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SYLLOGE ON WEST ASIA

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

BY KUSHAL AGRAWAL

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MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

IRAN

MP says Natanz suffered 5 acts of sabotage

Tehran Times, 1st May, 2021

Speaking to Fars News Agency, Fereydoun Abbasi, head of the Energy Committee of the parliament recounted sabotage acts done in Natanz nuclear site, revealing new details about the recent power outage. “This is not the first time something similar has happened in Natanz, but the method of sabotage is new. This is not the first time sabotage and the use of explosives have been reported. For the past 15 years, the enemy has been constantly trying to do this,” he said. Abbasi stated that it is estimated that the recent sabotage was the fifth big attack. “This time they targeted the distribution network, the cables, and the spare batteries that supply power,” he explained.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/46048/1/MP-says-Natanz-suffered-5-acts-of-sabotage>

JCPOA talks moving forward, but slowly

Tehran Times, 2nd May, 2021

The Joint Commission of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action wrapped up the third round of negotiations, with the delegates returning to their capitals for further consultations. Director of the European External Action Service, Enrique Mora, called the progress in negotiations “moderate.” He stated that the Joint Commission would reconvene next week. He also stressed that “with more detail comes more complexity.” Chief negotiators will leave Vienna today for consultations in

capitals and return next week (Friday). It is said that experts will stay in Vienna and continue talks within the working groups. In the meantime, the experts will likely continue to draft elements of a future agreement.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/46053/2/JCPOA-talks-moving-forward-but-slowly>

Iran, world powers hold fourth round of nuclear talks

Tehran Times, 7th May, 2021

Iran and the remaining parties to the 2015 nuclear deal held another meeting on Friday to discuss the latest developments concerning the nuclear deal. During the meeting, participants agreed to expedite talks and start working on a draft text of the final agreement to revive the nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). The Friday meeting has marked the start of the fourth round of nuclear talks, which is taking place in the Austrian capital of Vienna within the framework of the JCPOA Joint Commission. Araghchi issued a brief statement shortly after the JCPOA Joint Commission. He said that during the meeting “it was decided to start expert and technical consultations and work on the draft texts immediately.”

The statement added, “All parties reaffirmed their seriousness to achieve the result in the shortest possible time.”

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/46066/9/Iran-world-powers-hold-fourth-round-of-nuclear-talks>

Iran ‘conceals illegal activities’ for WMD tech - German intel

Jerusalem Post, 8th May, 2021

A new intelligence report from Germany’s northernmost state, Schleswig-Holstein, has disclosed detailed information about the secretive methods which Iran uses to cover up its attempts to secure illicit technology for the world’s most deadly weapons. “Proliferation-relevant countries such as Iran, North Korea and Syria, but also Pakistan, try to circumvent safety precautions and legal export regulations and to disguise illegal procurement activities. To do this, they turn to mostly conspiratorial means and methods,” wrote the intelligence agency. The Iranian regime’s methods to obtain illicit technology for weapons of mass destruction, according to the report, include “the creation of a neutral firm to deceive the buyer about the true nature of the sale through a state-controlled company; the establishment of illegal procurement networks which belong to the front companies and middlemen.

<https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/iran-news/iran-conceals-illegal-activities-for-wmd-tech-german-intel-667494>

Iran to restrict IAEA access by May 24 if no progress made in Vienna talks, MP warns

Tehran Times, 8th May, 2021

The lawmaker, Mojtaba Zolnouri, who is the head of the Iranian Parliament’s National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, said the nuclear talks in Vienna have so far failed to produce a concrete result and they have become “draining.”

