



Clinton fears nuke suicide bombers!

Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton has expressed concern over the possibility of Pakistan's nuclear weapons falling into the hands of jihadists, which she said was "a threatening scenario", according to a media report.

"Pakistan is running full speed to develop tactical nukes in their continuing hostility with India," the former secretary of state told a close-door fundraiser in Virginia in February. The New York Times reported, citing 50-minute audio being hacked from the Democratic Party's computers.

"But we live in fear that they're going to have a coup, that jihadists are going to take over the government, they're going to get access to nuclear weapons, and you'll have suicide nuclear bombers. So, this could not be a more threatening scenario," the daily quoted Clinton as saying in the audio that appeared on The Washington Free Beacon website.

During the fund raiser, responding to a question on modernisation of nuclear weapons, the daily said, Clinton went beyond the question to warn of an emerging nuclear arms race, naming Russia and China as well as Pakistan and India.

"This is one of the most dangerous developments imaginable," Clinton said. Such remarks from the former secretary of state gains significance in view of an interview of Pakistani defence minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif to the local TV channel in which he threatened to unleash nukes against India.

"If our safety is threatened, we will annihilate them (India)," Asif had said.



A Kashmiri woman pours water on burning debris after a protest in Srinagar against the recent killings in Kashmir yesterday. Inset, A woman holds a placard while shouting slogans during a protest to condemn violence in Kashmir, organised by Defence of Human Rights (DHR) in Islamabad, Pakistan.

'US-India military ties closest ever'

AGENCIES

India-US military relationship is the "closest it has been ever" and the two countries are exercising together by air, land and sea for the first time, America's defence secretary Ashton Carter has said.

"America's regional partnerships are growing in number and strength. The US-India military relationship is the closest it's ever been. Great nation, large democracy," Carter remarked on Thursday in San Diego.

"Through our strategic handshake with America's reaching west in our re-balance and India reaching east in what Prime Minister (Narendra) Modi calls his Act East Policy, our two nations are exercising together by air, land, and sea."

Noting that Asia-Pacific is the most consequential region for America's future, he said the US is managing "historic change" in the area.

Meanwhile, US on Thursday blamed Pakistan for the escalation of tensions in the Indian subcontinent.

According to Indian media, Pakistan's coddling of UN-designated terror groups and its launching cross-border terrorism into India is being seen by the Obama administration as the provocation - if not justification -- for New Delhi's decision to conduct the surgical strikes at terrorist launch pads across the border.

"We've repeatedly expressed our concerns regarding the danger that terrorism poses to the region. We continue to urge actions to combat and delegitimise terrorist groups like LeT and the Haqqani Network, Jaish-e-Mohammad," State Department spokesman John Kirby said when asked about India's actions.



'Bloodbath' in Aleppo

Air strikes keep pounding the city as diplomacy nears collapse

AFP, Beirut

Syrian regime forces advanced in the battleground city of Aleppo yesterday backed by a Russian air campaign that a monitor said has killed more than 3,800 civilians in the past year.

The Doctors Without Borders (MSF) charity accused Syria's government and its ally Moscow of provoking a "bloodbath" in the city, saying the eastern rebel-held portion had become "a giant kill box".

Syria's army was advancing on two Aleppo fronts, as talks between key players Washington and Moscow -- which back opposing sides in the war -- appeared close to collapse. Dozens of people are said to have died in close clashes and air strikes yesterday, reported Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

Damascus's bid to recapture all of the divided northern city prompted the UN to warn of "a humanitarian catastrophe".

Since the army operation began, Damascus and Moscow have pounded east Aleppo with air strikes, barrel bomb attacks and artillery fire, killing at least 216 people, including more than 40 children, according to the Observatory.

The assault has levelled apartment blocks and put hospitals out of service, creating a humanitarian catastrophe in opposition areas besieged for most of the past two months.

It has been some of the worst violence since the March 2011 beginning of Syria's conflict, which has killed more than

300,000 people and displaced over half the population.

On Thursday, US Secretary of State John Kerry warned Washington was "on the verge" of suspending talks with Russia on Syria because of the Aleppo assault.

