



AS OF 0500 HOURS, JUNE 28

## OVERVIEW

A U.S. military spokesman in Afghanistan confirmed the start of an investigation into a Saturday airstrike that allegedly killed at least seven hostages being held in a Taliban prison, according to the *New York Times*. On Iraq, U.S. Central Command said it has reopened its investigation into a 2015 airstrike near Mosul that killed at least 11 civilians after the *Washington Post* identified flaws in the initial probe of the attack. Also of note, the Pentagon's revamped training program for Syrian rebels has produced fewer than 100 additional fighters due to a more targeted approach that is designed to assist existing units battling ISIL, officials said.

## NEWS HEADLINES AT 0430

- UK PM David Cameron to meet EU leaders in Brussels
- Egypt detains, deports prominent female TV host
- U.S. Navy lifts alcohol ban for sailors in Japan
- Supreme Court strikes down Texas abortion restrictions
- Republicans to release Benghazi report on Tuesday
- Airbnb sues San Francisco over new short-term rentals rules
- Coast Guard Academy sets record for female enrollment
- Flyers great Eric Lindros headlines 2016 Hockey Hall of Fame class

## OVERSEAS HEADLINES OF NOTE

- *Haaretz*: Israeli military chief revokes controversial 'Hannibal' directive
- *Ukraine Today*: Ukraine, NATO holding joint Rapid Trident 2016 drills
- *Xinhua*: U.S. defense chief hails Iraq's liberation of Fallujah

## THIS DAY IN MILITARY HISTORY

- 1919 – The Treaty of Versailles is signed in France, ending the First World War

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*New York Times*, June 28, Pg. A8 | Najim Rahim and Rod Nordland

American airstrikes in northern Afghanistan killed at least seven hostages being held in a Taliban prison on Saturday, according to accounts from the families of victims and local officials from the immediate area. Some accounts put the death toll as high as 16. But senior Afghan officials in Kunduz Province, including the governor, denied that the airstrikes had killed the prisoners, accusing the Taliban of staging the deaths to make it appear that an airstrike was responsible.

### 2. [Military reopens probe of airstrike](#)

*Washington Post*, June 28, Pg. A3 | Greg Jaffe

The U.S. military has reopened its investigation into a 2015 airstrike near the Iraqi city of Mosul that killed at least 11 civilians, including nine women and children, U.S. military officials said.

### **3. Revamped U.S. training program, with new goals, has trained fewer than 100 Syrians so far**

*Washington Post Online (Checkpoint), June 27 / Missy Ryan*

U.S. military officials are considering ways to ramp up training of Syrian fighters against the Islamic State as the Pentagon moves cautiously forward with a revamped program to create an effective local ground force.

## **IRAQ/SYRIA**

### **4. Pentagon welcomes Fallujah recapture, looks north to Mosul**

*Agence France-Presse, June 27 / Thomas Watkins*

The Pentagon on Monday welcomed the recapture of the Iraqi city of Fallujah from the Islamic State group, but warned of widespread booby traps and pockets of remaining jihadist resistance.

### **5. Iraqi army closes in on Islamic State militants near Falluja**

*Reuters, June 27 / Thair al-Sudani and Ahmed Rasheed*

Iraq's army sought on Monday to eliminate Islamic State fighters holed up in farmland west of Falluja to keep them from launching a counterattack on the city, a day after the government declared victory over the militants there.

### **6. Homes burned, looted in Iraqi city after defeat of militants**

*Associated Press, June 27 / Susannah George*

Dozens of homes were looted and burned as Fallujah was liberated from the Islamic State group, and Iraqi government forces Monday accused the retreating militants. Some provincial police, however, blamed the fires on Shiite militias operating with the federal police.

### **7. In Fallujah, an abandoned prison reveals life under ISIS**

*Washington Post, June 28, Pg. A1 / Loveday Morris*

From the outside, there's not a lot that stands out about the three neighboring houses on this residential street in the Iraqi city of Fallujah. One is grander than most, with two tall columns straddling its entrance. The others are unassuming and beige, like much of this city, which had been under the control of the Islamic State for the past 2 1/2 years. But behind their front doors is a makeshift prison used by the militants to mete out their archaic punishments. It provides a harrowing window into the brutal rule of law that governed here before the city was retaken, a glimpse of its regime of executions, floggings and torture.

## **MIDEAST**

### **8. Forty-two dead in Yemen suicide attacks claimed by Islamic State**

*Agence France-Presse, June 27 / Fawaz al-Haidari*

A wave of suicide bombings targeting Yemeni troops killed at least 42 people Monday in the southeastern city of Mukalla, officials said, in attacks claimed by the Islamic State group.

### **9. Trying to Mend One More Diplomatic Fence, Turkey Apologizes for Downing Russian Plane**

*New York Times, June 28, Pg. A4 / Sabrina Tavernise*

Turkey continued its diplomatic fence mending on Monday, apologizing for downing a Russian jet near its border with Syria last year.

## **ASIA/PACIFIC**

### **10. Taiwan 'to test-fire missiles in US' as China tensions rise**

*Agence France-Presse, June 27 | Laura Mannering*

Taiwan plans to test-fire its newest anti-missile system for the first time in the United States next month as relations with rival China deteriorate, a defence source and media reports said Monday.

### **11. Chinese Warships Now Training with U.S. Carrier Strike Group**

*U.S. Naval Institute News, June 27 | Sam LaGrone*

Five ships from the People's Liberation Army Navy are training with a U.S. carrier strike group ahead of next month's Rim of the Pacific 2016 exercises, a Navy official confirmed to USNI News on Monday.

### **12. U.S., Japan, South Korea conducting first joint ballistic missile defense drill**

*Stars and Stripes, June 28 | Wyatt Olson*

The U.S., Japan and South Korea are conducting their first joint ballistic missile defense exercise in Hawaii that is aimed as much at fostering cooperation between the two Asian neighbors as preparing for a possible North Korean attack.

### **13. U.S. confirms North Korea's Musudan missile reaches space**

*Yonhap News Agency (South Korea), June 27 | Chang Jae-soon*

North Korea's Musudan intermediate-range ballistic missile reached space and then re-entered Earth's atmosphere in its sixth test attempt last week, a U.S. defense official confirmed Monday, saying the launch would be a success if Pyongyang had designed the test that way.

## **EUROPE**

### **14. Brexit casts doubt over new EU and NATO defense strategy**

*Reuters, June 27 | Robin Emmott*

Britain's departure from the European Union risks undermining Europe's new defense strategy, days before NATO and EU governments sign a landmark pact to confront a range of threats from Russia to the Mediterranean, officials say.

### **15. U.S. Looks to Shore Up Its Allies**

*Wall Street Journal, June 28, Pg. A7 | Carol E. Lee*

The U.K.'s decision to leave the European Union dramatically expands the portfolio of foreign-policy challenges the next U.S. president will inherit, complicating critical decisions to address instability across the globe.

