around 50 soldiers and thousands of people fled from the region. These clashes are happening amid efforts towards peace deal and negotiations between the government and ethnic rebels in Myanmar.³⁶

The third United States-Singapore Strategic Partnership Dialogue was held at Washington on 13 February with the aim to enhance existing bilateral cooperation and strategic partnership between the two countries. They discussed different aspects of their relationship including the free trade agreement, Trans-Pacific Partnership, Third Party Training programme, Law Enforcement and Homeland Security and Safety Dialogue and so on. Both sides reiterated that in the maritime security domain, international laws need to be maintained and the Code of Conduct on South China Sea should be implemented. Singapore was represented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Permanent Secretary Mr. Chee Wee Kiong and US by the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Mr. Daniel Russel.³⁷

The Export-Import (EXIM) Bank of South Korea has promised to give \$56 million in loan to the Cambodian government to renovate few key highways in Southern part of the country. The loan contract was signed by the EXIM bank chairman and President Lee Duk-hoon and Cambodian Finance Minister Aun Porn Moniroth in Phnom Penh. The highways will connect Phnom Penh and southern part of Vietnam and will enhance border trade between the two countries. Mr. Duk-hoon has mentioned that economy of Cambodia is expected to benefit from the economic growth of South Korea. EXIM bank of South Korea is expected to sign another similar agreement with Lao PDR too.³⁸

In order to achieve the target of bringing 29.4 million international tourists in 2015, Malaysia has announced visa waiver for the Indian tourists. In 2013, India was the fifth largest source of

³⁵ Licas, Purita S., "Japan Assures Continued Assistance to ASEAN despite Its Tight Financial Position", February 12, 2015, available at <http://news.pia.gov.ph/article/view/2791423701488/japan-assures-continued-assistance-to-asean-despite-its-tight-financial-position>, accessed on February 19, 2015.

³⁶ "Myanmar Army Kills Ethnic Rebels In Firefight", *The Straits Times*, February 15, 2015, available on <http://www.straitstimes.com/news/asia/south-east-asia/story/myanmar-army-kills-ethnic-rebels-firefight-20150215>, accessed on February 24, 2015; and, Fisher, Jonah, "Myanmar Clashes With Rebels 'Kill 47 Soldiers'", *BBC News*, February 3, 2015, available on <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-31450420>, accessed on February 24, 2015.

³⁷ Joint Statement on the Third United States-Singapore Strategic Partnership Dialogue, *US Department of State*, February 13, 2015, available on <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2015/02/237495.htm>, accessed on February 25, 2015.

³⁸ 'EXIM Bank to Support ASEAN Development', *The Korea Herald*, February 12, 2015, available on <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20150212000905>, accessed on February 24, 2015.

international tourists to Malaysia, a favourite destination of the Indian travellers. However, in 2014 there was a drop in the number of international tourists including Indian tourists, perhaps, due to the air accidents. India is an addition to the list of China, South Korea and Japan, countries which are already enjoying visa waiver from Malaysia. Malaysian tourism ministry has been organising promotional campaigns in various countries including India to increase the number of sub-continental tourists in Malaysia. The tourism minister of Malaysia, Nazri Azis, told that Indians who wish to stay longer in Malaysia can apply through Malaysia's Second Home Programme which permits foreigners to reside in Malaysia for a period of ten years without visa requirements.³⁹

D. Russia

Russia

(February 9-15, 2015)

- **A cease fire for eastern Ukraine has been agreed upon in Minsk; Moscow urges Croatia and other countries to stop 'mercenaries' involvement in Ukraine; Russian defence minister hails constructive development of ties with Cuba in military sphere; Defence Minister also visits Nicaragua and Venezuela; Russia says no plans to turn Shanghai Cooperation Organization into a military bloc; Syria applies for observer status of SCO; Gazprom says 'western route' gas pipeline to China ready for construction; Russia and China to organize expedition to find bodies of Soviet military personnel killed in China; Japan's Prime Minister calls for strengthening relations with Russia.**

A cease fire deal has been agreed upon for eastern Ukraine on February 12 following marathon negotiations between the Presidents of Russia, Ukraine, France and Chancellor of German in Minsk. The key points of the deal include: a) an immediate and full bilateral ceasefire that will take effect in parts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions from 00:00 local time on 15 February, b) withdrawal of all heavy weapons by both sides to equal distances to create a buffer zone of at least 50km, c) Effective monitoring and verification regime for the ceasefire and withdrawal of heavy weapons to be carried out by the OSCE, d) initiating a dialogue on the holding of local elections; e) amnesty for fighters involved in the conflict, f) release of all hostages, g) unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid to the needy, h) restoration of full social and economic links with affected areas, i) restoration of full Ukrainian government control over the state border, throughout the conflict zone, j) withdrawal of all foreign armed groups, weapons and mercenaries from Ukrainian territory, k) constitutional reform in Ukraine, with adoption of a new constitution by the end of 2015.⁴⁰

³⁹ "Free visas to attract more Indian tourists", *Free Malaysia Today.com*, February 14, 2015, available on <http://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2015/02/14/free-visas-to-attract-more-indian-tourists/>, accessed on February 25, 2015.