“We hope that the lock of negotiations will be broken and the path will continue quickly,” the lawmaker said. But at the same time, he warned, if this lock is not broken by May 24, Iran will implement a parliamentary nuclear law obligating the Iranian government to rapidly increase nuclear activities and restrict the International Atomic Energy Agency’s access to Iranian nuclear facilities.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/460695/iran-to-restrict-iaea-access-by-may-24-if-no-progress-made-in>

Iran will extend deal with IAEA if needed, top negotiator says

Tehran Times, 9th May, 2021

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi told Japanese broadcaster NHK that Iran hopes enough progress will be made so that there will be no need for an extension. But he said that if needed, Iran will consider an extension at a proper time. The Iranian negotiator was referring to a February deal between Iran and the IAEA which allowed the latter to continue its monitoring access to Iranian nuclear sites ahead of the implementation of a parliamentary nuclear law obligating the Iranian government to strictly restrict cooperation with the IAEA in case the West failed to lift sanctions. The deal was reached during a two-day visit by IAEA Director-General Mariano Grossi to Iran. During the visit, Grossi met with Ali Akbar Salehi, head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), and Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif.

“Intensive consultations led to a good result. A temporary technical understanding has been reached. The IAEA

will continue its necessary verification and monitoring in Iran,” the UN nuclear watchdog chief said in a tweet following his visit to Iran.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/46074/4/Iran-will-extend-deal-with-IAEA-if-needed-top-negotiator-says>

US Navy fires 30 warning shots to ward off Iran’s speed boats

Al-Monitor, 11th May, 2021

The crew of a US Coast Guard cutter fired multiple bursts of warning shots as two Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) fast-attack boats came too close to a formation of US Navy ships transiting the Strait of Hormuz on Monday. Thirteen IRGC boats approached the group of six US vessels as they escorted the surfaced USS Georgia submarine through the strait, according to the US Navy.

With deck guns uncovered and manned, two of the IRGC fast boats broke away from the Iranian formation and rapidly approached to within 150 yards of the USCGC Maui, the US’ Fifth Fleet said in a statement. The two fast boats continued to approach despite multiple audio warnings, radio warnings and a burst of warning shots, the US Navy reported. They turned back after additional warnings were sounded. In all, some 30 shots were fired from a .50 caliber machine gun onboard Maui, Pentagon Press Secretary John Kirby said Monday.

<https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/05/us-navy-fires-30-warning-shots-ward-irans-speed-boats#ixzz6vAarWCYA>

Iran rejects Pentagon’s claim, denounces U.S. ‘unprofessional’ behavior in Hormuz

Tehran Times, 11th May, 2021

The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps Navy has reacted to a claim by the Pentagon that the IRGC speedboats unprofessionally came close to an American vessel. The IRGC Navy said in a statement on Tuesday that IRGC boats did not act unprofessionally and while they were conducting a regular and conventional operation, they encountered seven American Navy vessels committing “provocative, gratuitous and unprofessional behaviors such as flying helicopters, firing flares and aimless shooting.” The statement said the IRGC boats maintained a legal distance from the American vessels in accordance with international maritime regulations and warned them against “dangerous and unprofessional behavior.”

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/46084/7/Iran-rejects-Pentagon-s-claim-denounces-U-S-unprofessional>

IAEA: Iran's enriched uranium is up to 63%

Tehran Times, 13th May, 2021

The United Nations’ International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) announced on Tuesday that the uranium samples they have received from the Natanz nuclear site was enriched to up to 63%. According to Reuters, which has obtained the IAEA report, “The agency's analysis of the ES (environmental samples) taken on 22 April 2021 shows an enrichment level of up to 63% U-235, which is consistent with the fluctuations of the enrichment levels (described by Iran).” Tuesday's report said

the Islamic Republic was now feeding the tails from the IR-4 cascade into a cascade of 27 IR-5 and 30 IR-6s centrifuges to refine uranium to up to 5%.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/460864/IAEA-Iran-s-enriched-uranium-is-up-to-63>