### **16. Kerry Offers Assistance to Ease the EU's Transition**

*Wall Street Journal, June 28, Pg. A7 | Laurence Norman*

The U.S. will do everything it can to smooth the transition in the European Union following Britain's vote to leave the bloc, Secretary of State John Kerry said Monday, as he called on European leaders to react calmly to the U.K.'s decision.

## **AFGHANISTAN/PAKISTAN**

### **17. [Kabul to investigate child sex slavery fuelling insider attacks](#)**

*Agence France-Presse, June 28 | Anuj Chopra*

Afghanistan's president has ordered a "thorough investigation" into institutionalised sexual abuse of children by police, after AFP revealed the Taliban are using child sex slaves to launch deadly insider attacks.

### **18. [Former Afghan warlord scuttles peace deal with Kabul](#)**

*Associated Press, June 27 | Kathy Gannon*

A former Afghan warlord announced Monday that a much-touted peace deal between his militant group and the Kabul government was effectively "dead."

## **AFRICA**

### **19. [Study: Militant Islamist attacks in Africa growing](#)**

*TheHill.com, June 27 | Kristina Wong*

The number of militant Islamist attacks in Africa has more than quadrupled in just the past six years, according to new research published Monday.

### **20. [Boko Haram Fighters Prey on Niger After Fleeing Bases in Nigeria](#)**

*Bloomberg, June 28 | Olivier Monnier*

Driven from its stronghold in northeastern Nigeria, the Islamist militant group Boko Haram is targeting the world's least developed country: Niger.

## **ARMY**

### **21. [Sweaty Soldiers Plead for Right to Keep Arms Bare](#)**

*Wall Street Journal (A-Hed), June 28, Pg. A1 | Paul Sonne*

Army Specialist Cortne Mitchell, originally from Staten Island, N.Y., moved to Texas for his assignment at Fort Hood and learned the meaning of hot. Spc. Mitchell and his fellow petroleum-supply specialists labor in summer temperatures that can hover around 100 degrees. Humidity can reach 90%. Maybe it was the heat. Maybe it was the humidity. But the transplanted New Yorker and his colleagues had a vision: If they could only roll up their sleeves.

### **22. [Why his Medal of Honor was denied](#)**

*Washington Post, June 28, Pg. A17 | Dan Lamothe*

Army Sgt. 1st Class Earl D. Plumlee had just taken a photograph with other members of his unit when an enormous explosion shook his base in Afghanistan. The elite Special Forces soldiers didn't know it yet, but Taliban militants had detonated a 400-pound car bomb and were about to start pouring through a hole in the installation's exterior wall.

## MARINE CORPS

### [23. The Marines will remove the word 'man' from these 19 job titles](#)

*MarineCorpsTimes.com, June 27 | Gina Harkins*

Thousands of Marines serving throughout the infantry and in other key positions are about to get new gender-neutral job titles, but the service's top leaders are pushing to leave the word "man" in some of its most iconic occupations. In all, the Marine Corps plans to rename 19 of its military occupational specialties, or MOSs, as the result of a months-long review mandated by Navy Secretary Ray Mabus. A service-wide message announcing the changes is expected to be published within the next few days.

### [24. In desert battle of tortoises v. Marines, tortoises win, for now](#)

*Washington Post, June 28, Pg. E1 | Tony Perry*

Troops sent to the Marine Corps's sprawling base in the Mojave Desert near here for advanced combat training are warned sternly about an unbreakable rule: no harming the desert tortoises or leaving behind food crumbs that are likely to attract ravens, the arch-predator of tortoises.

## NAVY

### [25. U.S. Navy turns to cloud technology to reduce drunken driving](#)

*Associated Press, June 28 | Yuri Kageyama*

An American sailor has tapped a cloud-based technology for mobile phones to make it easier to have volunteers take turns driving drunk friends home, an initiative that has curtailed drunken driving among the Navy ranks.

## VETERANS

### [26. Is veteran preference a 'third rail'?](#)

*Washington Post, June 28, Pg. A17 | Lisa Rein*

With an effort in Congress to scale back veteran preference in federal hiring awaiting action by a House-Senate conference committee, a former top personnel official says there's a better plan. Jeffrey Neal, who was in charge of hiring for the Department of Homeland Security until he retired in 2011, says a Senate proposal to limit veteran preference to a single use is flawed because it does not take into account former service members' high job turnover.

## NOTABLE COMMENTARY

### [27. A War Plan Against the House's Pentagon Budget Tricks](#)

*Bloomberg View, June 27 | Editorial*

For the second year in a row, President Barack Obama is poised to veto Congress's annual defense legislation. For the second year in row, he's justified in doing so. While the congressional approach has several problems -- including a ban on transferring prisoners from Guantanamo Bay -- one of the most egregious is a budgetary gimmick: The spending package approved by the House on June 11 effectively raids the military's emergency war fund to pay for normal Pentagon operations.

### [28. An antidote to Brexit](#)

*Washington Post, June 28, Pg. A18 | Editorial*

Under David Cameron's leadership, Britain's importance as a U.S. ally has steadily diminished. His government was slow in joining the campaign against the Islamic State and has played no significant role in resisting Russian aggression in Ukraine. Following a rebuff by Parliament, Mr. Cameron retreated from airstrikes against Syria in 2013, prompting a climbdown by President Obama that has had disastrous consequences. Mr. Cameron's most notable foreign policy initiative was his craven courtship of Chinese dictator Xi Jinping in the hope of reaping commercial advantage.

## **29. Russia is harassing U.S. diplomats all over Europe**

*Washington Post Online, June 27 | Josh Rogin*

Russian intelligence and security services have been waging a campaign of harassment and intimidation against U.S. diplomats, embassy staff and their families in Moscow and several other European capitals that has rattled ambassadors and prompted Secretary of State John F. Kerry to ask Vladimir Putin to put a stop to it.

## **30. China's Great Wall of Confrontation**

*Wall Street Journal Online (China's World), June 28 | Andrew Browne*

Although the Great Wall has become China's pre-eminent national symbol of pride and strength, the construction of its soaring watchtowers and crenelated parapets actually reflected a moment of dynastic weakness.

## **TOP STORIES**

### **1. Hostages Die. Did Taliban or Airstrikes Kill Them?**

*New York Times, June 28, Pg. A8 | Najim Rahim and Rod Nordland*

KUNDUZ, Afghanistan -- American airstrikes in northern Afghanistan killed at least seven hostages being held in a Taliban prison on Saturday, according to accounts from the families of victims and local officials from the immediate area. Some accounts put the death toll as high as 16.

But senior Afghan officials in Kunduz Province, including the governor, denied that the airstrikes had killed the prisoners, accusing the Taliban of staging the deaths to make it appear that an airstrike was responsible.

The victims were among more than 200 people who have been abducted by Taliban insurgents on highways in Kunduz Province, mostly taken from buses traveling to neighboring provinces, in four episodes since May 28.

The American military's spokesman in Kabul, Afghanistan, Brig. Gen. Charles H. Cleveland, said the airstrike report was under investigation. "We've recently learned of the allegation and are working with our Afghan counterparts to look into it," he said on Monday.

While Afghan officials all agreed that the American military conducted drone strikes in the Aaq-Masjid area of Chardara District, a remote area dominated by Taliban insurgents, they gave widely divergent accounts of what happened.