⁴⁰ "Ukraine Ceasefire: New Minsk Agreement Key Points", *BBC News*, February 12, 2015 at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-31436513?print=true>

Russian Foreign Ministry has urged, on February 12, Croatia and other countries to stop its citizens from fighting in Ukraine. This was in response to the statements of Croatian First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Vesna Pusic who had stated that Croatian soldiers were fighting in the Ukrainian army.⁴¹

Defence Minister Sergey Shoigu, during his meeting with Cuba's President Raul Castro in Havana on February 14, has said that Russian-Cuban relations in the military and military-technical sphere are developing in a constructive way and that Moscow remains interested in expanding cooperation in the naval sphere. He also invited Cuba's military delegation to participate in 2015 tank biathlon international competitions, international war games, the 4th international security conference and the international scientific and technical forum Army 2015. Shoigu was quoted as saying 'the approaches of Russia and Cuba on global and regional security issues fully coincide and they are bound by common interest in forming a just and polycentric world order.'⁴²

Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu has paid a visit to Nicaragua and Venezuela on February 11 and 12 respectively. While in Caracas, he held meetings with his Venezuelan counterpart Vladimir Padrino Lopez and President Nicolas Maduro wherein they discussed topical issues of military and military-technical cooperation and key issues of global and regional security. They also agreed to step up joint military exercises.⁴³ In Nicaragua, Shoigu held negotiations with commander-in-chief of the Nicaraguan Army General Julio Aviles and Nicaraguan President Jose Daniel Ortega. It was reported that prospects of military and technical cooperation were discussed. Nicaraguan army spokesman General Adolfo Zepeda had said that the country remains interested in buying Russian warplanes and patrol boats in order to combat drug trafficking in coastal areas.⁴⁴

The chief of the Russian Foreign Ministry's Asian-Pacific cooperation department Bakhtier Khakimov has said, in Moscow on February 13, that there are no plans to turn the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) into a military bloc. He added that the situation in Afghanistan remains a priority and concern for the organisation.⁴⁵

The chief of the Russian Foreign Ministry's Asian-Pacific cooperation department Bakhtier Khakimov has said, in Moscow on February 13 that Syria has filed an application for an observer status at the SCO.⁴⁶

⁴¹ "Moscow Urges Croatia, Other Countries To Stop Mercenaries' Involvement In Ukraine", *Itar-Tass*, February 12, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/777274>

⁴² "Russian defence minister hails 'constructive' development of Cuba ties in military sphere", *Itar-Tass*, February 14, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/777626>

⁴³ "Russian Defence Minister To Pay First Visit To Venezuela", *Itar-Tass*, February 11, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/776808>

⁴⁴ "Russia and Nicaragua To Sign Several Bilateral Agreements In Defence Sphere – Ministry", *Itar-Tass*, February 12, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/777094>

⁴⁵ "No Plans To Turn Shanghai Cooperation Organization Into Military Bloc – Russian Diplomat", *Itar-Tass*, February 13, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/777480>

⁴⁶ "Syria Applies For Observer Status At Shanghai Security Bloc – Russian Foreign Ministry", *Itar-Tass*, February 13, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/777468>

Gazprom's head Alexey Miller has said, in Moscow on February 13 after his visit to China, that the 'western route' gas pipeline project to China is near ready for construction. In November 2014, Gazprom and China's CNPC signed a memorandum on gas supplies from Russia to China via the Western route. This route envisages gas supplies to China from gas fields in Western Siberia via the Altai gas pipeline. The start of direct supplies is scheduled for 2019. In May 2014, Gazprom and CNPC signed a US\$ 400bln contract for gas supplies from Russia to China via the Eastern route for 30 years. The Eastern route envisages supplies of 38 billion cubic meters of gas a year via the Power of Siberia pipeline.⁴⁷

Russia and China will organize a joint search and reburial of Soviet military personnel who died during the liberation of China's north-eastern regions from Japanese invaders. The search will be one of the actions the two countries will devote to the 70th anniversary of victory over German and Japanese troops. The expedition will search 32 square kilometres in the district of Mudanjiang (Heilongjiang Province), where 388 Soviet military were buried - in August-September 1945, the Soviet Union had liberated China's north-east from Japan.⁴⁸

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has called for strengthening relations with Russia at the opening of the Japanese parliament session on February 12. He spoke in favour of continuing negotiations on signing a peace deal with Moscow and hoped that President Putin will undertake an official visit to Tokyo in 2015. On the same day, Deputy Foreign Ministers of Russia and Japan discussed bilateral relations in Moscow.⁴⁹

(February 9-15, 2015)

- **Moscow to consider financial aid to Greece if it requests for it; Turkey becomes the second-biggest Russian gas importer in 2014 after Germany; Gazprom more than doubles LNG sales in 2014; Russia's new generation strategic bomber to make first flight in 2019; Russia's railroad-based missile system to be equipped with Yars missiles; Russian Strategic Missile Forces conduct exercises in 12 regions; Russia's 2015 budget revenues expected to fall by US\$ 35 billion; OPEC says Russia's oil exports are likely to drop by 60 thousand barrels a day in 2015.**

Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has said, in Moscow on February 11 that Russia will consider the issue of financial assistance for Greece if Athens asks Moscow about it. He went on to add that the two countries remain interested in developing military and technical cooperation.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ "Chinese 'Western Route' Gas Pipeline Project Near Ready For Construction – Gazprom CEO", *Itar-Tass*, February 13, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/777389>

⁴⁸ "Russia, China To Organize Expedition To Find Bodies Of Soviet Military In China", *Itar-Tass*, February 13, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/777378>

⁴⁹ "Japan's PM Calls For Strengthening Relations With Russia", *Itar-Tass*, February 12, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/world/777123>

⁵⁰ "Russia To Consider Financial Aid To Greece In Case Athens Requests It – FM Lavrov", *Itar-Tass*, February 12, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/776915>

Gazprom has reported, in Moscow on February 13 that it has increased gas exports to Turkey by 2.3 per cent in 2014 to 27.3 billion cubic meters and cut supplies to its two biggest European customers - Germany and Italy by 3.7 per cent and 14.4 per cent respectively. The total volume of Russian gas exports to Western Europe dropped by 3.7 per cent in 2014 to 117.92 billion cubic meters.⁵¹

Gazprom has increased sales of liquefied natural gas (LNG) by 120 per cent to 4.5 billion cubic meters in 2014. The Sakhalin-2 oil and gas project in Russia's Far East is yet the only source of liquefied natural gas for Gazprom.⁵²

The Commander-in-chief of the Russian Air Force Viktor Bondarev has said, in Moscow on February 13 that the prospective Air Complex for Long Range Aviation (PAK DA) will take to the sky in 2019. PAK DA is being developed by the Tupolev design bureau and the Kazan Aircraft Production Association and Russian troops are expected to start receiving the new aircraft in 2023-2025. The aircraft will replace the Tu-95 and Tu-160 planes that are currently in service with Russia's long range and strategic aviation.⁵³

Itar-Tass news agency, citing a defence industry source, has said on February 12 that Russia's future railroad-based Barguzin missile system will be equipped with the RS-24 Yars intercontinental ballistic missiles and this will be done within the next 3-4 years. One Barguzin train, equal to a regiment, will be able to carry six Yars intercontinental ballistic missiles. The system is being developed at the Moscow-based Institute of Thermal Engineering and is Russia's response to the United States deployment of the anti-ballistic missile defence system.⁵⁴

Defence Ministry's spokesman for the military branch Colonel Igor Yegorov has said that more than 30 missile regiments of Russia's Strategic Missile Forces took part in large-scale exercises in 12 regions of the country that were held on February 12.⁵⁵

Economic Development Minister Alexey Ulyukayev has said, in Gorki on February 11, that Russia's budget's revenues is expected to decline by 2.3 trillion roubles (US\$ 35 billion) in 2015 amid the falling value of the country's gas and oil exports.⁵⁶

⁵¹ "Turkey Becomes Second-Biggest Russian Gas Importer In 2014, Germany Keeps Leading Position", *Itar-Tass*, February 13, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/777470>

⁵² "Russian Gazprom Group More Than Doubles LNG Sales In 2014", *Itar-Tass*, February 13, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/777551>

⁵³ "Russia's New Generation Strategic Bomber To Make First Flight in 2019 – Air Force", *Itar-Tass*, February 13, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/777542>

⁵⁴ "Russia's Railroad-Based Missile System To Be Equipped With Yars Missiles – Source", *Itar-Tass*, February 12, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/777265>

⁵⁵ "Russian Strategic Missile Forces Conduct Exercises In 12 Regions", *Itar-Tass*, February 12, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/russia/777221>

⁵⁶ "Russia's 2015 Budget Revenues To Fall By \$35 Bln – Minister", *Itar-Tass*, February 11, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/776961>

Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) has said, in a monthly report released in Vienna on February 9, that Russia's oil exports are likely to drop by 60 thousand barrels a day in 2015 due to the 'impact of sanctions, low prices and absence of any large projects expected to come on-line'.⁵⁷

D. The United State of America

National

(January 19-25, 2015)

- **US creates cybersecurity coordination agency; Obama calls on US firms to help fight cyberattacks; Sea-service leaders chart priorities, challenges; Deputy Defence Secretary Work outlines budget priorities, process; Budget cuts mean long-term risk, Northcom Chief says; Sexual assault rates decrease at military service academies; Hagel welcomes proposed resolution on use of force against ISIL.**

The White House on February 10 announced the creation of a federal agency to analyse threats to the nation's cybersecurity and coordinate strategy to combat them. The Obama administration is launching the Cyber Threat Intelligence Integration Centre as a place to coordinate cyber threat intelligence from the FBI, the National Security Agency, the Department of Homeland Security and other federal agencies. The centre will operate under the guidance of the director of national intelligence. Currently, no single government agency is responsible for coordinating cyber threat assessments, sharing information rapidly among existing agencies and providing timely intelligence to policymakers, said Lisa Monaco, assistant to the president for homeland security and counterterrorism.⁵⁸