IAEA inspected Iran nuclear facilities three times a month: report

Tehran Times, 14th May, 2021

According to Bloomberg, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has conducted three-snap inspections of Iranian nuclear facilities a month, marking a record. Last year, the global nuclear watchdog conducted three surprise inspections of Iranian nuclear facilities every month. According to the report published by Bloomberg on Friday, one-fifth of the IAEA's 161 surprise inspections worldwide in 2020 were from Iran's nuclear facilities. The report said the number of inspections by the IAEA inspectors in Iran in 2020 is almost close to the record of visits in 2018.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/460892/IAEA-inspected-Iran-nuclear-facilities-three-times-a-month-report>

IRAQ

Iranian-backed rocket attacks on US increase in Iraq

Jerusalem Post, 5th May, 2021

On Tuesday two rockets landed at Ain al-Asad air base in western Iraq. On Monday three to six rockets fell near Balad air base in Iraq, according to various reports. The base houses US contractors and has been

targeted numerous times in the past by pro-Iranian militias targeting Americans.

This appears to be the third attack in three days, representing an increase in pro-Iranian rocket attacks on US forces in Iraq. The attackers frequently use 107-mm. rockets supplied by Iran, although they have also used drones in a new escalation. The attacks are designed to provide Iran leverage, to harass the US and to create plausible deniability for Iran.

<https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/iranian-backed-rocket-attacks-on-us-increase-in-iraq-667205>

ISRAEL

Biden to Abu Dhabi crown prince: Normalization with Israel is important

Jerusalem Post, 5th May, 2021

US President Joe Biden spoke on the phone with Crown Prince Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan on Tuesday.

According to a readout of the call, they discussed several regional issues, including the situation in Afghanistan, the Iranian nuclear threat, and “the common quest for de-escalation and peace in the Middle East.” “In that regard, the president underlined the strategic importance of the normalization of relations between the United Arab Emirates and Israel,” the White House said in a statement. “He expressed his full support for strengthening and expanding these arrangements.”

<https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/biden-to-abu-dhabi-crown-prince-normalization-with-israel-important-667216>

IDF carries out attacks on Hezbollah outposts - Syrian reports

Jerusalem Post, 6th May, 2021

The IDF carried out attacks against Hezbollah outposts near Quneitra on the Syrian border Wednesday night, according to Syrian reports cited by Israeli media.

This is the second consecutive night that Syrian media reported an attack by the IDF in Syria. The IDF disseminated leaflets to the Syrian Armed Forces in Quneitra, warning them not to cooperate with Hezbollah, N12 reported, citing local news. On Tuesday, an alleged Israeli airstrike targeted a site near Latakia and Tartus along Syria's Mediterranean coast, according to the Syrian state news agency SANA.

<https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/idf-carries-out-attacks-on-hezbollah-outposts-syrian-reports-667333>

Egypt, Qatar and the UN urge Hamas to end violence against Israel

Jerusalem Post, 10th May, 2021

Egypt, Qatar and the United Nations have contacted Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in an attempt to prevent a major confrontation between the Gaza-based terrorist groups and Israel, sources close to Hamas said Monday night. Haniyeh, who is based in Qatar, phoned Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and briefed him on the current situation in the Gaza Strip and Jerusalem, the sources said.

<https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/egypt-qatar-and-the-un-urge-hamas-to-end-violence-against-israel-667797>

Hamas uses 'A-120' rocket, named for slain commander, to fire at Jerusalem

Jerusalem Post, 11th May, 2021

Hamas used a new rocket in its attack against Jerusalem on Monday called the A-120 and named for a commander killed by the IDF during the Gaza War of 2014. The "A-120" is said to have a range of about 120 kilometers and was seen in footage shared by Hamas of a long rocket being loaded by masked terrorists into a launcher in the Gaza Strip. Seven rockets were fired toward Jerusalem on Monday, one of which hit a home in a nearby suburb, causing damage but no injuries. The rocket is strikingly similar to the R-160 which Hamas boasted as its longest-range domestically-made rocket, first fired in the 2014 war, at one point hitting as far north as near Haifa.