Mohammadullah, the police commander in the village of Nahr-i Sofi in the area of the airstrike, said that local residents reported that the drone strikes had killed 14 people, many of them people who had been abducted. He was uncertain how many of the 14 were hostages and how many were Taliban insurgents. Like many Afghans, the police commander has only one name.

Amruddin Wali, a senior member of the Kunduz Provincial Council, said he learned from locals that 14 to 16 hostages out of 20 in Taliban custody were killed in the strikes.

The Kunduz provincial police chief, Gen. Qaseem Jangalbagh, said that the dead in the airstrikes included five Taliban jailers and their local warden, Mullah Janat Gul.

Both Gen. Sher Aziz Kamawal, commander of the 808th Police Zone, which includes northeastern Afghanistan, and the Kunduz governor, Asadullah Omarkhel, said the Taliban responded to the airstrikes on their positions by putting abducted passengers into a truck container and then detonating explosives there. "The Taliban first decided to behead the passengers but then they killed them with an I.E.D. and tried to show it was an airstrike to create problems between the government and its international allies," Governor Omarkhel said.

Last year, American airstrikes destroyed the Doctors Without Borders hospital in Kunduz, killing 42 patients and staff members. While the American military apologized, blaming a series of errors and punishing 16 American soldiers and officers, many senior Afghan officials insisted that the insurgents had provoked the attack, repeating unsubstantiated accounts that they had been firing from the hospital.

At the provincial hospital in Kunduz on Monday, six bodies, some of them burned and mangled beyond recognition, were brought in from Chardara District. One of them was identified as Ansarullah, an Afghan National Army soldier who had been on leave when his bus was stopped by the Taliban in Kunduz and he was taken away by the insurgents. His body was identified by a cousin, Abdul Khair.

Mr. Khair said people from the district had told them his cousin was killed by a rocket fired into the prison building by a drone on Saturday night. Family members had been trying to win his release from the insurgents, who told them they wanted to swap government prisoners for Taliban prisoners.

An elder from Badakhshan Province, Wakil Alim, also visited the hospital on Monday and identified three other bodies as those of passengers who had been held by the Taliban.

The chief of the Kunduz provincial hospital, Nayim Mangal, said the damage done to the bodies brought there appeared to have been caused by rockets fired from an aircraft.

In Kabul, officials in the capital were unclear about what had happened. The spokesman for the Ministry of Defense, Dawlat Waziri, said: "All we can say now is that the airstrikes targeted the enemy bases there, which inflicted heavy casualties to the enemy. We are not sure if the prison or place where our soldiers were kept was hit in the airstrikes."

A spokesman for the Taliban, Zabihullah Mujahid, reached by telephone, denied that the insurgents had staged the bus passengers' deaths. He said three insurgents were killed in the airstrikes along with six of the abducted passengers. He said all of the passengers being held by the insurgents were government employees or soldiers;

passengers with no such affiliation were all released earlier, he said, and only a small number of passengers remained in custody.

President Obama recently expanded the authority for American forces to use airstrikes against Taliban targets. Under the new rules, airstrikes no longer need to be justified as necessary to defend American troops. The first such strikes were carried out earlier this month, the Pentagon said.

--Jawad Sukhanyar contributed reporting from Kabul

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## **2. Military reopens probe of airstrike**

### ***Attack in Iraq shows problems in handling of reports of civilian deaths***

Washington Post, June 28, Pg. A3 | Greg Jaffe

The U.S. military has reopened its investigation into a 2015 airstrike near the Iraqi city of Mosul that killed at least 11 civilians, including nine women and children, U.S. military officials said.

The move by U.S. Central Command follows an article in The Washington Post that identified flaws in the initial probe of the attack, which concluded that only four civilians were killed.

The Post's story also raised broader questions about the military's efforts to investigate battlefield mistakes. In nearly two years of bombing and more than 12,000 airstrikes in Iraq and Syria, the U.S. military has acknowledged only 41 civilian deaths. Military analysts and human rights activists said those figures vastly understate the civilian casualties caused by U.S. airstrikes.

"There's not a chance that number is right. Just equipment failures alone would have killed 41 civilians, not even accounting for far more common human mistakes or bad intelligence," said Jason Lyall, an associate professor of political science at Yale University who studies the effects of air power and served as a technical adviser to the U.S. government in Afghanistan. "The lack of curiosity here is entirely alarming."

If confirmed by military investigators, the 11 civilian deaths in the attack on the Islamic State checkpoint in the village of Hatra would account for more than 25 percent of all civilian casualties acknowledged so far by the U.S. military in Iraq and Syria.

An initial review of the strike by the Air Force found the allegations in The Post's story "credible," and Air Force officials, based in Qatar, have "since opened an investigation," said Col. Patrick Ryder, a spokesman for U.S. Central Command.

Gen. Joseph Votel, who commands American forces in the Middle East and Central Asia, said that the U.S. military goes to "great lengths to target only our enemies."

"We take allegations of civilian casualties seriously, including this new information about our strike at the ISIL checkpoint near al Hatra," Votel said in a statement, using a common acronym for the Islamic State.



The White House is on the verge of releasing a long-delayed report on militants and civilians killed by the United States in countries where it is not at war. The list will include airstrikes in countries such as Libya, Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen. It will not include deaths in Iraq or Syria.

White House officials declined to comment on the deaths at the Hatra checkpoint, but National Security Council spokesman Ned Price said the United States goes to "extraordinary lengths to avoid noncombatant deaths." In cases where civilians are wounded or killed, Price said that the U.S. military is authorized to make condolence payments "to those injured and the families of those killed."

So far, though, in nearly two years of airstrikes, the U.S. military has yet to make any condolence payments, according to military officials.

The checkpoint strike near Mosul and subsequent investigation show why so few payments have been made and why the military's civilian death count remains so low. U.S. military officials first learned of the possibility of civilian casualties in the strike when the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad received an email from a woman who said her Kia Sorento had been blown up by U.S. planes.

Raja'a Zidan al-Ekabee wrote that two families trying to flee Mosul, traveling in her Kia and a GMC Suburban, were killed when they were stopped at an Islamic State checkpoint in the town of Hatra.

"A missile of the international air forces struck the checkpoint and both cars with the families inside them were burned to death," Ekabee wrote.

Because the cars were stopped at the checkpoint for 40 minutes, U.S. pilots told military investigators that they assumed the vehicles were allied with the militants and attacked them. Investigators reviewed footage from the strike last year and spotted four figures fleeing one of the burning vehicles just before a 500-pound bomb hit. Only by pausing the image and measuring the height of the shadows of the figures on the grainy black-and-white video did the investigators determine that one of the people was probably a child.

The military's investigation, relying exclusively on the video footage, concluded that four civilians were killed in the strike. Such footage, however, can be unreliable. A recent study conducted by CNA, a federally funded think tank, concluded that bomb damage assessment videos in Afghanistan had missed civilian deaths in 19 out of 21 cases that were later investigated on the ground.