Days after a data breach affecting 80 million customers of health insurer Anthem was disclosed, President Barack Obama on February 13 urged U.S. firms to join the fight against cyberattacks, which he said were among the greatest threats to U.S. national security. Obama made his case before corporate chief executives and consumer and privacy advocates at a White House-sponsored conference on cybersecurity and consumer protection at Stanford University in California.⁵⁹

Producing more amphibious ships, staying on top of cybersecurity needs and facing new challenges in the Asia-Pacific region are some of the priorities of the sea-service leaders, a panel concluded at the Western Conference and Exposition in San Diego on February 12. Panel members

⁵⁷ "Russian Oil Exports In 2015 To Drop By 60 Thousand Barrels A Day – OPEC", *Itar-Tass*, February 9, 2015 at <http://tass.ru/en/economy/776490>

⁵⁸ "US Creates Cybersecurity Coordination Agency", *VOA News*, February 10, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-creates-cybersecurity-coordination-agency/2637729.html>

⁵⁹ Pande, Aru, "Obama Calls on US Firms to Help Fight Cyberattacks", *VOA News*, February 13, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/obama-to-encourage-information-sharing-on-cybersecurity-threats/2641814.html>

included Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Joseph F. Dunford Jr., Vice Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Michelle J. Howard and Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Paul F. Zukunft. The Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association International and the U.S. Naval Institute organized the two-day exposition. "Making sure we have Navy ships for the future is the most important part of our budget," Howard said. Navy and Marine Corps strategies come from the seas, Dunford added. And the Marine Corps needs about 20 more amphibious warships than the 31 now in existence, he added.⁶⁰

The president's fiscal year 2016 defence budget request begins the process of restoring future warfighting capacity and capabilities by reversing delays to long-term modernization efforts, Deputy Defence Secretary Bob Work said on February 10. The request balances lower budgets with higher operational demands, he said during his keynote address at the U.S. Naval Institute's 2015 WEST Conference, and totals \$585 billion in FY 2016, which includes \$51 billion in overseas contingency operations funds. "These numbers are about \$36 billion above the FY 2016 sequestration caps – which remain in effect at this point – and about \$38 billion, or 7.6 percent more than the enacted FY 2015 budget levels," the deputy secretary said. "These figures are right in line with those that we submitted last year," he added.⁶¹

Though the United States has seen military budgets drop following wars, today's cuts are piling on to a complex security environment seldom seen in history, the commander of U.S. Northern Command and North American Aerospace Defence Command said on February 10. Speaking in San Diego at the West 2015 Expo sponsored by the Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association and the U.S. Naval Institute, Navy Adm. Bill Gortney said America faces many dangers, even as the U.S. military draws down from almost 14 years of war. He cited Russia, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, al-Qaida, problems arising from the Arab Spring, cyber warfare, challenges from China, Iranian nuclear ambitions, North Korean unpredictability, the possibility of home-grown terrorism and the nexus of transnational criminal gangs and terror groups as examples.⁶²

Rates of unwanted sexual contact at the military service academies declined in 2014, according to a report released on February 11 by the Defence Department. The annual report on sexual harassment and violence at the military service academies estimates that overall rates decreased for both men and women, indicating that nearly 200 fewer sexual assaults occurred at the academies in 2014 than in 2012. "The academies have been working hard on prevention," said Dr. Nate Galbreath, senior executive advisor for DoD's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response programme. "Indications are that academy leadership focus on this programme is contributing

⁶⁰ Cronk, Terri Moon, "Sea-service Leaders Chart Priorities, Challenges", *DoD News*, February 13, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128187>

⁶¹ Roulo, Claudette, "Work Outlines Budget Priorities, Process", *DoD News*, February 10, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128153>

⁶² Garamone, Jim, "Budget Cuts Mean Long-term Risk, Northcom Chief Says", *DoD News*, February 11, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128156>

to an overall safer climate.” The report is a congressionally mandated annual assessment of the military’s service academies.⁶³

Defence Secretary Chuck Hagel on February 11 expressed his support for a proposed resolution President Barack Obama is submitting to Congress that would authorize the use of military force against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. “I welcome the president’s proposed resolution ... and urge Congress to pass it,” the secretary said in a statement. The president’s draft language reflects important input from Congress, the secretary said, and would give the Defence Department the support and flexibility needed in military operations against ISIL.⁶⁴

(January 19-25, 2015)

- **DARPA hones skills of future cyber officers; New threat centre to integrate cyber intelligence; President: massive global effort created anti-Ebola success; Senate confirms Carter as 25th Secretary of Defence; Carter ‘Will help keep our military strong,’ President says; Hagel bids farewell to defence department workforce; Air Force seeks \$10 billion over sequestration funding; Obama: chapel hill shootings ‘brutal and outrageous murders’.**

After months of work with world-class experts and online challenges, 60 cadets and midshipmen from the three service academies and the Coast Guard Academy recently faced off in contests of full-spectrum offensive and defensive cyber skills. The Defence Advanced Projects Research Agency, or DARPA, hosted the two-phase competition. Cyber Stakes Online was held in October, and Cyber Stakes Live was held January 30-February 1 in Pittsburgh. Contestants came from the U.S. Air Force Academy, the U.S. Military Academy, the U.S. Naval Academy and, for the first time this year, the U.S. Coast Guard Academy. Cybersecurity has become a national security priority, and U.S. Cyber Command is making progress toward its goal of integrating 6,000 cybersecurity experts into combat commands by 2016.⁶⁵

