



China: Pentagon report 'severely damaged' ties

US Congress warned over Beijing's new 'Guam killer' missile

AFP, Beijing

China yesterday accused the US of deliberately distorting the facts in a report on the Asian giant's defence policy, warning Washington it had "severely damaged" trust between the superpowers.

The Pentagon on Friday said Beijing had been building up military facilities on reefs and islets in a bid to assert its claims to the contested waters of the South China Sea.

China's military has also been using "coercive tactics" to foster tensions with its neighbours, but will ensure they do not snowball into outright conflict, according to the annual report to Congress.

Beijing hit back yesterday in comments published in state media, with a defence ministry spokesman saying the Pentagon report had "deliberately distorted China's defence policies".

"It is the United States that has been flexing military muscles by frequently sending military aircraft and warships to the region," spokesman Yang Yujun said, according to the official news agency Xinhua.

"The US annual report on China's

military and security developments has severely damaged mutual trust between the two sides."

Yang accused the US of being behind the "militarisation in the South China Sea", parts of which are claimed by Vietnam, Taiwan, Brunei, Malaysia



and the Philippines as well as China.

The South China Sea, an important shipping route thought to be home to vast energy deposits, has become a growing source of tension between Beijing and Washington as the US turns its focus on Asia.

Washington fears Beijing is seeking to impose military controls over the entire area, where China has built massive structures including radar systems and airstrips on reclaimed reefs and islets.

The Pentagon report estimated China has reclaimed 3,200 acres (1,300 hectares) of land around the Spratly Islands, also claimed by the Philippines, over the past two years.

Beijing has been angered by the growing US attention on Asia and US forays into the Sea, including sailing warships close to reclaimed islands.

Meanwhile, the US Congress has been warned that China's new 'Guam killer' missile, capable of hitting targets some 5,500 km away, is raising new fears of a growing Chinese threat to key American military facilities and stability in the Pacific Rim.

A Congressional panel has issued a report warning of the dangers of the DF-26 intermediate-range ballistic missile, during a week in which US-China tensions flared anew with a US Navy destroyer sailing close to a Chinese-claimed island in the disputed South China Sea.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN POLITICS

Seventeen female French ministers speak out

BBC ONLINE

Seventeen women who have served as ministers in France say they will no longer be silent about sexual harassment in politics.

All 17 signatories to the declaration are current or former ministers. Among them is Christine Lagarde, the head of the International Monetary Fund and France's former finance minister.

On Monday, the deputy speaker of the National Assembly, Denis Baupin, resigned over sexual harassment claims, which he denies.

"Like all women who have entered spheres that up until then were exclusively male, we have had to fight against sexism," the declaration, in the Journal de Dimanche newspaper, said yesterday.

"It is not for women to have to adapt to these places, but for the behaviour of certain men to change." Examples of some of the sexual harassment suffered by the women are also given in the article.

It explains that Fleur Pellerin, who was culture minister in Francois Hollande's government from 2014 until this February

this year, rarely suffered harassment until she was appointed to office.

After her first appointment in government, she was asked by a male journalist if she was given the job "because you are a beautiful woman".

"They feel entitled to have a laugh and to make unwelcome gestures such as patting a woman on the buttocks," another signatory, former Women's Rights Minister Yvette Roudy, told French news channel La Chaine Info yesterday.

"Some women aren't so offended but others are very offended and are now speaking out. It's time women talk about it and make it known that they are not being complimented but are effectively being treated as whores."

Denis Baupin groped one female Green Party member and sent explicit messages to others, female former Green Party colleagues said in interviews in French media last week.

France Inter said the women chose to come forward after Baupin gave his support in March to a high-profile campaign criticising violence against women.



CIA tip-off led to Mandela's arrest: report

AFP, London

A tip from a CIA spy to authorities in apartheid-era South Africa led to Nelson Mandela's 1962 arrest, beginning the leader's 27 years behind bars, an article in the Sunday Times reported.

The newspaper cited comments reportedly made by Donald Rickard, a former US vice-consul in Durban and CIA operative, to British film director John Irvin.

Irvin's new film "Mandela's Gun", about the months before the anti-apartheid icon's arrest, is due to be screened at the Cannes film festival this week.