Moscow, a key ally of President Bashar al-Assad, began a military campaign to bolster his forces in September 2015 that has so far killed more than 9,300 people, the Britain-based Observatory says. That figure includes 3,804 civilians and more than 5,500 jihadists and rebels, it says, adding that at least 20,000 civilians have been wounded.

Meanwhile, Kerry's Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov yesterday accused Washington of protecting a jihadist group in its effort to overthrow Assad's regime.

Lavrov told the BBC that Washington had vowed, under a failed truce deal, to "take as a priority an obligation to separate the opposition" from the former al-Qaeda affiliate Fateh al-Sham Front, once known as Al-Nusra Front, but that it had not done so.

"We have more and more reasons to believe that from the very beginning the plan was to spare Nusra and to keep it just in case for Plan B or stage two when it would be time to change the regime," Lavrov said.

Moscow said Thursday it would continue its campaign, despite Washington's threat and international concern about Aleppo.



Children play in puddle caused by an air strike yesterday in a rebel-held Aleppo district, Syria.

PHOTO: REUTERS

India, Pakistan bodies in tit-for-tat move

AGENCIES

Amid rising political and military tensions, Pakistani and Indian bodies yesterday took tit-for-tat moves banning artistes and movies in their respective countries.

In Pakistan, several Thursday stopped screening of Bollywood movies in the aftermath of Indian Army's surgical strikes on terror launchpads in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK) a day earlier.

Lahore Super Cinema - a prominent movie hall in the city - posted a message on its official Facebook page saying that no Indian cinema would be screened in any of its theaters.

"In solidarity with Pakistan Army and our film actors, Super Cinema being one of the largest Cinema operators in Pakistan hereby announce boycotting of Indian films in at all our Cinemas with immediate effect for an indefinite period," read the post.

Another prominent movie operator - Nuplex Cinema in Karachi, also took to social media to announce that Indian films would be taken off. Nuplex and another

chain of movie halls - Atrium Cinemas - stopped the screening of the Amitabh Bachchan-starrer movie 'Pink.'

Escalating tensions between the two countries had already spilled over to the Indian film industry with the Indian Motion Picture Producers' Association (IMPPA) on Thursday passing a resolution to ban Pakistani actors, technicians and performers from working in India.

"We have no objections against those who have already completed a film with a Pakistani artiste or ones that may be on the floor, but

starting today, one cannot sign Pakistani artistes for any fresh assignments," Ashoke Pandit, vice president IMPPA, had said. Amid the uproar, Indian superstar Salman Khan spoke about maintaining peaceful relations between India and Pakistan. Salman said that the action taken towards terrorists is justified, however, Pakistani artists are not terrorists.

"They (Pakistani actors) are artists, not terrorists. It's the government who gives them permits and visas," said Salman Khan.

BAN ON ARTISTES, FILMS



Duterte vows to kill 3m drug addicts

AFP, Davao

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte yesterday likened his deadly crime war to Hitler's efforts to exterminate Jews, as he declared he was "happy to slaughter" millions of drug addicts.

Duterte also railed against Western critics of his unprecedented law-and-order crackdown, which has left more than 3,000 people dead in three months and raised concerns about a breakdown in the rule of law in one of Asia's most chaotic democracies.

"Hitler massacred three million Jews. Now there are three million drug addicts (in the Philippines). I'd be happy to slaughter them," Duterte told reporters in his home city of Davao shortly after returning from Vietnam.

"At least if Germany had Hitler, the Philippines would have," he said, then paused. "But you know, my victims, I would like to be (sic) all criminals to finish the problem of my country and save the next generation from perdition."

Duterte, 71, won elections in May in a landslide after a campaign dominated by his pledge to eradicate drugs in society by killing tens of thousands of people.

The lawyer and former city prosecutor promised immunity for security forces if they were charged with murder, and on his first day in office urged residents of a Manila slum to kill drug addicts within their own community.



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu shakes hands with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas during the funeral of former Israeli President Shimon Peres in Jerusalem; grandchildren of Peres lay a wreath on his grave; and Peres's daughter cries during the ceremony, yesterday. World leaders bid farewell to Nobel Peace laureate Shimon Peres at his funeral yesterday, with US President Barack Obama hailing him as a giant of the 20th century.