The military never tried to contact Ekabee to determine who was traveling in the cars that were destroyed at the checkpoint.

The U.S. military said it is constrained in its ability to investigate civilian deaths from American airstrikes because it has so few troops on the ground in Iraq and Syria. "We recognize that we are not perfect and there are things we may not see," Ryder said.

Military officials said they take great care in their targeting process to ensure no civilians are injured or killed. "The amount of effort that goes into trying to avoid civilian casualties is probably about the same, if not more laborious, than the actual targeting process itself," Ryder said.

The United States monitors Iraqi media and works with the State Department and nongovernmental organizations to seek out allegations of civilian deaths.

But the process for logging and investigating complaints in Iraq and Syria is flawed, human rights activists said. "When I met with senior U.S. military officials in Tampa a few weeks back, they admitted that they had only assessed 40 percent of all 430 known alleged coalition civilian casualty events - an omission we hope they are tackling," said Chris Woods, the director of Airwars.org, an organization that tracks civilian casualties in Iraq and Syria.

One airstrike that was never logged or investigated took place in the northern Iraqi town of Bashiqa on Nov. 24

Massoud Hameed said in an interview with The Post that his brother and sister-in-law and their three children were killed when an airstrike hit their home in the village. His local parliamentarian said he complained to the U.S. Embassy about the deaths, which were also reported in the Iraqi media and logged by Airwars.

The U.S. military recently said it had no record of a civilian casualty allegation in Bashiqa.

Woods called the oversight "troubling."

"For the coalition to say it was unaware of the civilian casualty event despite [media] reporting, a complaint to the U.S. embassy and an Airwars case study is bizarre, though not unexpected," he said.

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### **3. Revamped U.S. training program, with new goals, has trained fewer than 100 Syrians so far**

Washington Post Online (Checkpoint), June 27 | Missy Ryan

U.S. military officials are considering ways to ramp up training of Syrian fighters against the Islamic State as the Pentagon moves cautiously forward with a revamped program to create an effective local ground force.

Several U.S. officials, speaking to reporters on the condition of anonymity to discuss ongoing military efforts, described the steps the Pentagon has taken since late last year, when the Obama administration abandoned an earlier Syria training plan. After repeated setbacks to that program, which aimed to create an army of Syrian fighters from scratch, officials settled on a different approach, one that would train only small numbers of leaders or other key personnel from local units who could act as a liaison with U.S. and allied forces attacking the Islamic State from the air.

Since the original program was revised, U.S. military personnel have trained fewer than 100 additional fighters, mostly outside of Syria, officials said. Those trained are specialized fighters whom military officials describe as "spotters" rather than ordinary infantry troops.

"What we're looking at now is taking out key enabler personnel from certain units, training them and then reinserting them so they can provide information to the coalition to enable us to then target ISIL," one official said. ISIL is another term for the Islamic State.

The output of the revamped program is only a modest addition to that of the initial plan that, after months of work and millions of dollars, only trained about 200 fighters before it was ended. But officials said the relatively small

numbers in the current program is not a reflection of renewed difficulties, but of a more targeted approach that is designed to assist existing units fighting the Islamic State.

"The primary thrust of our counter-ISIL approach in Syria is to partner with and equip these forces that have succeeded in taking away 20 percent of [territory previously held by militants], primarily in northern Syria," another official said.

Officials pointed to the advances that Kurdish and Arab forces, backed by American air power and, more recently, guidance from U.S. Special Operations troops on the ground, have made in northern Syria in recent months. This week, allied Syrian forces battled militants in Manbij, a key transit town near the Turkish border whose capture has been a U.S. priority.

The Obama administration says local forces have picked up momentum against the Islamic State in both Syria and Iraq. Just this week, Iraqi commanders announced their recapture of Fallujah, which was the first city in Iraq to fall to the Islamic State.

New details of the Syria training effort shed new light on the mission of the elite U.S. forces in Syria, whose activities the Pentagon has sought to keep out of public view. With about 300 Special Operations troops on the ground, the Pentagon is now overseeing a patchwork of activities in support of various friendly Syrian factions across the country. Those include fighters from northwest and southern Syria trained in the original Pentagon program; Kurdish troops battling the Islamic State in northern and eastern Syria; and Arab tribal forces who military officials hope will eventually prove capable of encircling militants in their de facto capital of Raqqa.

U.S. forces in Syria, in northeast Syria far from government forces, are primarily advising and equipping local forces as they seek to recapture territory from the Islamic State.

At the same time, other U.S. personnel continue to train Syrian "enabler" forces at a slow clip outside Syria, at facilities in Jordan and Turkey.

Officials said that, with six months behind them in the revised training scheme, they are now looking at options to expand current training activities, potentially within or outside Syria. "We've had a couple of trials and we're going to look to continue to develop off of those," the first official said.

According to the second official, the goal is "to build up what has been working."

In April, President Obama announced a significant expansion to the U.S. Special Operations presence in Syria, a sign of increasing comfort with the small, vulnerable U.S. operation in a country whose government remains a foe. The following month, Gen. Joseph Votel, head of U.S. Central Command, made a visit to a training site in northern Syria.

The Pentagon initiative is separate from a CIA-led training program that has provided support to rebels battling forces loyal to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. This week, the New York Times and Al Jazeera reported that weapons destined for those rebels were diverted and sold on the black market.

Officials said the Pentagon is seeking to avoid similar problems in part by giving Syrian forces limited amounts of ammunition, equipping those units on an operation-by-operation basis. They also hope that having American personnel on the ground will provide a check on what happens to U.S.-provided weaponry.

"These are ... transactional relationships," the first official said. "We provide enough for them to accomplish the next objective."

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## **IRAQ/SYRIA**

### **4. Pentagon welcomes Fallujah recapture, looks north to Mosul**

Agence France-Presse, June 27 | Thomas Watkins

WASHINGTON -- The Pentagon on Monday welcomed the recapture of the Iraqi city of Fallujah from the Islamic State group, but warned of widespread booby traps and pockets of remaining jihadist resistance.

Iraqi forces seized the IS group's last positions in Fallujah on Sunday, establishing full control over one of the jihadists' most emblematic bastions after a month-long operation.

"The United States military and our coalition partners are proud to have supported the Iraqi Security Forces under the prime minister's command in this important operation," Pentagon chief Ashton Carter said in a statement congratulating Iraq Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi.

Iraqi forces will likely continue to meet pockets of resistance and have much dangerous work ahead as they clear homemade bombs -- known as IEDs -- from the city, officials cautioned.

"Not just vehicle-borne IEDs but these house-borne IEDs which are particularly nasty to try to clear," said Pentagon spokesman Captain Jeff Davis.

Carter added it was important the Iraqi government investigates alleged human rights abuses carried out by security forces against some civilians as they tried to flee the city.

The US-led anti-IS coalition's focus now shifts north, where the ultimate goal is to recapture Mosul, the jihadists' main Iraq stronghold.

The coalition is helping Iraqi troops move north from Baiji towards the town of Qayyarah, which lies around 35 miles (60 kilometers) south of Mosul on the banks of the Tigris river.