<https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/hamas-uses-a-120-rocket-named-for-slain-commander-to-fire-at-jerusalem-667837>

Lebanon fires rockets at Israel, no injuries reported

Jerusalem Post, 14th May, 2021

Three rockets were fired from southern Lebanon toward Israel on Thursday night. The IDF said that the rockets landed in the sea off the coast of northern Israel. According to the [IDF](#), the rockets fell into the Mediterranean sea. Residents of the northern-Israeli town Shlomi heard the sound of the booms. A Palestinian terrorist group south of Tyre was likely behind the rocket fire and had been arrested by

Lebanese security forces, according to MTV Lebanon.

<https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/three-rockets-fired-from-lebanon-initial-report-668129>

With Jordan, Lebanon border violence Israel faces 4-front conflict

Jerusalem Post, 15th May, 2021

Lebanese protesters, likely urged on by [Hezbollah](#), tried to breach an area of a border fence in northern Israel on Friday near Metulla. In Lod, Israel continued a curfew after nights of violence that had the city looking like it was suffering a civil war. In Gaza the IDF struck another Hamas anti-tank squad, one of a half dozen such units targeted in recent days. On the Jordan border, demonstrators supporting the Palestinians tried to break through to reach Israel and the West Bank. Israel is now facing a four-front conflict – its internal strife, Gaza, Lebanon and Jordan – and possibly more violence in Jerusalem and the West Bank.

<https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/with-jordan-lebanon-border-violence-israel-faces-4-front-conflict-668197>

Israeli ground troops deployed near Gaza border

Al-Monitor, 14th May, 2021

The Israeli military is now using ground troops in its operations against the Gaza Strip. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) announced just after midnight Friday that its “air and ground troops are currently attacking in the Gaza Strip.”

The IDF later said, “There are currently no IDF ground troops inside the Gaza strip.

IDF air and ground forces are carrying out strikes on targets in the Gaza strip,” the Times of Israel reported. The move follows several days of Israeli airstrikes against the Palestinian enclave as well as Hamas firing rockets into Israel. At least 103 Palestinians have been killed in the airstrikes, including 27 children and eight women, Palestinian officials said. Seven people have been killed in Israel by the rockets, also including women and children, plus a soldier.

<https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/05/israeli-ground-troops-deployed-near-gaza-border#ixzz6vBrccwsc>

Hamas scrambles to learn how Israel killed its military leaders hiding in secret locations

Al-Monitor, 14th May, 2021

Hamas was deeply shocked after a number of its military leaders were killed in an Israeli airstrike targeting them on May 12, and it fears that Israel has spies who have uncovered Hamas' secret communications system. The Israeli army announced on May 12 that it had killed 16 Hamas military leaders and members. Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, the movement's military wing, admitted in a statement on May 12 that some of its leaders had been killed, namely, “Bassem Issa, the commander of the Gaza City Brigade, and several other leaders and mujahideen who died during the occupation's aggression against the resistance's sites and hideouts.” A reliable source in al-Qassam Brigades told Al-Monitor that al-Qassam Brigades had already started an investigation on how the

Israeli army reached the leaders, in what is considered a “security breach” among the brigade commanders. He further pointed to concerns about Israel penetrating the wired communication network that al-Qassam Brigades established in the ground in recent years, covering all areas of the Gaza Strip, which leaders and members use to exchange military information.

<https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/05/hamas-scrambles-learn-how-israel-killed-its-military-leaders-hiding-secret#ixzz6vBscKnrG>

Hamis uses large rocket arsenal in latest escalation round with Israel

Al-Monitor, 14th May, 2021

Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, Hamas’ military wing, launched May 10 seven missiles toward Jerusalem, carrying high-explosive warheads with a range of 120 kilometers (75 miles) in response to Israeli actions in Jerusalem, settler incursions into Al-Aqsa Mosque and pressure on residents of Sheikh Jarrah to leave their homes. Meanwhile, the Israeli army stated that it had only intercepted one missile and was forced to evacuate the Knesset building.