Mandela was eventually freed from prison in 1990 and went on to become South Africa's president between 1994 and 1999 before dying in 2013.

During an interview, Rickard explained how Mandela was arrested but did not explain how he had learnt where he would be.

He added that Mandela was "completely under the control of the Soviet Union".

"He could have incited a war in South Africa, the United States would have to get involved, grudgingly, and things could have gone to hell," Rickard added.

"We were teetering on the brink here and it had to be stopped, which meant Mandela had to be stopped. And I put a stop to it."

Zizi Kodwa, national spokesman of Mandela's ruling African National Congress (ANC) party, called the revelation "a serious indictment" but said it was nothing new.

He claimed that though the incident happened decades ago, the CIA was still interfering in South African politics. Rickard, who was reportedly employed by the CIA until 1978, died in March, two weeks after talking to Irvin.



(From left, clockwise) Palestinians re-enact a scene from the 1948 Nakba during a rally marking the 68th anniversary of the establishment of the state of Israel in the West Bank city of Ramallah; a Palestinian girl wears earrings bearing the number "68" in Gaza city; and a protester holds a slingshot to throw stones towards Israeli security forces during clashes in Bethlehem, yesterday. The "Nakba" means in Arabic "catastrophe" in reference to the birth of the state of Israel 68-years-ago in British-mandate Palestine, which led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who either fled or were driven out of their homes during the 1948 war. The large keys symbolise the homes left by Palestinians in 1948.



TRUMP'S HISTORY WITH WOMEN

Its complicated

AFP, Washington

US Republican presidential hopeful Donald Trump has a mixed history with women, with crude remarks mixed with efforts to foster the career of female employees, The New York Times reported.

The thrice-married Trump, 69, cultivated an image as a womanizer ever since he was in an all-male military school in the 1960s, where he was dubbed a "ladies' man," the Times reported Saturday.

Critics portray Trump as a misogynist, seeing proof in incidents such as his feud with actress Rosie O'Donnell -- whom he disparaged as a "fat pig" -- and his suggestions that former presidential rival Carly Fiorina's face made her unelectable.

But the Times, in more than 50 interviews with women associated with Trump over the past four decades, shows a more complex and contradictory image. There were unwelcome advances on women and plenty of crude commentary on female bodies, the Times reported.

But Trump also nurtured the careers of several women within his business organization.

One Miss USA contestant said that in 1997 Trump, who was married to actress Marla Maples at the time, introduced



himself and kissed her and other contestants on the lips.

However Trump also hired Barbara Res as his head of construction in the 1980s, at a time when there were few women in such positions at major construction firms. She said that her boss wanted her to be a "Donna Trump."

"I know you're a woman in a man's world. And while men tend to be better than women, a good woman is better than 10 good men," she recalls him saying.

Years later, Trump told her "You like your candy," Res told the Times. "It was him reminding me that I was overweight." Res worked with Trump for 18 years.

"The respect for women was always there," Alan Lapidus, an architect who designed the Trump Plaza casino in Atlantic City, told the Times. "When he was building his empire, the backbone was women."

Trump told the Times that he was proud of his record of hiring and promoting women. He brushed off the unflattering allegations.

Yesterday, Trump took to Twitter to blast the article. "The failing @nytimes wrote yet another hit piece on me. All are impressed with how nicely I have treated women, they found nothing. A joke!" read one tweet.

"Why doesn't the failing @nytimes write the real story on the Clintons and women? The media is TOTALLY dishonest!" read another.

Controlled blast carried out as Man U game called off

BBC ONLINE

A controlled explosion was carried out at Old Trafford, after a suspect package was found before Manchester United's match against Bournemouth yesterday.

Greater Manchester Police described the device as "incredibly lifelike" but confirmed it "wasn't viable".

The Sir Alex Ferguson Stand and the Stretford End were evacuated before the game and sniffer dogs brought in.

Kick-off, due at 15:00 BST (8:00pm in Bangladesh), was delayed and shortly afterwards the match was abandoned on police advice.

Kerry visits Saudi before key talks

AFP, Jeddah

US Secretary of State John Kerry held talks in Saudi Arabia yesterday to secure its support ahead of a potential showdown with Russia at talks on the Syrian conflict.

