

Nato to boost defences in eastern Europe

AFP, Brussels

Nato was set to agree a major boost to its defences in eastern Europe including six bases and a spearhead force of 5,000 troops in response to what it called Russian aggression in Ukraine.

Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg yesterday insisted that the moves likely to be approved by defence ministers meeting in Brussels were purely defensive, but the increased presence on Russia's borders is likely to rile Moscow.

With Eastern European states concerned by the worst tensions with Russia since the Cold war, the bases will be in the alliance's three Baltic states -- Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania -- plus Poland, Romania and Bulgaria.

"This is something we do as a response to the aggressive actions we have seen from Russia, violating international law and annexing Crimea," Stoltenberg told reporters as he arrived at the 28-nation group's headquarters.

"It is a response to what we are seeing from Russia over a period of time, and it is in full accordance with our international obligations," the former Norwegian prime minister said.

Nato leaders agreed to step up the alliance's eastern defences at a summit in Wales in September, amid concerns about Russia's actions in Ukraine and a increase in Russian military activity on Nato's borders.

Stoltenberg said the Nato measures were also motivated by new threats from Islamist militants in North Africa and the Middle East who are fuelling violence within Europe.

The Nato defence ministers are expected to agree on a so-called "spearhead" force of around 5,000 troops which will be able to deploy anywhere within a "few days," Stoltenberg said.

West floats new Ukraine peace plan

Merkel, Hollande arrive in Kiev as Ukraine faces 'total war'

AFP, Kiev

German and French leaders yesterday pushed ahead with a new peace plan to Kiev and Moscow after a surge in deadly fighting in eastern Ukraine.

Chancellor Angela Merkel and President Francois Hollande arrived in Kiev after a visit by US Secretary of State John Kerry, who called on Moscow to make an "immediate commitment" to a ceasefire in Kiev's conflict with pro-Russian rebels.

As the European leaders set out on the biggest peace push so far to end the near 10-month conflict, at least 21 people were killed in fresh clashes as the separatists try to push deeper into government-held territory.

"We talked about the largest threat that Ukraine faces today and that is Russia's continued aggression in the east," Kerry said after talks with Ukraine's leaders.

"There must be an immediate commitment now to a real ceasefire, which is not just a piece of paper with words, but which is followed by specific actions," Kerry said.

"We want a diplomatic resolution, but we cannot close our eyes to tanks that are crossing the border from Russia," he said, emphasising that "we are not seeking conflict with Russia".

In Paris, Hollande said he and Merkel would "propose a new solution to the con-



Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko (R) shakes hands with US Secretary of State John Kerry after a press conference following a bilateral meeting in Kiev, yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

flit based on the territorial integrity of Ukraine."

He said the plan would be discussed with Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko on Thursday and Russia's Vladimir Putin in Moscow on Friday, but warned that diplomacy "cannot go on indefinitely".

Despite growing talk of Washington arming Ukrainian forces, a State Department official said only that Kerry was to unveil \$16 million in fresh US humanitarian aid, particularly to help displaced

people.

Russia, itself accused of arming the separatists, warned that any US move to send weapons to Ukraine would cause "colossal damage" to ties, foreign ministry spokesman Alexander Lukashevich said.

Kerry is to meet Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov at a security conference in Munich on Saturday after the three-way Moscow meeting.

Meanwhile, European sources yesterday said the EU will add 19 people including five

Russians to its sanctions list over the conflict in Ukraine following a surge in fighting between Kiev and pro-Moscow rebels.

None of the 19 new figures targeted for travel bans and asset freezes is "top level", the sources said.

Ukraine and its Western allies accuse Moscow of sending thousands of regular army troops and weapons to support the rebels who launched an uprising against Kiev in April. And while Moscow has repeatedly denied the allegations, the separatists are equipped with the advanced weaponry of a regular army.

The fighting has claimed more than 5,350 lives since April, including some 220 in just the past three weeks, according to the United Nations.

Weekend peace talks in Minsk -- where a now-tattered truce was agreed in September -- collapsed after rebel leaders stayed away.

As the bloodletting has intensified, Washington has been reviewing its position to see if it should bow to a growing clamour to send heavy weapons to Kiev.

US President Barack Obama's nominee for defence secretary said on Wednesday he was likely to support providing weapons.

Ashton Carter, expected to be confirmed soon as Pentagon chief, told a US Senate committee that "we need to support the Ukrainians in defending themselves".

Jordanian planes strike ISIS after pilot murder

AFP, Amman

Jordan yesterday said its warplanes had launched new strikes against the Islamic State group, after vowing a harsh response to the burning alive of one of its fighter pilots captured in Syria.

The announcement came as King Abdullah II personally paid his condolences to the airman's family, which has urged the government to "destroy" the jihadists reflecting deep anger among Jordanians over the brutal murder.

"The Jordanian air force launched raids against positions of the Islamic State group," said a government official, who did not want to be named.

He did not disclose where or when the strikes took place, saying the military would release a statement later.