On May 11, two Israelis were killed and 60 others wounded when Hamas launched 137 S40 missiles at the cities of Ashkelon and Ashdod, with one directly hitting a building. On the same night, central Israel was subjected to the heaviest bombardment since the escalation began, with dozens of rockets falling in Tel Aviv and Gush Dan, killing one person, wounding dozens and hitting the main oil storage tank. On May 12, Hamas fired SH85 missiles at Tel Aviv and Ben-

Gurion Airport, with a range of 85 kilometers (53 miles). On May 13, it fired an Ayyash missile with large destructive force and a range of 250 kilometers (155 miles) toward Israel’s Ramon Airport.

<https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/05/hamas-uses-large-rocket-arsenal-latest-escalation-round-israel#ixzz6vBt1bEgp>

Iran says Hamas is targeting Iron Dome sites, airports

Jerusalem Post, 15th May, 2021

Iran is telegraphing how Hamas has planned and executed its war on Israel. Since the first rocket was fired on Jerusalem on Monday, Hamas has set the pace and tempo of this conflict. It appears to be a plan that has been in place for years – and may have had guidance directly from Iran. Hamas tactics are similar to the Houthis in Yemen, who are also backed by Tehran. Hamas has used new drones, based on an Iranian model that the Houthis use, and has targeted airports as the Houthis do in Saudi Arabia. This may be a new Iran proxy-war doctrine: Iran’s Press TV appears to admit as much. Iran has long backed Hamas with technological advice for rockets, weapons and cash. On Friday, Press TV, an Iran government channel, said that “the Palestinian Islamic Resistance movement Hamas says it has targeted the Israeli regime’s Iron Dome stations and an Israeli air base, which is used by Israeli warplanes to bombard civilian targets in the besieged Gaza Strip.”

<https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/iran-says-hamas-is-targeting-iron-dome-sites-airports-668194>

JORDAN

Muslim Brotherhood Official And Fmr. Jordanian MP Saud Abu Mahfouz: The Jews Have The Money Of Rothschild And Adelson And They Provoke Us With Their Filth, But We Are Willing To Redeem Jerusalem With Our Lives

Memri TV, 9th May, 2021

Former Jordanian MP and Muslim Brotherhood official Saud Abu Mahfouz said that the Muslim Brotherhood considers Jerusalem as an "enterprise of martyrdom." He made his remarks in a video that was posted on the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood YouTube channel on May 9, 2021. Abu Mahfouz said that the Jews are provoking "our Islamic identity" with their deeds and filth. He continued to address the Jews, saying that the Islamic nation will uproot them, regardless of the "Jewish haughtiness, the American arrogance, and the feebleness of the dying Arab regimes. He added: "You bastards" have all the money of Moskowitz, Rothschild, and Sheldon Adelson "but we have the integrity and credibility of the imprisoned [Israeli Islamic Movement leader] Raed Salah."

<https://www.memri.org/tv/jordanian-mb-official-saud-abu-mahfouz-seeks-redeem-jlm-with-lives-jews-deeds-filth-provoking-our-islamic-identity>

Protesters rush toward Israeli border in Jordan and Lebanon

Al-Monitor, 14th May, 2021

Protesters in Jordan and Lebanon stormed toward their borders with Israel on Friday in response to the ongoing conflict in Israel and the Palestinian territories.

A viral video on social media showed hundreds of Jordanians running toward the King Hussein Bridge, which connects the Hashemite Kingdom to Israel. Jordanian police later said that "activity" in Shuna, which is close to the bridge, ended without issue. The participants cooperated with police and first responders gave them water due to the high temperature, according to a police statement.

A group of Lebanese men also attempted to enter the Israeli town of Metula. Two were injured when Israeli shells landed near them. Lebanese security forces also responded to prevent them from advancing, the official National News Agency reported.