Meanwhile, a new Cyber Threat Intelligence Integration Centre is being created under the auspices of the director of national intelligence. The centre will serve a similar function for cyber as the National Counterterrorism Centre does for terrorism, Lisa Monaco, assistant to the president for homeland security and counterterrorism, said during a keynote speech on February 10 at the Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars. The NCTC, established in 2004, puts into action a 9/11 Commission recommendation – to break “the older mould of national government organizations” and “be a centre for joint operational planning and joint intelligence, staffed by personnel from the various agencies.”⁶⁶

⁶³ Roulo, Claudette, “Sexual Assault Rates Decrease at Military Service Academies”, *DoD News*, February 11, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128158>

⁶⁴ “Hagel Welcomes Proposed Resolution on Use of Force Against ISIL”, *DoD News*, February 11, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128159>

⁶⁵ Pellerin, Cheryl, “DARPA Hones Skills of Future Cyber Officers”, *DoD News*, February 11, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128162>

⁶⁶ Pellerin, Cheryl, “New Threat Centre to Integrate Cyber Intelligence”, *DoD News*, February 11, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128164>

The American and partner-nation fight in the last few months against the Ebola virus in West Africa has cut cases of the disease by 80 percent, President Barack Obama announced in Washington on February 11. But the battle won't be over until the caseload totals zero, he said. The president spoke at the Eisenhower Executive Office Building, addressing U.S. military and civilian personnel, thanking them for answering the call for help in the Ebola-affected countries of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea. Obama said the progress made in just a few months has been enormous. "Last fall, we saw between 800 and 1,000 new cases a week," he said of the region. "Today, we're seeing between 100 and 150 cases a week." Last summer, as Ebola spread in West Africa and threatened to cross more borders, he said fighting the disease had to be "more than a national security priority, but an example of American leadership."⁶⁷

The U.S. Senate on February 12 confirmed former Deputy Defence Secretary Ash Carter as the 25th secretary of defence. Two days after the Senate Armed Services Committee voted unanimously to approve Carter's nomination, the full Senate, in a 93-5 affirmative vote, confirmed President Barack Obama's nominee for the top position in the Defence Department. Carter will not assume his official duties until he takes the oath of office, a ceremony expected to occur in the next several days. Until that time, Pentagon Press Secretary Navy Adm. John Kirby said during a recent press briefing, Defence Secretary Chuck Hagel "will continue to carry out the full responsibilities of his office and he will do so right up until the time his successor is confirmed and installed."⁶⁸

Meanwhile, Ash Carter received a welcome back and praise from President Barack Obama. "Ash Carter served as a key leader of our national security team in the first years of my presidency, and with his overwhelming bipartisan confirmation by the Senate today, I'm proud to welcome him back as our next secretary of defence," Obama said in a White House statement issued on February 12. "With his decades of experience, Ash will help keep our military strong as we continue the fight against terrorist networks, modernize our alliances, and invest in new capabilities to keep our armed forces prepared for long-term threats." As secretary of defence, the president continued, "Ash will play a central role in our work with Congress to find a more responsible approach to defence spending that makes the department more efficient, preserves military readiness, and keeps faith with our men and women in uniform and their families. Hagel will remain in office as defence secretary until Carter is sworn in."⁶⁹

As he prepares to leave office, Defence Secretary Chuck Hagel on February 13 said farewell to the military and civilian men and women of the Defence Department's workforce in a statement, noting it's been "a tremendous privilege" to serve as the nation's top defence official. Here is Hagel's statement: "To the men and women of the Department of Defence: "As I leave office, I am immensely proud of what we have accomplished together over the past two years. We have

⁶⁷ Cronk, Terri Moon, "President: Massive Global Effort Created Anti-Ebola Success", *DoD News*, February 11, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128165>

⁶⁸ Pellerin, Cheryl, "Senate Confirms Carter as 25th Secretary of Defence", *DoD News*, February 12, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128173>

⁶⁹ "Carter 'Will Help Keep Our Military Strong,' President Says", *DoD News*, February 12, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128174>

responsibly ended our combat operations in Afghanistan and begun the follow-on mission to preserve our achievements there.” “We have bolstered enduring alliances and strengthened emerging partnerships, while successfully responding to crises around the world. We have launched vital reforms that will prepare this institution for the challenges of the future.”⁷⁰

The demand for Air Force capabilities is increasing, therefore the service is requesting \$10 billion more than sequestration-level funding provides, Air Force Secretary Deborah Lee James said in Orlando, Florida on February 13. Speaking during the Air Force Association Air Warfare Symposium and Technology Exposition, James discussed why the Air Force is taking its strongest stand to date against sequestration. “There is just absolutely no question in my mind that we are the best Air Force on the planet – precisely because of who we are, what we believe and what we do,” she said.⁷¹