PHOTO: AGENCIES

EU agrees to ratify Paris climate deal

AFP, Brussels

EU environment ministers yesterday agreed to fast-track the ratification of the landmark Paris agreement on climate change, despite the fact that some national parliaments have yet to approve the deal.

"All member states greenlight early EU ratification of Paris agreement. What some believed impossible is now real," European Union President Donald Tusk said on Twitter. "Victory!" tweeted French Environment Minister Segolene Royal.

Fears that the United States and China, the world's two biggest polluters, were leaving the EU behind on ratifying last year's historic deal pushed the bloc's 28 ministers to rush through the collective measure.

Around 60 countries have now committed to the landmark agreement designed to stem the planet's rising temperatures, which was sealed in December 2015 in the French capital.

"This is a historic day," EU Environment Commissioner Miguel Arias Canete told a news conference, "a day when we put behind us any doubts that the EU is ready to join the Paris climate agreement."

Seven EU countries including Germany and France have ratified the deal so far.

The Paris accord requires all countries to devise plans to achieve the goal of keeping the rise in temperatures within two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and strive for 1.5 C if possible.

Saudi condemns US 9/11 law

Warns of 'disastrous consequences' as tensions grow between allies

AFP, Riyadh

Saudi Arabia has warned of "disastrous consequences" from a United States law allowing 9/11 victims to sue the kingdom, in a major spike in tension between the long-standing allies.

The warning came after the US Congress voted overwhelmingly on Wednesday to override President Barack Obama's veto of the Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act (JASTA).

JASTA allows attack survivors and relatives of terrorism victims to pursue cases against foreign governments in US federal court and to demand compensation if such governments are proven to bear some responsibility for attacks on US soil.

A Saudi foreign ministry source late on Thursday called on the US Congress "to take the necessary measures to counter the disastrous and dangerous consequences" of the law.

Press Agency, said the law is "a source of great worry." This law "weakens the immunity of states", and will have a negative impact on all countries "including the United States," the spokesman said, expressing hope that "wisdom will prevail."

In opposing the law, Obama said it would harm US interests by undermining the principle of sovereign immunity, opening up the US to private lawsuits over its military missions abroad.

The erosion of sovereign immunity is also a concern among the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council, of which Saudi Arabia is the most powerful member.

Late on Thursday, United Arab Emirates foreign minister Anwar Gargash described the move as "a dangerous precedent in international law that undermines the principle of sovereign immunity and the future of sovereign investments" in the US.

A senior Saudi prince reportedly threatened to pull out billions of dollars of US assets if JASTA became law, though Saudi officials have distanced themselves from such threats.



ABORTION LAW Polish women seeks to stall nation

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Women in Poland are to stage an all-out strike to protest the country's plan to effectively ban abortions.

Female workers across the predominantly Catholic country will take part in the action on Monday, in an effort to disruptively draw attention to attempts to restrict Poland's severely limited abortion laws even further.

Those taking part hope the strike will bring Polish society and the economy to a standstill.

Currently, abortion is only permitted in cases of rape or if the woman or foetus' life is in danger.

First PM-like action by Modi: Rahul

TNN, New Delhi

Taking an apparent dig at Prime Minister Narendra Modi while congratulating him for Thursday's surgical strikes along the LoC, Congress vice president Rahul Gandhi yesterday said that this is the first 'Prime Minister-like action' by Modi in two and a half years.

"I want to thank him (PM Modi) because for the first time in two and half years he has taken an action that is of the stature of PM," Rahul said.

Supporting the PM's firm stand on terrorism, Rahul added, "Modi has my full support; the Congress party and entire nation is standing by him."

On Thursday, India had carried out strikes on seven terror launch pads across the LoC with the Army inflicting "significant casualties" on terrorists preparing to infiltrate from PoK.

Shortly after the strike, Congress president Sonia Gandhi had also backed the government on Army's action.

"This is a strong message that conveys our country's resolve to prevent further infiltration and attacks on our security forces and our people," Sonia said congratulating the armed forces on the success of the operation.