Abadi had already declared victory in Fallujah on June 17 after IS defenses collapsed, with Iraqi forces facing only limited resistance in subsequent clearing operations.

The fighting to get into Fallujah was initially fierce, particularly on the southern side, and Iraqi forces were supported by more than 100 US-led coalition air strikes.

"To some extent once (Iraqi troops) got through the hard candy shell and into the chewy center, things went much more quickly," Davis said.

"It was really a heavy fight along the frontline but once they penetrated in it seemed to go very quickly."

Davis said the recapture of Fallujah would "significantly" help the security situation in Baghdad, where IS fighters thought to have come from Fallujah have carried out a string of bomb attacks in recent weeks.

"The loss of Fallujah will further deny ISIL access to a province that is critically important to its overall goals," he said.

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## **5. Iraqi army closes in on Islamic State militants near Falluja**

Reuters, June 27 | Thayer al-Sudani and Ahmed Rasheed

FALLUJA, Iraq -- Iraq's army sought on Monday to eliminate Islamic State fighters holed up in farmland west of Falluja to keep them from launching a counterattack on the city, a day after the government declared victory over the militants there.

Backed by air strikes from a U.S.-led coalition, Iraqi artillery bombarded targets as its troops closed in on up to 150 insurgents in areas along the southern bank of the Euphrates River, an army officer participating in the operation said.

The government's recapture of Falluja, an hour's drive west of the capital, Baghdad, was part of a broader offensive against Islamic State militants, which seized large swaths of Iraq's north and west in 2014, but is now being driven back by an array of forces.

Falluja's recovery lent fresh momentum to the campaign to recapture Mosul, Iraq's second-largest city and the biggest anywhere within the jihadists' self-proclaimed caliphate. Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi has pledged to retake Mosul this year.

Colonel Ahmed al-Saidi, who participated in Monday's advance, said ground forces were moving cautiously to avoid triggering roadside bombs planted by Islamic State.

The holed-up militants "have two options: either they surrender or they get killed. We want to prevent them catching their breath and attacking our forces with car bombs," he said.

Saidi said radio intercepts suggested the militants were running out of ammunition and he expected them to fold shortly.

The insurgents earlier this month mounted limited resistance to Iraqi forces inside Falluja before scattering after some commanders abandoned the fight, according to Iraqi officials.

A Pentagon spokesman told reporters in Washington that while there were still pockets of resistance, Falluja had been cleared and was under the control of the Iraqi government.

Captain Jeff Davis said the U.S.-led coalition had carried out more than 100 air strikes on Falluja since the ground operation started.

"We certainly know that there will be significant challenges that they'll face as they go through and back clear and remove that city of booby traps, IEDs," Davis said, referring to improvised bombs.

U.S. Secretary of Defense Ash Carter, said in a statement that the Falluja operation had been "a significant challenge for the ISF and for the coalition", and the task of looking after the displaced residents of Falluja was still ahead.

"It is also essential to complete the investigations the government of Iraq has launched to address alleged abuses of civilians", Carter said.

The military's swift advance surprised many who anticipated a protracted battle for Falluja, a bastion of Sunni Muslim insurgency where some of the fiercest fighting of the U.S. occupation of Iraq took place in 2004 against Islamic State's forerunner, al Qaeda.

## ASSESSING THE DAMAGE

Falluja was seen as a launching pad for recent Islamic State bombings in and around the capital, and the military campaign was aimed in large part at denying the militants a safe haven nearby.

A suicide attack around midnight at a mosque in Abu Ghraib, roughly halfway between Falluja and Baghdad, killed at least 12 people and wounded 32 others. There was no immediate claim of responsibility.

Control of Falluja is now shared between the army, elite counter-terrorism forces and federal police. Some fighters from Shi'ite Muslim militias, which have held several outlying areas for months, are also present inside Falluja proper.

The army, along with local police, are expected to take full control in the coming days, a military source said.

Central districts of Falluja, which in January 2014 became the first Iraqi city to fall to Islamic State, were mostly quiet on Monday as bomb removal operations along roadways and in buildings began in earnest.

Military sources said the city had been heavily mined by Islamic State, but the extent of damage to infrastructure and property could not be assessed easily.

Dozens of buildings across the city have been set on fire, something government forces blamed mostly on fleeing militants. At least one building, a converted prison in Nazal district, was torched after Islamic State was pushed out.

In video published a week ago showing the cages where the militants had allegedly detained Iraqi security officials, the building appeared fully intact. When a Reuters team visited the same site on Monday, soot covered the floor and most rooms were stained black from smoke.

A spokesman for Iraq's federal police acknowledged the arson, but said his forces no longer controlled the area. He suggested the destruction was carried out by residents angry about their missing relatives, though most civilians had fled the city by the time the prison was discovered.

Some officials estimate that as little as 10 percent of Falluja had been destroyed, comparing that relatively favorably with Ramadi and Sinjar, cities recaptured from Islamic State last year but widely devastated in the process.

A spokesman for the governor of Anbar province, where Falluja is located, said the worst damage had occurred in the southern industrial district where Islamic State had assembled car bombs used in attacks in Baghdad.

More than 85,000 residents displaced by the fighting in the past month are waiting in government-run camps to return home; at least twice as many people fled Falluja during IS rule.

The World Food Program on Monday expressed alarm at "the extremely dire conditions" of civilians who have overwhelmed the capacity of aid groups.

*--Additional reporting by Stephen Kalin, Idrees Ali and Phil Stewart in Washington*

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## **6. Homes burned, looted in Iraqi city after defeat of militants**

Associated Press, June 27 | Susannah George

FALLUJAH, Iraq — Dozens of homes were looted and burned as Fallujah was liberated from the Islamic State group, and Iraqi government forces Monday accused the retreating militants. Some provincial police, however, blamed the fires on Shiite militias operating with the federal police.

The allegations of sectarian incidents in Fallujah are on a much smaller scale than those that unfolded in another Sunni-majority city, Tikrit, after government-sanctioned Shiite militias helped retake it from the IS group. The Iraqi government had sought to try to prevent similar abuses in the Fallujah campaign.

Iraqi forces declared Sunday they had "fully liberated" Fallujah from the Sunni-led extremist group that took over the city 40 miles (65 kilometers) west of Baghdad more than two years ago. The operation, backed by airstrikes from a U.S.-led coalition, began May 22, and involved a number of different Iraqi security forces: elite special operations troops, federal police, Anbar provincial police, and an umbrella group of government-approved mostly Shiite militias.

Thick clouds of black smoke billowed over the Julan neighborhood in northwestern Fallujah, one of the last strongholds of the militants, from dozens of burning homes.

Special forces Lt. Gen. Abdul Wahab al-Saadi who led the operation to retake the city, said IS militants had torched hundreds of houses in Fallujah's north and west as they fled Sunday, just as the fighters did in many other neighborhoods in the last five weeks.

But some commanders said many of the fires burning Monday were lit by Shiite militiamen operating with the federal police.

Cpl. Arsan Majid, an Anbar provincial policeman, said he saw men in federal police uniforms looting and burning dozens of homes. An Iraqi special forces soldier, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to brief reporters, confirmed Majid's account.