U.S. President Barack Obama has called the shooting deaths of three Muslims near a college campus in North Carolina “brutal and outrageous murders.” “No one in the United States of America should ever be targeted because of who they are, what they look like, or how they worship,” said the president in a written statement.⁷²

International: Asia

(February 9-15, 2015)

- **Precision airstrikes kill former Taliban commander, associates; Afghan transition trends ‘positive,’ Campbell says; Report: Obama, Khamenei exchange letters; Obama sends resolution for use of force against ISIL to Congress; Secretary of State Kerry: US-led coalition ‘on the road’ to destroying IS; U.S., Coalition allies continue airstrikes against ISIL; Roulo, Claudette, “Iraqi security forces repel ISIL attack; Chinese leader to make US state visit; US says China illegally subsidized exporters; US, S. Korean diplomats discuss North’s nuclear programme.**

The Defence Department announced on February 10 the deaths of eight individuals, including a former Taliban commander, killed during precision airstrikes in Afghanistan. Pentagon Press Secretary Navy Adm. John Kirby told Pentagon reporters the airstrikes are a “reminder,” and emphasized using all available methods to dismantle terrorist groups threatening U.S., partner and allied interests. “U.S. forces in Afghanistan conducted a precision strike in Helmand province,” he said, “resulting in the death of eight individuals, to include Abdul Rauf Khadim, a former Taliban commander.”⁷³

⁷⁰ “Hagel Bids Farewell to Defence Department Workforce”, *DoD News*, February 13, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128181>

⁷¹ Marshall, Tyrone C. Jr., “Air Force Seeks \$10 Billion Over Sequestration Funding”, *DoD News*, February 13, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128184>

⁷² Arabasadi, Arash, “Obama: Chapel Hill Shootings ‘Brutal and Outrageous Murders’”, *VOA News*, February 13, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/thousands-mourn-3-muslim-americans-in-north-carolina/2642739.html>

⁷³ Marshall Jr., Tyrone C., “Precision Airstrikes Kill Former Taliban Commander, Associates”, *DoD News*, February 10, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128151>

The commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan delivered an upbeat assessment of progress in the nation, while also acknowledging there is much that needs to be done. Army Gen. John F. Campbell told the Senate Armed Services Committee this morning that there is a new atmosphere in the Afghan capital of Kabul, and that Afghan forces are succeeding in the struggle against the Taliban and affiliated terror groups. "Afghanistan, the region, the enemy and our coalition have undergone tremendous transition and most of this has been extraordinarily positive for us," Campbell said. In September, Afghanistan completed its first peaceful transition of power when Hamid Karzai gave way to new Afghan President Ashraf Ghani.⁷⁴

Iran's supreme leader and the U.S. president have exchanged correspondence as the two sides try to reach a nuclear accord, according to a report in *The Wall Street Journal*. In a story posted online on February 13, the Journal says Ayatollah Ali Khamenei "has responded to overtures" from U.S. President Barack Obama. Khamenei wrote to the U.S. leader "in recent weeks" in response to a letter from Obama in October "that raised the possibility of U.S.-Iranian cooperation in fighting Islamic State" if an agreement on a nuclear deal is reached, the report says.⁷⁵

President Barack Obama has sent a draft resolution to Congress to authorize the use of force against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. The president spoke about the draft authorization during a White House announcement this afternoon. Vice President Joe Biden, Defence Secretary Chuck Hagel and Secretary of State John Kerry stood with the president. The draft resolution would give the United States the authority to fulfil the objective of destroying the terror group in Iraq and Syria, the president said. U.S. forces and coalition allies are already striking at the group in the region. American forces are operating under authorizations passed after the 9-11 attacks.⁷⁶

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said the U.S.-led coalition is "on the road" to degrading and destroying the Islamic State (IS) group. President Obama's special envoy for the coalition, retired Marine General John Allen, said he expects a major Iraqi-led counter-offensive against the IS group in coming weeks. Kerry described to U.S. television viewers on February 8 on NBC's Meet the Press a coalition that is more committed than ever, particularly in the aftermath of the execution by burning of Jordanian pilot Muath al-Kaseasbeh, seen on a video released last week.⁷⁷ Meanwhile, U.S. and coalition military forces have continued to attack Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant terrorists in Syria and Iraq, Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve officials reported on February 13.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Garamone, Jim, "Afghan Transition Trends 'Positive,' Campbell Says", *DoD News*, February 12, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128178>

⁷⁵ "Report: Obama, Khamenei Exchange Letters", *VOA News*, February 14, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/report-obama-khamenei-exchange-letters/2644047.html>

⁷⁶ Garamone, Jim, "Obama Sends Resolution for Use of Force Against ISIL to Congress", *DoD News*, February 11, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128167>

⁷⁷ Beattie, Victor, "Kerry: US-led Coalition 'on the Road' to Destroying IS", *VOA News*, February 09, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/kerry-us-led-coalition-on-road-to-destroying-islamic-state/2634491.html>

⁷⁸ "U.S., Coalition Allies Continue Airstrikes Against ISIL", *DoD News*, February 13, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128183>

