

# N Korea warns of nuke strike

Trump says US will solve 'problem' without China, if needed

AGENCIES

North Korean state media yesterday warned of a nuclear attack on the United States at any sign of US aggression as a US Navy strike group steamed towards the western Pacific.

US President Donald Trump, who has urged China to do more to rein in its impoverished neighbor, said in a Tweet North Korea was "looking for trouble" and the United States would "solve the problem" with or without China's help.

"North Korea is looking for trouble," Trump wrote on Twitter. "If China decides to help, that would be great. If not, we will solve the problem without them! U.S.A."

Trump launched a missile strike on Syria late Thursday while meeting with Chinese leader Xi Jinping at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida.

The move was widely interpreted as a warning to North Korea as well as retaliation for the Damascus regime's suspected sarin attack against civilians in a rebel-held town in Syria.

The strike group -- which includes the Nimitz-class aircraft supercarrier USS Carl Vinson -- cancelled a planned trip to Australia this weekend, heading to the Korean peninsula instead in a show of force.

North Korea's official Rodong Sinmun newspaper said the country

statement carried by KCNA, said the US navy strike group's approach showed America's "reckless moves for invading had reached a serious phase."

"The DPRK is ready to react to any mode of war desired by the US," it added.

a nuclear warhead, and has so far staged five nuclear tests, two of them last year.

Satellite imagery analysis suggests it could be preparing for a sixth. Speculation over an imminent nuclear test is brewing as the North marks anniversaries including the 105th birthday of its late founder on Saturday -- sometimes celebrated with a demonstration of military might.

Officials from South Korea and China, North Korea's closest ally, threatened to impose "strong additional measures" if North Korea carries out more nuclear tests. China has already executed sanctions, including banning all North Korean coal imports for the last two months.

Russia's foreign ministry, in a statement ahead of a visit by US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, said it was concerned about many aspects of US foreign policy, particularly on North Korea.

As reported by South Korean news agency Yonhap, the US, South Korea and Japan are meeting this month to plan a joint response to North Korea.

## DEPLOYMENT OF US NAVAL STRIKE GROUP



was prepared to respond to any aggression by the United States.

"Our revolutionary strong army is keenly watching every move by enemy elements with our nuclear sight focused on the US invasionary bases not only in South Korea and the Pacific operation theater but also in the US mainland," it said.

The North's foreign ministry, in a

The Trump administration is reviewing its policy towards North Korea and has said all options are on the table, including military strikes, but US officials said non-military action appeared to be at the top of the list.

Pyongyang is on a quest to develop a long-range missile capable of hitting the US mainland with

## DEATH SENTENCE TO SUSPECTED INDIAN SPY

# Pakistan forces prepared to respond to any threat: PM

New Delhi to do 'whatever it takes' to help national

AGENCIES

Pakistan prime minister Nawaz Sharif yesterday said that their armed forces are fully capable and prepared to respond to any spectrum of threat.

Sharif's comment came a day after Pakistan gave death sentence to Indian national Kulbhushan Jadhav on charges of espionage and waging war against Islamabad.

There are differing accounts of how and where Jadhav was detained. Pakistan says he was detained on 3 March 2016 in the restive Balochistan province, which has been hit by a separatist insurgency that Islamabad accuses India of backing. India says he was kidnapped by Pakistan while he was in Iran.

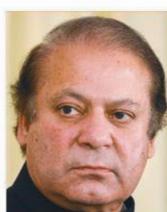
"Pakistan is a peace-loving country but this should not be seen as a sign of weakness," Sharif said while addressing cadets at the Asghar Khan Pakistan Air Force Academy.

Earlier in the day, India warned Pakistan that execution of the death sentence handed down to Kulbhushan Jadhav by a military court would be taken as "pre-meditated murder" and Islamabad should consider its consequences on bilateral relations.

"There is no evidence of wrongdoing by Jadhav. If anything, he is the victim of a plan

that seeks to cast aspersions on India to deflect international attention from Pakistan's well-known record of sponsoring and supporting terrorism," External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj said in the Parliament.

In Lok Sabha, Home Minister Rajnath Singh said the government will do everything possible to get justice for Jadhav.



Nawaz Sharif



Sushma Swaraj

While condemning the action, Singh said that Pakistan had ignored all norms of law and justice.

"The government strongly condemns it. All norms of law and justice were ignored. I want to assure the House that the government will do everything possible to get justice for Jadhav. He will get justice," he said.