The Shiite militias largely had remained on Fallujah's outskirts during the operation while the special forces and federal police took the lead in clearing the center of the city. Fearing sectarian conflict, authorities did not want the militias inside the city that has long been a stronghold of Sunni opposition to the Shiite-led government in Baghdad.

However, small numbers of militia fighters entered the center of the city with Iraq's federal police forces, according to Iraqi commanders and Associated Press reporters at the scene.

Standing under a highway overpass Monday, a group of Iraqi troops argued over the cause of the smoke.

"It's impossible to know who lit those fires," one man yelled. He pointed down a street of opulent homes used by the militants as bases — all marked with IS graffiti and all completely charred by flames from the inside out.

In one home, melted curtains still hung in the windows and the bright periwinkle paint decorating the sitting room had blistered from the heat.

"Daesh did it, just like they did here," he said, using the Arabic acronym for the Islamic State group.

Majid, of the Anbar police, initially nodded his agreement in front of the group, but later, he whispered to a reporter that Shiite militias operating with the federal police were to blame.

"They destroyed 50 homes in a single day," he said out of earshot of the group of Iraqi army officers.

Special forces Cpl. Mohammad Hussein, stationed at a makeshift base in the city center, said his men arrested a half-dozen people who were caught looting. "They were just taking whatever they could find," he said.

Along the main east-west highway, dozens of minarets still rose above Fallujah's mostly squat homes and buildings. Known as "the city of mosques," almost all are still standing, but many have their intricate tile work chipped away by small arms fire and artillery.

At the Khalifa Mosque beside the central hospital, artillery fire punched a hole below one of its blue domes.

On the side of the road, a group of federal police gathered to slaughter a dozen sheep in celebration of Sunday's victory.

Standing above a pile of sheep carcasses, police officer Arkan Saker shrugged off allegations his forces were to blame for the fires burning on the far edge of the city.

"It's just people burning garbage," he said, "or it could be from a house booby-trapped with explosives."

The overall damage to Fallujah appears to be much lower than in Ramadi and Sinjar. In those areas, entire blocks were left largely uninhabitable by intense Iraqi and coalition airstrikes to clear territory and hundreds of planted bombs.



The U.N. estimates 85,000 people have fled Fallujah in the past month, and many are sheltering in hot, overcrowded camps in the middle of the desert as the Iraqi government is ill-prepared to deal with the humanitarian crisis.

U.S. State Department spokeswoman Elizabeth Trudeau said Washington "remained concerned about the humanitarian situation for Iraqis fleeing the fighting."

"However, we have seen significant progress by the U.N. and Iraqis in recent days to provide for the basic necessities of internally displaced persons," she said.

Majid, the policeman who also fought in Ramadi, said Fallujah was left in better shape, but acknowledged that the damage was still significant.

"Even this destruction could change how people feel about the government," he said.

"Imagine the people who will return here just to find their home burned," Majid added. "They will have to go back to the camps. It's terrible."

*--Associated Press writer Matthew Lee in Washington contributed*

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## **7. In Fallujah, an abandoned prison reveals life under ISIS**

Washington Post, June 28, Pg. A1 | Loveday Morris

FALLUJAH, Iraq - From the outside, there's not a lot that stands out about the three neighboring houses on this residential street in the Iraqi city of Fallujah.

One is grander than most, with two tall columns straddling its entrance. The others are unassuming and beige, like much of this city, which had been under the control of the Islamic State for the past 2 1/2 years.

But behind their front doors is a makeshift prison used by the militants to mete out their archaic punishments. It provides a harrowing window into the brutal rule of law that governed here before the city was retaken, a glimpse of its regime of executions, floggings and torture.

Home to many of the Islamic State's leaders, Fallujah was the first city to fall into the hands of the organization and was a hub for its operations in Iraq. The prison is just one of the remnants of their self-proclaimed caliphate that were left behind by the militants as they died or fled the city and that are now slowly being discovered, allowing Iraqi forces firsthand insight into the group's inner workings.

As they pick through buildings after steadily recapturing the city over the past month, they are gradually unearthing bombmaking factories, documents, weapons caches and jails like this one - many hidden in regular houses to avoid detection in airstrikes.

Col. Haitham Ghazi, an intelligence officer for the Iraqi police's emergency response division, also known as SWAT, indicates a room behind a barred door in one of the smaller buildings.

"You can feel the breath of the prisoners inside," he said.

The room, perhaps once a living room, is stifling, still thick with the rancid smell of the sweat of those who were incarcerated here.

It's dazzling daylight outside, but the windows are covered with sheets of metal. The little light that seeps through casts a glow over dozens of little bundles on the carpets - sheets, curtains and scraps of clothes bound together to make pillows. There are dozens, giving an indication of the number of prisoners who were once locked up here.

The hallway outside has been torched. Iraqi security forces say it was like that when they arrived, though pro-government forces appear to be setting some buildings on fire in Fallujah, a claim they deny.

Up a spiraling wrought-iron staircase, the rooms above still contain clothing and other possessions of the family that once lived here, belongings tossed across the floors and beds.

Papers found in the house show that many people were detained after disputes that Islamic State courts had arbitrated, said Ghazi, whose forces discovered the prison. Some were held for stealing, others for minor offenses such as smoking or violating the group's strict dress code.

Maj. Gen. Thamer Ismail, SWAT's top commander for the area, said Iraqi forces have found a "a treasure of information" on the group in Fallujah. From here, the Islamic State ordered car-bombing missions in Baghdad and operations as far away as Syria, he said.

His forces found another makeshift prison in Fallujah's Nazzal neighborhood, he said, but it is smaller than this one in the recently retaken Muallimin district.

"I'm sure there are many more," he said.

A hole in a garden wall outside that leads to the largest building allowed the jailers to move from house to house without venturing into the street, where they could have been exposed by observation from the air.

A steel sheet has been welded over the marbled entrance to the main greeting room, the first sign that this is no ordinary home. A prison door with steel bars allows access to it and another room that have been joined by a hole in a wall to make a large detention hall. Grills are drilled onto the windows. Blankets and curtains lie scattered on the floor, along with a few dates, which Iraqi security forces believe those held captive were fed. The halls here are airier, perhaps for prisoners accused of lesser infractions.

"There is worse to come," Ghazi said. "They have no humanity."

It's the third house that appears to have been kept for the worst punishments: solitary confinement and torture. A thick, black metal chain with a hook on the end hangs in the stairwell. It has a winch attached.

"They'd hang them here from their legs and beat them," Ghazi said. "And from this one," he said, pointing to another hanging hook on a metal cable.

In the upstairs bedrooms, solitary confinement cells had been erected. In one room, there are five cells - a few feet deep and about a foot-and-a-half wide. Their doors and walls are solid metal, with only holes in the top for ventilation.

"How could they even breathe in here in this heat?" Ghazi said. The room next door has five more cells; these are a little larger.

The prison was empty when his forces arrived, Ghazi said. He does not know what happened to most of those who were incarcerated, except for some who appear to have been summarily executed as Iraqi forces advanced.