Jordan has conducted regular raids against IS in Syria as part of a US-led campaign against the Sunni extremist group, which has seized swathes of the war-torn country and of neighbouring Iraq.

The gruesome murder of airman Maaz al-Kassasbeh, who was captured by ISIS in December when his F-16 fighter plane went down in Syria, has increased support in Jordan for stepped-up military action against the jihadists.

"Jordan will wage all-out war to protect our principles and values," the Al-Rai government newspaper wrote in an editorial. "We are on the lookout for this band of criminals."

Abdullah cut short a visit to the United States and flew back to Amman on Wednesday after the harrowing video emerged of Kassasbeh's killing.

"The blood of martyr Maaz al-Kassasbeh will not be in vain and the response of Jordan and its army after what happened to our dear son will be severe," he said after wards

TAIWAN PLANE CRASH

Search on for 12 missing

AFP, Taipei

Taiwan rescuers scoured a river for 12 people still missing from a TransAsia plane crash yesterday, as the pilot, who died in the crash, was hailed a hero for apparently battling to avoid hitting built-up areas.

Hundreds of rescuers in boats, as well as divers and soldiers mounted the search in the chilly waters, as the death toll rose to 31 with more bodies located including those of the pilot and co-pilot, authorities said.

The TransAsia ATR 72-600 crashed shortly after take-off from Songshan airport in Taipei Wednesday, hitting an elevated road as it banked sidelong towards the Keelung River, leaving a trail of debris including a smashed taxi.

In an operation overnight large parts of the plane's fuselage were lifted from the river, enabling rescuers to recover bodies trapped inside, while divers battled strong currents to search downstream for more victims.

Pilot Liao Chien-tung was applauded by avia-

tion experts for apparently steering the turboprop plane, which had 53 passengers and five crew on board, away from populated areas, potentially avoiding more deaths and damage.

Friends and relatives described the 41-year-old Liao as a diligent and family-loving man from a humble background who studied hard to join the air force before becoming a commercial pilot.

The accident, which occurred on a domestic route to the island of Kinmen, was the second fatal crash for TransAsia since July.

Desperate crew shouted "Mayday! Mayday! Engine flameout!" as the plane plunged out of the sky, according to a recording thought to be the final message from the cockpit to the control tower.

Among the 15 survivors of the crash, 26-year-old flight attendant Huang Jin-ya was lucky for the second time -- she was supposed to be on the plane that crashed in July, killing 48, but switched her shift, according to local reports.

A total of 31 Chinese nationals were onboard the plane, with at least 16 dead, 12 missing and three injured, the government said.

US preparing to regulate business on the moon

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

The US is getting ready to license companies for commercial development of the moon.

US companies are able to claim bits of the moon through the same process that allows them to get approval to launch rockets into space, according to a new report from Reuters.

The claims come from a letter sent by the Federal Aviation Authority (FAA) to Bigelow Aerospace, an American space startup that among other things makes inflatable habitats for use in space. The letter seems to imply that if Bigelow put one of the habitats on the moon, it would have exclusive rights to that territory, according to Reuters.

Bigelow is sending its inflatable

habitats to the International Space Station this year, ahead of a plan to keep them as outposts in space that could eventually see them house tourists. It then wants to move its focus to the moon, installing similar basis from around 2025.

Bigelow told Reuters that the new rules don't mean that anyone can own the moon. They simply ensure that "somebody else isn't licensed to land on top of you or land on top of where exploration and prospecting activities are going on", it said.

The US is part of a UN treaty that rules over space law and bans any government from claiming the moon or any other celestial bodies. But it does not ban private companies from putting objects onto the moon, a process which is now licensed by the FAA.

Syria strikes kill 57 after rebel shelling

AFP, Beirut

At least 57 people were killed yesterday as Syria's regime pounded a rebel stronghold with air strikes after a barrage of opposition fire hit the capital Damascus, a monitor said.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said 12 children were among those killed in the opposition-held Eastern Ghouta region outside Damascus, and an AFP photographer there described chaotic scenes.

In the capital, meanwhile, a barrage of at least 120 rockets and mortar rounds fired by rebel forces killed 10 people, among them a child.

The fire left usually busy streets of the city deserted and prompted Damascus University to close for the day, sending students home.



A cloud of smoke rises following an air strike by Syrian government forces in the rebel-held area of Douma, north east of the capital Damascus, yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

Egypt sentences 230 anti-Mubarak activists to life

AFP, Cairo

An Egyptian court Wednesday sentenced to life 230 secular activists from the 2011 revolt against long-time strongman Hosni Mubarak, including leading campaigner Ahmed Douma, an official said.

Thirty-nine others, all minors, were jailed for 10 years.

The verdict, which can be appealed, is the harshest delivered so far against non-Islamist activists amid a government crackdown on opponents overseen by President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi.

Hundreds of Islamist supporters of Mubarak's successor, Mohamed Morsi, have been sentenced to death after often speedy trials described by the United Nations as "unprecedented in recent history".