An attempt by 20 to 25 Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant fighters to attack al Asad Air Base in Iraq was repulsed by “ready and able” Iraqi security forces, the Pentagon press secretary said on February 13. The admiral said the fighters reached the perimeter of the base, located in the Anbar province in western Iraq. “They were immediately engaged by members of the Iraqi army – the 7th Infantry of the Iraqi army,” he added. No coalition forces were injured in the attack, nor is there indication of Iraqi casualties, Kirby said.⁷⁹

China’s state-run Xinhua news agency says President Xi Jinping will make his first official state visit to the United States in September. The timing of the trip was announced after Xi spoke on the phone with President Barack Obama. “During the conversation, both sides agreed to make full preparations to ensure the success of the trip,” Xinhua reported. The White House said Obama urged his Chinese counterpart to push his country further towards “consumption-led growth and a market-determined exchange rate.” The U.S. president also reiterated his commitment to reaching a bilateral investment treaty with Beijing.⁸⁰

Meanwhile, the United States is accusing China of illegally subsidizing its exporters in seven industries. U.S. Trade Representative Michael Froman said Beijing provided at least \$1 billion in illegal subsidies during the past three years. The financial support, he said, violates rules set by the World Trade Organization. Froman said Chinese textile, clothing, metal, chemical, medical product, building material and agricultural industries benefited from the Chinese government’s subsidies. He said the subsidies hurt U.S. workers, farmers, ranchers and businesses by reducing competition and threatening jobs and wages in the United States. The United States said it would try to reach a settlement of the case with China at the WTO, but if that failed, the U.S. could ask the Geneva-based agency to rule in the dispute. There was no immediate reaction to the dispute from Beijing.⁸¹

The number two diplomats from the United States and South Korea held talks in Seoul on February 9 to discuss bilateral issues and North Korea’s nuclear and missile programmes, officials said. U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Tony Blinken will spend three days in Seoul, the first leg of an Asia tour that will also take him to China and Japan. After meeting on February 9 with South Korean Vice Foreign Minister Cho Tai-yong, Blinken said it was important to maintain sanctions on the North until Pyongyang shows it is serious about wanting to resume six-party denuclearization talks.⁸²

⁷⁹ Roulo, Claudette, “Iraqi Security Forces Repel ISIL Attack”, *DoD News*, February 13, 2015 at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=128185>

⁸⁰ “Chinese Leader to Make US State Visit”, *VOA News*, February 11, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/chinese-leader-to-make-state-visit-to-us-in-late-2015/2638349.html>

⁸¹ “US Says China Illegally Subsidized Exporters”, *VOA News*, February 11, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/united-states-says-china-illegally-subsidized-exporters/2639140.html>

⁸² “US, S. Korean Diplomats Discuss North’s Nuclear Programme”, *VOA News*, February 09, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-south-korea-diplomats-discuss-north-korea-nuclear-program/2634449.html>

India-US Relations

(February 9-15, 2015)

- **India keen to get 'transformative' defence technology from US; Towards an effective Indo-US social security agreement; US policeman charged in attack on Indian visitor; Senate approves India-friendly Ashton Carter as new Defence Chief.**

India on February 9 said it wants to acquire "unique and transformative" military technologies from the US under the new bilateral Defence Trade and Technology Initiative (DTTI), even as the two countries prepare for the next round of talks on the matter later this month. "We are looking at technologies, which are not freely available, that can give us the edge," said secretary (defence production) G Mohan Kumar, who will co-chair the DTTI meeting with his US counterpart Frank Kendall on February 23.⁸³

In the backdrop of the successful India-visit of the US president, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "India and the US will restart discussions on a social security agreement and resume talks on bilateral investment treaty." Once the long-pending agreement between India and US comes into force, it will benefit millions of Indians working in the US, with regard to social security contributions. A social security agreement (SSA) is an agreement between two countries, which provides three benefits to internationally-mobile employees, namely: (a) continuation of social security contributions in the home country, (b) portability of social security benefits on relocation, and (c) totalisation of the period of contribution in the host country for determining the eligibility for benefits. India has now signed SSAs with 18 countries. However, only 13 of these SSAs have been enforced so far.⁸⁴

A police officer in the U.S. state of Alabama has been charged with assault after he threw a 57-year-old man from India to the ground and injured him. Police said the officer slammed Sureshbhai Patel, who doesn't speak English, to the ground face-first when he didn't respond to commands. The officer, Eric Parker, is being fired in connection with the February 6 incident. The FBI said it also was investigating.⁸⁵

The US Senate has confirmed President Barack Obama's nominee for defence secretary Ashton B. Carter who has vowed to prioritise the steady growth of India-US strategic partnership. "With his decades of experience, Ash will help keep our military strong as we continue the fight against terrorist networks, modernise our alliances, and invest in new capabilities to keep our armed

⁸³ "India Keen To Get 'Transformative' Defence Technology from US", *TNN*, February 10, 2015 at <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/india-keen-to-get-transformative-defence-technology-from-us/articleshow/46183375.cms?prtpage=1>

⁸⁴ "Towards An Effective Indo-US Social Security Agreement", *The Financial Express*, February 9, 2015 at <http://www.financialexpress.com/article/fe-columnist/towards-an-effective-indo-us-social-security-agreement/40484/>