<https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/05/protesters-rush-toward-israeli-border-jordan-and-lebanon#ixzz6vAldddWG>

LEBANON

German company removes dangerous material from Beirut port

Al-Monitor, 6th May, 2021

A German ship has removed dangerous materials from Beirut's port. The effort is part of the Lebanese government's response to the deadly explosion in the port last year. A ship from the Germany forklift manufacturer Combilift brought out 59 containers of "extremely dangerous material" from Beirut's port and unspecified other locations, according to a tweet Wednesday from Lebanon's prime minister's office. A massive explosion ripped through Beirut in August 2020 after 2,750 tons of the flammable fertilizer

ammonium nitrate caught on fire and exploded.

<https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/05/german-company-removes-dangerous-material-beirut-port#ixzz6vAt10Cxa>

US sanctions 7 over Hezbollah finances

Al-Monitor, 11th May, 2021

The US government sanctioned seven people Tuesday who are allegedly connected to the finances of the Lebanese military and political organization Hezbollah. The sanctions focused on Al-Qard al-Hassan, which Hezbollah critics say is the group's financial arm. Ibrahim Ali Daher, head of Hezbollah's Central Finance Unit, was among those sanctioned. He is said to oversee the group's budget, including funds allegedly for killing opponents and military activities. The other six designated individuals used their personal accounts to evade US sanctions on Al-Qard al-Hassan and transfer funds on its behalf, the Treasury Department said in a press release.

<https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/05/us-sanctions-7-over-hezbollah-finances#ixzz6vAtgBRit>

IDF claims three rockets fired from Lebanon toward Israel

Al-Monitor, 13th May, 2021

Rockets were fired from Lebanon toward Israel Thursday night amid continued Israeli-Palestinian fighting.

The Israel Defense Forces said three rockets were fired from Lebanon and landed in the Mediterranean Sea off the

coast of northern Israel. They did not say who was responsible nor did they mention any retaliatory actions. Hezbollah did not immediately comment on the incident. The Lebanese political and military organization backed by Iran sometimes clashes with Israel on the border and the two fought a major war in 2006. The Lebanese government also did not comment following the news. Some Lebanese media reports attributed the attack to Palestinian armed groups in the country. A security source told the Lebanese news outlet mtv that "preliminary information indicates that Palestinian factions fired the rockets in the direction of occupied Palestine."

<https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/05/idf-claims-three-rockets-fired-lebanon-toward-israel#ixzz6vAtsQGC9>

QATAR

International Union Of Muslim Scholars (IUMS), Funded By Qatar And Turkey, Urges Muslims To Wage Jihad, Sacrifice Their Souls For Al-Aqsa

MEMRI TV, 9th May, 2021

Amid the Israel Palestine escalation, the International Union of Muslim Scholars (IUMS), supported by Qatar and Turkey, posted on its website a proposed Friday sermon on the topic of Jerusalem. The sermon includes incitement to violence, jihad and self-sacrifice, as well as antisemitic motifs. Praising the "heroic jihad operations" of the "jihad fighters in Palestine," as well as the young Palestinians who are "deployed on the battlefield" in

Jerusalem, the sermon states that "the Muslims' foremost duty is to wage jihad by sacrificing their souls" for Al-Aqsa. It adds that whoever is unable to come to the battlefield himself must help the jihad fighters with money, and thus "illuminate Al-Aqsa," just as the Palestinians who are deployed on the front illuminate it with their blood and their souls. The sermon also states that the Prophet Muhammad spoke about "the battle to liberate Al-Aqsa from the Jews," and quotes the antisemitic hadith stating that, on Judgement Day, the Muslims will fight the Jews and even the stones and the trees will betray the Jews hiding behind them.