In the school across the street, their corpses are not hard to find because of the smell of the rotting flesh. In a small courtyard, they lie in a tangled heap in a hole in the ground. There are at least seven bodies here, Ghazi said, adding that there may be other execution sites around the prison.

The bodies appear emaciated, and the skin is blackening as they lie decaying in the heat. Red blindfolds cover the eyes.

The body of one man in sweat pants and a ripped T-shirt is on top. His nostrils are flared, and a pair of scissor handles stick out from his open mouth, the blades plunged into his throat in a final act of barbarity by the jailers before they abandoned the building.

*--Mustafa Salim contributed to this report*

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## **MIDEAST**

### **8. Forty-two dead in Yemen suicide attacks claimed by Islamic State**

Agence France-Presse, June 27 | Fawaz al-Haidari

ADEN -- A wave of suicide bombings targeting Yemeni troops killed at least 42 people Monday in the southeastern city of Mukalla, officials said, in attacks claimed by the Islamic State group.

The capital of Hadramawt province, Mukalla had been under the control of Al-Qaeda for one year until pro-government troops backed by a Saudi-led coalition recaptured the city in April.

But IS claimed responsibility for the attacks, saying in a statement that eight of its suicide bombers killed 50 members of Yemen's security forces, according to US-based monitor SITE Intelligence Group.

The governor of the vast province, Ahmed Saeed bin Breyk, told AFP previously that Mukalla had "witnessed five suicide attacks in four areas".

Three simultaneous bombings hit security checkpoints in the coastal city at sunset, just as troops fasting during the holy Muslim month of Ramadan were breaking their fast, a security official said.

In the first attack, a suicide bomber on a motorbike asked soldiers if he could eat with them before blowing himself up, the official said.

Two other bombers approached soldiers on foot elsewhere in the city before detonating their explosives.

Shortly afterwards, two suicide bombers launched a fourth attack and blew themselves up at the entrance of an army camp, the official said.

In all, the attacks killed 40 soldiers as well as a woman and child who were passing by and wounded 37 other people, said Hadramawt's health chief Riad al-Jalili.

Al-Qaeda retains a strong presence in Mukalla, and the jihadists still control several towns in the interior valley of Wadi Hadramawt.

Last month, the Pentagon said a "very small number" of US military personnel had been deployed around Mukalla in support of pro-government forces.

The US Navy has several ships nearby, including an amphibious assault vessel, the USS Boxer, and two destroyers.

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, or AQAP, has been based in Yemen since 2009.

Both it and the IS group have exploited the power vacuum created by the conflict in the impoverished country to expand their presence in the south and southeast.

In May, a suicide bombing claimed by IS and a second blast killed 47 police in Mukalla -- a city of 200,000 people.

There has been no let-up in the longstanding US air war against AQAP, which it regards as the jihadist network's most dangerous.

US strikes have taken out a number of senior Al-Qaeda commanders in Yemen over the past year.

The US military said this month that it had killed six Al-Qaeda fighters in three separate strikes in central Yemen.

AQAP "remains a significant threat to the region, the United States and beyond," said US Central Command, which oversees military operations in the Middle East.

On June 16, CIA director John Brennan told the Senate Intelligence Committee AQAP had several thousand "adherents and fighters" while there are also "several hundred" fighters loyal to the IS group in the war-torn country.

In recent months, AQAP and IS militants have also claimed several attacks on government and coalition targets in second city Aden, where the government has its base.

The Saudi-led coalition intervened in Yemen in March 2015 in support of President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi against Shiite Huthi rebels who had seized the capital Sanaa and other areas.

But it later turned its firepower against jihadists impeding the government's bid to firm up its grip on southern areas recaptured from the rebels.

## 9. Trying to Mend One More Diplomatic Fence, Turkey Apologizes for Downing Russian Plane

New York Times, June 28, Pg. A4 | Sabrina Tavernise

ISTANBUL -- Turkey continued its diplomatic fence mending on Monday, apologizing for downing a Russian jet near its border with Syria last year.

In a letter to President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia on Monday, the same day Turkey announced a rapprochement with Israel, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan expressed regret about the November episode, in which Turkish forces shot down a Russian warplane that Turkey said had violated its airspace.

The downing infuriated Russia and paralyzed relations between the two countries: The Kremlin ordered sanctions on Turkish food imports, stopped visa-free travel for Turks and barred Turkish tour operators from offering Russian tourists vacation packages.

Mr. Erdogan has become isolated diplomatically after adopting an increasingly authoritarian stand, a combative position with Europe regarding the international migrant crisis, and a newly muscular foreign policy, including a failed strategy in Syria. The outreach on Monday can be viewed as an effort to repair some of that damage.

"Turkey had been going through a deep sense of isolation for the past few years, having switched from its famous 'zero problems with neighbors' policy to a place where they had no neighbors without problems," said Asli Aydintasbas, an expert at the European Council on Foreign Relations. "This was the loneliest point in the history of the republic -- Qatar and Saudi Arabia looking like the government's only real friends."

Under Mr. Erdogan, Turkey has tried to establish friendships with its Muslim neighbors, a shift from the past. But some experts argue that Turkey miscalculated, especially in Syria, where, until recently, it pushed for the ouster of President Bashar al-Assad. It has also opposed the United States there over Kurdish rebels fighting the Islamic State, and has been criticized for letting fighters pass freely across its border with Syria.

In the case of Russia, economics trumped political posturing, Ms. Aydintasbas said. Trade between the two countries had been substantially in Russia's favor, largely because it sells considerable amounts of oil and gas to Turkey. But Turkey also benefited: More than three million Russians visit each year, the second-largest group of foreign travelers after Germans, and their absence has taken a painful toll on Turkey's tourism industry.

In his letter to Mr. Putin, Mr. Erdogan said he "would like to inform the family of the deceased Russian pilot that I share their pain and to offer my condolences to them," according to a statement from Turkey's presidential spokesman, Ibrahim Kalin.

The effort to repair relations with Russia began the same day that Turkey and Israel announced an agreement to resume full diplomatic relations, ending a bitter six-year rift between the once-close regional allies. The two countries had fallen out over a 2010 Israeli military raid on a Turkish boat, the Mavi Marmara, which was bringing aid to Gaza. Ten Turkish activists were killed.

The deal provided an opening for lucrative natural gas projects: for Israel to sell natural gas reserves to Turkey, and via Turkey to Europe.

Louis Fishman, an assistant professor at Brooklyn College who specializes in Turkish-Israeli affairs, said that, for Turkey, the resumption of relations was "not merely about cutting a natural gas deal with Israel, which certainly tops its agenda, but also an attempt to regain regional clout."

Turkey also announced on Monday that it would prosecute a Turkish man suspected of killing the pilot of the Russian jet after his plane was shot down in November, Reuters reported. Russia had been demanding the prosecution of the man, Alparslan Celik, who was fighting in northern Syria at the time.

It is unclear why the reconciliation with Russia is happening now. Mr. Erdogan, a charismatic leader who has tapped into rising populism in Turkey, has grown increasingly autocratic, prompting criticism from liberals at home and from some allies abroad. Experts said he was trying to change his positions abroad in order to burnish his image and authority.