## NEWS IN brief

### China remains world's biggest executioner

AFP, Beijing

China executed more people last year than the rest of the world combined, Amnesty International said yesterday. At least 931 individuals were executed between 2014 and 2016 in China, it said. All other countries together executed at least 1,032 people last year -- a decline of 37 percent compared to 2015. Of those, 87 percent took place in just four countries - Iran, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and

### Three dead in murder-suicide at US school

AFP, San Bernardino

A man walked into a school in southern California Monday and shot dead his estranged wife in front of her students, killing an eight-year-old boy in the crossfire before turning his gun on himself. Police said local resident Cedric Anderson had checked into the office as a visitor after entering the campus in the city of San Bernardino and going to the special needs classroom, where he opened fire on Karen Elaine Smith, 53, as she was teaching.

### Washington Post, NY Times win Pulitzers

REUTERS, New York

The Pulitzer Prizes on Monday honored The Washington Post for hard-hitting reporting on Donald Trump's presidential campaign and The New York Times for revealing Vladimir Putin's covert power grab, praising their probing of powerful people despite a hostile climate for the news media. The Pulitzers, the most prestigious honors in American journalism, is being awarded since 1917.



Migrants evacuate as a huge fire blazes through the Grande-Synthe migrant camp outside the northern French city of Dunkirk late Monday, reducing it to "a heap of ashes", the regional chief said. The fire has destroyed one of the biggest migrant camps in France housing 1,500 people, which started after a brawl involving hundreds of Afghans and Kurds, officials and police said.

PHOTO: AFP, REUTERS

## ATTACK ON PHILIPPINES TOURIST ISLAND

# Militants kill 9

AFP, Manila

Nine people including four members of the Philippine security forces were killed yesterday in clashes with 10 suspected members of the Abu Sayyaf kidnap group on the resort island of Bohol, authorities said.

The incursion would be the first on a key Philippine tourist destination in recent years by the group which pledges allegiance to the Islamic State and often targets foreigners in the lawless southern Mindanao region.

Five gunmen were killed, and four assault rifles and an improvised explosive device were recovered in the fighting on Bohol island, officials said.

The incident took place in a remote area, with local officials saying the militants had used fast boats to reach a village where they squared off against security forces who went to investigate.

US and Australian embassies had warned their citizens this week about possible kidnappings by "terrorist groups" specifically on Bohol and Cebu islands.

Bohol is a mere 30 minutes' boat ride away from the major port of Cebu on Cebu island, which is also among the country's top tourist draws. The attack came as millions of Filipinos head to resort locations for the holidays.

Over the past year the Abu Sayyaf has been expanding its activities, boarding commercial and fishing vessels off their southern island stronghold of Jolo, near Malaysia, and abducting dozens of foreign crew members.

## Malala becomes UN Messenger of Peace

REUTERS, United Nations

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres appointed Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai a UN Messenger of Peace on Monday to promote girls education, more than four years after a Taliban gunman shot her in the head on her school bus in 2012.

At 19, Yousafzai is the youngest Messenger of Peace, the highest honor given by the United Nations for an initial period of two years. She was also the youngest person to win the Nobel peace prize in 2014 when she was 17.

"You are not only a hero, but you are a very committed and generous person," Guterres told Yousafzai.

Other current Messengers of Peace include actor Leonardo di Caprio, for climate change, actor Charlize Theron, whose focus is prevention of HIV and elimination of violence against women, and actor Michael Douglas, whose focus is disarmament.

Yousafzai has become a regular speaker on the global stage and visited refugee camps in Rwanda and Kenya last July to highlight the plight of refugee girls from Burundi and Somalia.

The Pakistani education activist came to prominence when a Taliban gunman shot her in the head in 2012 as she was leaving school in Pakistan's Swat Valley, northwest of the country's capital Islamabad. She was targeted for her campaign against efforts by the Taliban to deny women education.



## UN: Growing risk of 'mass' starvation deaths in Africa

AFP, Geneva

The United Nations yesterday warned of a growing risk of mass deaths from starvation among people living in conflict and drought-hit areas of the Horn of Africa, Yemen and Nigeria.

An "avoidable humanitarian crisis... is fast becoming an inevitability", as the UN faces a "severe" funding shortfall to help people affected by famine, said UN refugee agency spokesman Adrian Edwards.