<https://www.memri.org/reports/international-union-muslim-scholars-iums-funded-qatar-and-turkey-urges-muslims-wage-jihad>

SAUDI ARABIA

US Navy seizes massive shipment of weapons in Arabian Sea

Al-Monitor, 10th May, 2021

The US Navy has released a video of a massive cache of rifles, machine guns and anti-tank rockets seized aboard a boat in the Arabian Sea last week. The USS Monterey halted a stateless dhow ship last Thursday before discovering dozens of Russian-made guided anti-tank missiles, thousands of Chinese-made AK-47-style rifles, as well as hundreds of machine guns, anti-materiel rifles and rocket-propelled grenade launchers (RPGs). The crew of the dhow was released after questioning and the weapons were loaded onto the Monterey over a two-day period, the Navy

said. An investigation has not yet determined where the weapons were headed, nor where they came from, the US Fifth Fleet said in a statement on Saturday.

<https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/05/us-navy-seizes-massive-shipment-weapons-arabian-sea#ixzz6vAqSFVCq>

SYRIA

1 killed, 6 injured in alleged Israeli airstrike targeting Syrian coast

Jerusalem Post, 5th May, 2021

An alleged Israeli airstrike targeted a site near Latakia and Tartus along Syria's Mediterranean coast on Tuesday night, according to the Syrian state news agency SANA. The strikes also hit the town of Haffah, east of the port city of Latakia, and Masyaf in Hama province. A civilian was killed and six were injured, including a child, according to Syrian media. The strike targeted a "civilian plastic warehouse," according to SANA. Initial reports and video from the scene indicated that a large fire had broken out in the area.

<https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/explosions-heard-near-syrias-mediterranean-port-cities-667229>

Intel: UN finds undeclared chemical weapons stockpile in Syria

Al-Monitor, 7th May, 2021

United Nations investigators uncovered previously undisclosed stockpiles of Syria's chemical weapons, the UN's top official for disarmament revealed to the Security Council on Thursday. The

discovery is the latest sign that the Syrian government of President Bashar al-Assad has not fully complied with an US and Russia-brokered agreement in 2013 to destroy the country's stockpiles. Analysis of samples from storage containers at a previously declared chemical weapons facility revealed a "large volume" of a chemical warfare agent, the UN's disarmament chief Izumi Nakamitsu said yesterday. Syria's government recently denied the site was used to produce chemical warfare agents, a claim rejected by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, she added.

<https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/05/intel-un-finds-undeclared-chemical-weapons-stockpile-syria#ixzz6vB0VqU9f>

Russia to build floating dock off Syrian coast

Al-Monitor, 10th May, 2021

The Russian Ministry of Defense is working to expand its naval base in the Syrian port of Tartus following the major expansion of the main Hmeimim base, located in the Latakia countryside. On Feb. 5, a website called The Drive published satellite images showing work in progress to extend one of the two main runways of Russia's Khmeimim airbase outpost in Syria by around 1,000 feet. "The extension would allow the base to support more regular deployments of larger and more heavily-laden aircraft, including heavy airlifters and even potentially bombers," the outlet reported.

A few days ago, the Russian TASS news agency quoted a source connected to the Russian military as saying that the ship

repair shop at the Russian naval installation at Tartus will have a floating dock in 2022.

<https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/05/russia-build-floating-dock-syrian-coast#ixzz6vB0kAnCD>

TURKEY

Iraq scolds Turkey over latest anti-PKK offensive in Iraqi Kurdistan

Al-Monitor, 4th May, 2021

Iraq has formally complained — yet again — over Turkey's escalating military presence on its soil. The Iraqi Foreign Ministry said in a statement Monday that it had summoned the Turkish charge d'affaires and handed him "a protest note" over "violations of Iraqi sovereignty" arising from the May 1 visit by Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar to a Turkish military base in Iraqi Kurdistan. Turkey responded that it fully respected Iraqi sovereignty and territorial integrity and signaled its intention to carry on the operation, saying it was in line with efforts to eradicate rebels of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK).