⁸⁵ "US Policeman Charged in Attack on Indian Visitor", *VOA News*, February 13, 2015 at <http://www.voanews.com/content/policeman-charged-attack-indian-visitor/2643927.html>

forces prepared for long-term threats,” said Obama after the Senate vote. During his confirmation hearing last week, Carter, who as Pentagon No. 2 launched the Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI) with India, vowed to lean-forward to expand DTTI with additional co-production and co-development activities.⁸⁶

II. DEFENCE REVIEWS

National

(February 9-15, 2015)

- **Indian Navy conducts Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief exercise in the Lakshadweep Islands; Defence minister says his stay on board INS Vikramaditya helpful in understanding Indian Navy.**

A large scale Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) exercise involving more than 20 ships from the Western and Eastern Fleet and various aircraft of the Indian Navy was conducted on February 9 in the Lakshadweep Islands. The Exercise simulated a major cyclone striking the Lakshadweep Islands and disrupting essential services, causing widespread destruction of property, loss of life and dislocation of personnel. The HADR exercise was designed to validate the Indian Navy’s capability to provide immediate succour and relief to the affected populace. The Exercise involved setting up medical camps, provision of food, shelter from the elements, restoration of basic facilities and limited restoration work till the situation stabilized. The Indian Navy has been at the forefront of relief operations and served with distinction many times in the past including Tsunami in 2004, evacuation operations from Lebanon in 2006 and Libya in 2011. More recently, the Indian Navy had also participated in the search efforts for search of Malaysian airliner MH 370. Significantly, the Exercise will further underscore the nation’s capabilities in being the ‘first responder’ in the region during times of humanitarian crises.⁸⁷

The Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar has said that the Indian Navy must remain a superior Force in the Indian Ocean Region and the Government will give all support to the Navy so that it becomes a truly Blue Water Navy. The defence minister was addressing the sailors and officers of the INS Vikramaditya after witnessing two days’ of Theatre Readiness Operational Level Exercise (TROPEX-2015) off the coast of Goa in the Arabian Sea. The minister said his stay on board INS Vikramaditya has helped him understand many a difficult situations that the Defence

⁸⁶ “Senate Approves India-Friendly Ashton Carter As New Defence Chief”, *IANS*, Washington, February 13, 2015 at http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/senate-approves-india-friendly-ashton-carter-as-new-defence-chief-115021300402_1.html

⁸⁷ “HADR Exercise by Indian Navy,” *PIB*, February 10, 2015, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=115326>

Forces especially sailors and officers of the Indian Navy face discharging their duties. TROPEX provides the Navy a valuable opportunity to validate its concept of operations and integration of new acquisitions with the Fleet.⁸⁸

International

(February 9-15, 2015)

- **Finland reluctant to develop a defence-industrial relationship with Russia; Poland earmarks 42 billion on military upgrade over a decade.**

Reports say that Finland has further distanced itself from a standing Russian offer to develop a defence-industrial relationship following Finland's Defence Minister Carl Haglund's remarks that Russian fighter aircraft technologies are untrustworthy. Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu presented the collaboration invite to Finland in mid-2013 in an attempt to soften the country's growing interest in moving toward NATO membership. Furthermore, Russia had suggested that Finland could join a Russian-led NATO-style defence grouping in the Baltic Sea area. Russia also proposed attaching a broad trade dimension to cooperation. The offer by Russia resulted in the ministries of defence in both countries establishing working groups to identify potential areas for defence-industrial cooperation, including the possibility that primary Russian defence programmes could be opened to Finnish subcontractors. However, the momentum toward formal bilateral talks stalled in February 2014 when Russia began to send troops and military equipment into Ukraine.⁸⁹

Meanwhile, according to reports, NATO-member Poland has kicked off an unprecedented military spending spree worth billions to overhaul its forces in the wake of uncertain security environment in Europe. The escalation of tensions with Russia over its annexation of Ukraine's Crimean peninsula and subsequent role in the crisis in that country's east has sounded the alarm on NATO's eastern flank in countries that were under Russian Influence during the Cold War. Poland has earmarked •33.6 billion (\$42 billion) on the upgrade over a decade, which includes a missile shield and anti-aircraft systems, armoured personnel carriers and submarines as well as combat drones. The plans bring Poland in line with NATO's recommended defence spending level of 2 percent of gross domestic product. Its purchase items include multi-role and combat helicopters, an anti-missile system and cruise missiles for submarines and drones. Significantly, 70 multi-role helicopters top the list, a contract worth •2.5 billion.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ "Parrikar Gets a Glimpse of Navy's Operational Capability on Western Seaboard," *PIB*, February 14, 2015, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=115466>

⁸⁹ "Finland Brushes Off Russian Overtures," *Defence News*, February 15, 2015, at <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/international/2015/02/15/finland-russia-border-relationship/23301883/>

⁹⁰ "Poland To Spend Billions on Defence," *Defence News*, February 16, 2015, at <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/international/europe/2015/02/15/poland-spend-billions-defense-amid-rumblings-war-europe/23457827/>