At Wednesday's hearing, all 269 defendants were convicted of taking part in clashes with security forces near Cairo's Tahrir Square in December 2011, said the judicial official who spoke on condition of anonymity.

They were also found guilty of assaulting security forces and setting alight government buildings, including a cultural centre

founded in 1798 by Napoleon Bonaparte that contained more than 200,000 books.

A life sentence in Egypt is 25 years. The defendants were also ordered to pay a combined fine of \$2.2 million.

Douma, 26, rose to prominence during the 2011 uprising that drove Mubarak from power and was also a key protest leader against Morsi.

Washington condemned the verdict.

"Mass trials and sentences run counter to the most basic democratic principles and due process under the law," said State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki, adding it "seems impossible that a fair review of evidence and testimony could be achieved under these circumstances."

The European Union likewise criticised the decision, saying Egypt was violating its international human rights obligations.

In November a court dropped murder charges against Mubarak.

If he walks free it would spur accusations against Sisi that he is reviving the Mubarak era. Mubarak's sons Alaa and Gamal -- symbols of corruption during their father's rule -- have also been released pending a retrial.

ISIS 'using mentally challenged children as suicide bombers'

INDEPENDNET.CO.UK

Isis militants are using children -- including those with mental health problems -- as suicide bombers and human shields, according to experts from a UN watchdog. Officials believe some of the youngsters may have little or no idea what is happening to them.

A report published on Wednesday said the militants were selling abducted children as sex slaves and killing others, including by means of crucifixion and burying them alive. Children from minority communities were particularly vulnerable.

"We have had reports of children, especially children who are mentally challenged, who have been used as suicide bombers, most probably without them even understanding," expert Renate Winter told Reuters.

"There was a video placed online that showed children at a very young age, approximately eight years of age and younger, to be trained already to become child soldiers."

Winter, a member of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of

the Child (CRC) was one of 18 independent experts who helped compile the report that revealed stark and widespread abuse of children in areas controlled by the militants.

She said those communities particularly vulnerable to abuse by the Sunni extremist militants included Yazidis, Christian and Shia Muslims. But Sunnis had also been victims, she added.

The report, which reviewed Iraq's treatment of children for the first time since 1998, drew attention to what it said was the "systematic killing of children belonging to religious and ethnic minorities by the so-called Isis, including several cases of mass execu-

tions of boys, as well as reports of beheadings, crucifixions of children and burying children alive".

It added that large numbers of children had been killed or badly wounded during air strikes or shelling by Iraqi security forces. Others had perished from "dehydration, starvation and heat" and Isis had carried out widespread sexual violence including "the abduction and sexual enslavement of children".

The experts who worked on the report called on Iraqi authorities to take all necessary measures to "rescue children" under the control of Isis and to prosecute perpetrators of crimes. Yet the experts have acknowledged that the government in Baghdad is almost certainly powerless at the moment in terms of holding the fighters accountable.

It also denounced frequent so-called honour killings as well as forced early and temporary marriages of girls as young as 11. The committee took issue with a law that allows rapists to go free if they marry their victim, the AFP said.

রোগতত্ত্ব, রোগ নিয়ন্ত্রণ ও গবেষণা ইনস্টিটিউট (আইইডিসিআর)

স্বাস্থ্য অধিদপ্তর

স্বাস্থ্য ও পরিবার কল্যাণ মন্ত্রণালয়

মোবাইল ফোনের মাধ্যমে স্বাস্থ্য সম্পর্কিত তথ্য সংগ্রহ

সকল মোবাইল ফোনের সম্মানিত গ্রাহকগণকে জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, বাংলাদেশ সরকারের স্বাস্থ্য মন্ত্রণালয়ের একটি প্রতিষ্ঠান রোগতত্ত্ব, রোগ নিয়ন্ত্রণ ও গবেষণা ইনস্টিটিউট (আইইডিসিআর) টেলিফোন ভিত্তিক রোগ নিরীক্ষা কার্যক্রম চালু করেছে। এই কার্যক্রম চলাকালে আপনি আইইডিসিআর থেকে একটি ফোন কল আপনার মোবাইলে পেতে পাবেন। আইইডিসিআর ফোন কলের মাধ্যমে আপনার এবং আপনার পরিবারের অন্যান্য সদস্যদের স্বাস্থ্য সংক্রান্ত তথ্য সংগ্রহ করছে। এ ধরনের রোগ নিরীক্ষা কার্যক্রম বাংলাদেশে নতুন হলেও পৃথিবীর অনেক উন্নত দেশেই তা চালু আছে।

স্বাস্থ্য সংক্রান্ত আপনার মূল্যবান তথ্য এই রোগ নিরীক্ষা কার্যক্রমের জন্য বিশেষ গুরুত্বপূর্ণ। গবেষণায় প্রাপ্ত তথ্য জনস্বার্থে ব্যবহৃত হবে। উত্তরদাতার কোন পরিচয় কোথাও প্রকাশ করা হবে না। এ বিষয়ে আপনার সার্বিক সহযোগিতা ও আন্তরিকতা আমাদের একান্ত কাম্য।

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