UNHCR's operations in famine-hit South Sudan, and in Nigeria, Somalia and Yemen, which are on the brink of famine, are funded at between just three and 11 percent, he told reporters in Geneva.

As a whole, the United Nations has requested \$4.4 billion to address the crisis in the four countries, but so far received only \$984 million, said UN humanitarian agency spokesman Jens Laerke said.

The current crisis risks becoming worse than the 2011 drought in the Horn of Africa that killed more than 260,000 people in Somalia alone, Edwards said.

"A repeat must be avoided at all costs," he said.

More than 20 million people across Nigeria, South Sudan, Somalia and Yemen, are in areas hit by drought and are experiencing famine or are at high risk of famine, according to UN numbers.

In conflict-ravaged South Sudan, where the UN warned in February that fighting, insecurity, lack of access to aid and the collapsing economy had left 100,000 people facing starvation, "a further one million people are now on the brink of famine," Edwards said.

And in Yemen, which is already experiencing the world's largest humanitarian crisis, 17 million people, or around 60 percent of the war-torn country's population, are going hungry.

In northern Nigeria meanwhile, seven million people are currently struggling with food insecurity. The situation is also "very, very dire" in troubled Somalia, said David Hermann, who coordinates operations in the country for the International Committee of the Red Cross.

"The response should happen now, because if it doesn't happen now... people are going to die from starvation," he told reporters.



## 'Just kill me'

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

New footage has captured the moment that a doctor who was violently yanked from his seat on a United Airlines plane and dragged along the aisle told airline staff "just kill me".

The world reacted with outrage and concern after the initial videos, captured by horrified passengers, showed several police officers forcing the man out of his seat, ignoring his cries and pulling him by his hands along the floor of the plane.

The new video shows the man, clearly distressed, clinging on to the curtain which separates the plane compartments, blood streaking his face, repeating the same words over and over.

The airline released an initial statement to explain that the United Express Flight 3411 in Chicago was fully booked and that staff asked for "volunteers" to take another flight.

It later came to light that passengers were removed so that the airline's own staff could take a seat.

When too few volunteers came forward, law enforcement was tasked to select random passengers and force them off the plane.

The airline account of the incident accused the man of being "more and more disruptive and belligerent", raising his voice and repeatedly declining to leave the plane.

PHOTO: AFP

## IS controls less than 7pc of Iraq territory

AFP, Baghdad

The Islamic State group now controls less than seven percent of Iraq, down from the 40 percent it held nearly three years ago, a military spokesman said yesterday.

Iraqi forces backed by US-led air strikes and other support are now battling IS inside second city Mosul, after retaking much of the other territory the jihadists had seized.

"Daesh controlled 40 percent of Iraqi land" in 2014, Brigadier General Yahya Rasool told reporters.

"As of March 31 (this year), they only held 6.8 percent of Iraqi territory," said Rasool, the spokesman of the Joint Operations Command coordinating the anti-jihadist effort.

The most brutal organisation in modern jihad shocked the world when it took over Mosul in June 2014 and then swept across much of the country's Sunni Arab heartland. Its reach in Iraq peaked in August the same year when a second offensive saw it take over areas of northern Iraq that were home to various minorities.

Iraqi forces retook control of the eastern side of the city, which is divided by the Tigris River, in January and have since mid-February been battling die-hard jihadists holed up in their last west Mosul redoubts.

## Sweden Attack Suspect admits to 'terror crime'

AFP, Stockholm

Suspected Stockholm truck attacker Rakhmat Akilov, a 39-year-old Uzbek and jihadist sympathiser, yesterday admitted to committing a "terrorist crime" by mowing down pedestrians on a busy street, killing four and injuring 15 others.

"Akilov confesses to a terrorist crime and accepts his custody detention," his lawyer Johan Eriksson told a custody hearing in a Stockholm district court.

Akilov, a construction worker who had been refused permanent residency in Sweden in June 2016, had gone underground last year after receiving a deportation order, police said. The Aftonbladet newspaper reported that he had said he was "pleased with what he had done".



Kashmiri mourners shout pro-freedom slogans during the funeral of taxi driver Ali Muhammad Dagga, 55, who died caught in clashes between Kashmiri protesters and Indian government forces in Srinagar, yesterday. Eight civilians were killed in Indian-administered Kashmir on April 9 when police opened fire at protesters who stormed polling stations during a by-election for a parliamentary seat, a top officer said.

PHOTO: AFP