<https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/05/iraq-scolds-turkey-over-latest-anti-pkk-offensive-iraqi-kurdistan#ixzz6vB1kBIND>

Turkey's only goal in northern Iraq is to eradicate PKK, Akar says

Daily Sabah, 5th May, 2021

Turkey respects the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all of its neighbors, including Iraq, Defense Minister Hulusi Akar said, in response to Baghdad's

decision to summon the Turkish diplomat over Akar's visit to a base in northern Iraq.

"Our only goal is to fight terrorism and terrorists. Everybody should know that we are in northern Iraq due to the terrorists who have taken shelter over there due to the region's geographical conditions," Akar said on a visit to the Gölcük Navy Fleet Command in northwestern Turkey's Kocaeli on Wednesday.

<https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/war-on-terror/turkeys-only-goal-in-northern-iraq-is-to-eradicate-pkk-akar-says>

Tripoli committed to Turkey-Libya maritime deal, PM Dbeibah says

Daily Sabah, 5th May, 2021

Libyan Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah reiterated his country's commitment to the maritime deal with Turkey, as he said it benefits Libyans.

Speaking in an interview with the Doha-based broadcaster Al Jazeera, due to be aired in full Wednesday, Dbeibah said his government disagrees with Greece's evaluation of the agreement.

"We disagree with Greece in evaluating the Libyan-Turkish maritime agreement that serves the Libyans, and (therefore) we will not abandon it," he said. On Nov. 27, Ankara and Tripoli reached two separate memorandums of understanding (MoU), one on military cooperation and the other on the maritime boundaries of countries in the Eastern Mediterranean.

<https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/tripoli-committed-to-turkey-libya-maritime-deal-pm-dbeibah-says>

Erdoğan condemns Israel's 'heinous' attacks on Al-Aqsa Mosque

Daily Sabah, 8th May, 2021

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan condemned Saturday Israel's "heinous" attacks against Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque during Ramadan, expressing solidarity with Palestinians. "We strongly condemn Israel's heinous attacks against our first qibla #AlAqsaMosque, that are unfortunately being carried out every Ramadan," Erdoğan said on Twitter.

"As Turkey, we will continue to stand by our Palestinian brothers and sisters in all circumstances," he added.

<https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/erdogan-condemns-israels-heinous-attacks-on-al-aqsa-mosque>

Turkey aims to solve S-400 issue with US through dialogue: Kalın

Daily Sabah, 12th May, 2021

Turkey and the U.S. can resolve the S-400 problem through negotiations, Presidential Spokesperson Ibrahim Kalın said Tuesday, as he said President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan plan to hold a meeting with U.S. President Joe Biden and other leaders at an upcoming NATO summit. "We expect the Biden administration to take concrete steps," Kalın told Hürriyet daily, noting that the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) sanctions, F-35 and S-400 issues "block" bilateral ties. "If we are two allies and strategic partners, we can solve these through negotiation," Kalın said, adding that Turkey may also purchase Patriot missiles if conditions are available.

<https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/turkey-aims-to-solve-s-400-issue-with-us-through-dialogue-kalin>

Erdogan: Turkey won't 'remain silent' over Israeli strikes in Gaza

Al-Monitor, 14th May, 2021

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Friday that Ankara is “furious” over Israeli airstrikes in the Gaza Strip and lashed out at countries that “remain silent” in the face of Israel’s operation. “We are both saddened and furious at the cruelty of the terrorist state of Israel against Palestinians,” Erdogan told a virtual meeting of his ruling Justice and Development Party. “To stand against Israel’s aggression in Palestinian cities, Jerusalem is a duty of honor for humanity,” he said. “By attacking the sacred sites of all three religions, terror state Israel has crossed all boundaries.”

<https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/05/erdogan-turkey-wont-remain-silent-over-israeli-strikes-gaza#ixzz6vB2nc2D9>