After his Saudi meetings, Kerry was due to fly to Vienna which this week will host the international contact groups engaged in efforts to halt fighting in Syria and Libya.

Riyadh is the key backer of rebels fighting to overthrow Syria's President Bashar al-Assad, and Kerry is keen to keep the opposition on board with a shaky ceasefire in force since February.

Saudi allies Egypt and the UAE are also major supporters of the administration in eastern Libya which is withholding its support from a UN-backed unity government in Tripoli.

Kerry met Saudi Arabia's King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Nayef at the royal court in a palace in Jeddah.

"I want to thank you for the many things that Saudi Arabia is working on with us to great effect," he told King Salman as the pair sat down, before reporters were ushered out.

"On Syria, the secretary provided an update of the situation on the ground following last week's reaffirmation of the cessation of hostilities," a US spokesman said.

"The secretary also gave an update

"fighting terrorism" with the Crown Prince, who is also interior minister.

After his talks in Vienna, Kerry will fly on to Brussels on Wednesday for a Nato foreign ministers' meeting and talks on the full range of challenges facing the Western allies.

Meanwhile, a monitor said yesterday fighting raging between rival Islamist rebel factions to control a key opposition stronghold near Damascus since late last month has killed more than 300 fighters.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the clashes in Eastern Ghouta pitted the Saudi-backed Jaish al-Islam faction, which has been taking part in peace talks in Geneva, against the Faylaq al-Rahman and Jaish al-Fustat groups, both led by Al-Nusra Front, Syria's Al-Qaeda affiliate.

"More than 300 fighters have been killed as Islamist rebel factions battle for influence in the Eastern Ghouta," since April 28, Observatory head Rami Abdel Rahman said.



'EU trying to copy Hitler-like superstate'

AFP, London

Former London mayor Boris Johnson has claimed the European Union was behaving like German Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler by trying to create a superstate, in a newspaper interview yesterday.

Johnson is one of the leading figures campaigning for Britain to leave the EU in a closely-fought referendum being held on June 23.

His comments drew swift criticism from opponents, who said they were "offensive" and showed a "lack of judgement".

Johnson said the last two thousand years of European history had featured repeated efforts to bring the continent together under a single government, emulating the Roman empire.

"Napoleon, Hitler, various people tried this out, and it ends tragically. The EU is an attempt to do this by different methods," Johnson told The Sunday Telegraph.

"But fundamentally what is lacking is the eternal problem, which is that there is no underlying loyalty to the idea of Europe."

"There is no single authority that anybody respects or understands. That is causing this massive democratic void."

Johnson is a leading member of the ruling Conservative party of Prime Minister David Cameron, who is leading the campaign to keep Britain in the EU.

EXAMPLE SET ON FIRST DAY

London Mayor Sadiq Khan waits at a bus stop after leaving his home in Tooting on May 9, 2016 in London, England. In a nod to his 'son of a bus driver' heritage and setting an example, Khan took a bus and a Tube from his home to get to City Hall at the first day of his four-year tenure as mayor of London. He has pledged to make public transport more affordable to Londoners.



PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

VENEZUELA IN STATE OF EMERGENCY

Maduro launches crackdown

AFP, Caracas

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro announced a sweeping crackdown Saturday under a new emergency decree, ordering the seizure of paralyzed factories, the arrest of their owners and military exercises to counter alleged foreign threats.

The embattled leftist is struggling to contain a raging economic crisis that has led to food shortages, soaring prices, riots, looting and vigilante justice, pushing Venezuela to the brink of collapse.

He accused the United States on Friday of destabilizing the country at the behest of the "fascist Venezuelan right," prompting him to declare a state of emergency.

Addressing his supporters at a rally in central Caracas on Saturday, Maduro announced some of the actions to be taken under the decree, which has not yet been published.

"We must take all measures to recover productive capacity, which is being paralyzed by the bourgeoisie," he told the cheering, red-clad crowd.

The move comes after the largest food and beverage company in Venezuela, the Polar Group, halted production of beer on April 30, saying government mismanagement meant it was no longer able to import barley.

Maduro also ordered military exercises next Saturday "to prepare ourselves for any scenario," denouncing alleged plans for an "armed intervention."