"At the core of the decision to mend ties with Israel and Russia is an existential need for survival," Ms. Aydintasbas said. Mr. Erdogan's Justice and Development Party is "the top vote-getter and has just won elections," she said, "but with a serious homegrown insurgency, a frail economy and a long list of foes, it is hard to rule a country."

Cengiz Candar, a visiting scholar at the Stockholm University Institute for Turkish Studies, said: "We're seeing the contours of Erdogan's pragmatism. Now they can say: 'See, we are improving our relations in our neighborhood. We're on the right track.'"

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## ASIA/PACIFIC

### 10. Taiwan 'to test-fire missiles in US' as China tensions rise

Agence France-Presse, June 27 | Laura Mannering

TAIPEI -- Taiwan plans to test-fire its newest anti-missile system for the first time in the United States next month as relations with rival China deteriorate, a defence source and media reports said Monday.

Relations between China and Taiwan have cooled rapidly under the island's new Beijing-sceptic president Tsai Ing-wen, who took office in May, ending an eight-year rapprochement.

The test of the US-made Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3) system will be launched at the White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico, in early July, a defence ministry source told AFP, in a move likely to irk Beijing even though it was arranged before Tsai took the helm.

According to the source, the test will be conducted in the US to avoid China collecting information about it, and due to space restrictions in Taiwan.

The American Institute in Taiwan, the de facto US embassy, would not comment on the test, which was also reported in Taiwan's Liberty Times newspaper.

Despite having no official diplomatic ties with Taipei after recognising Beijing in 1979, the US is still Taiwan's greatest ally and main arms supplier.

The missile system was purchased in 2008, well before Tsai's leadership, and the test was approved by the US last year, according to the Liberty Times.

Taiwan bought three earlier model PAC-2 systems in the 1990s and also tested them in the US. They were deployed in the densely populated greater Taipei area.

It then bought the new PAC-3 -- a system designed to intercept incoming ballistic missiles near the end of their trajectory -- as part of a \$6.5 billion arms sale by the US in 2008, which infuriated Beijing at the time.

The system is already partly operational and will shield Taipei, as well as central Taichung and southern Kaohsiung from any Chinese missile attacks, according to the defence ministry.

The Taiwanese missile unit involved in the July drill will fire two missiles to intercept a missile launched by the US military, which simulates an incoming Chinese ballistic missile, the Liberty Times reported.

Japan has also tested the PAC-3 on US soil.

In the latest setback for cross-strait ties, China said Sunday that communications with Taiwan had been suspended after the island's new government failed to acknowledge the concept that there is only "one China".

China still insists self-ruling Taiwan is part of its territory awaiting reunification, by force if necessary, even though the two sides split in 1949 after a civil war.

According to Taiwan's defence ministry there are 1,500 Chinese missiles aimed at the island.

China launched ballistic missiles into waters off Taiwan in 1995 and 1996 in an attempt to deter voters in the island's first democratic presidential elections.

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## **11. Chinese Warships Now Training with U.S. Carrier Strike Group**

U.S. Naval Institute News, June 27 | Sam LaGrone

Five ships from the People's Liberation Army Navy are training with a U.S. carrier strike group ahead of next month's Rim of the Pacific 2016 exercises, a Navy official confirmed to USNI News on Monday.

Last week the five ship PLAN flotilla linked up with the strike group – centered on carrier USS John C. Stennis (CVN-74) — met near Guam and steamed toward Hawaii ahead of July's international exercises.

According to a list of ships China intended to send to the exercise released by U.S. 3rd Fleet, the PLAN flotilla includes Type 052C guided missile destroyer Xi'an (153), Type 054A guided missile frigate Hengshui (572), fleet oiler Gaoyouhui, the hospital ship Peace Ark and the submarine logistics vessel Changxingdao.

The Stennis CSG includes one Ticonderoga-class guided missile cruiser and several Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyers and has mostly been operating in the South China Sea since April before heading to Hawaii.

While underway, the close to a dozen ships conducted low-intensity division tactics (DIVTACS) –ships maneuvering in large formations — the official said.

Secretary of Defense Ash Carter previewed the exercises earlier this month during the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore.

“In fact, the United States and China plan to sail together from Guam to Hawaii for RIMPAC, conducting several exercise events along the way, including an event to practice search-and-rescue,” Carter said in a speech on June 4.

Later in the speech, Carter used the example of the exercises and China’s participation in RIMPAC as proof the U.S. is looking to expand military to military cooperation with the PLA.

“America wants to expand military-to-military agreements with China to focus not only on risk reduction, but also on practical cooperation. Our two militaries can all also work together, bilaterally or as part of the principled security network, to meet a number of challenges – like terrorism and piracy – in the Asia-Pacific and around the world.”

While Beijing and Washington — and its allies — are at odds over territorial claims in the South China Sea, military to military relations between the PLA and the Pentagon have been largely good since 2014 when Chinese ships joined the multinational RIMPAC for the first time.

When asked by USNI News, U.S. Navy officials did not say if the PLAN had sent a signals and electronic intelligence spy ship along with the invited Chinese flotilla this year.

In 2014, along with five warships, the Chinese sent a Dongdiao-class auxiliary general intelligence (AGI) ship ships designed to gather electronic and communication data from surrounding vessels and aircraft that monitored the exercise.

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## **12. U.S., Japan, South Korea conducting first joint ballistic missile defense drill**

Stars and Stripes, June 28 | Wyatt Olson

FORT SHAFTER, Hawaii — The U.S., Japan and South Korea are conducting their first joint ballistic missile defense exercise in Hawaii that is aimed as much at fostering cooperation between the two Asian neighbors as preparing for a possible North Korean attack.

Participants of the Pacific Dragon exercise, which is expected to conclude Tuesday, include guided-missile destroyer USS John Paul Jones, destroyer USS Shoup and the Pacific Missile Range Facility on the island of Kauai, according to a Navy spokesman.

Naval vessels with the Japan Maritime Self Defense Force and South Korea Navy, in Hawaii for next month’s Rim of the Pacific exercise, are the other participants.

The Navy provided no further details. An official with the South Korea Ministry of National Defense told reporters Monday that among the three warships that South Korea sent to RIMPAC was the Aegis-equipped Sejong the Great destroyer.



Navy assets from the three countries will primarily share information that's needed to detect and track the launch of an enemy's missile, but the drill will not include actually firing interceptor missiles, the ministry official said.

Aegis is the Navy's primary anti-missile system, which is also used by South Korean and Japanese naval ships.

The antimissile drill slated for Tuesday is based on a hypothetical missile launch by North Korea, the ministry official said.

North Korea has conducted numerous missile tests this year. The most recent – and possibly most successful of its medium-range launches – came Wednesday when a Musudan missile flew about 800 miles high before coming down in the Sea of Japan.

The North has promised more missile tests, while at the same time trying to perfect a miniaturized nuclear weapon that could one day be mounted on such a missile.

Pacific Dragon is a positive step forward in the trilateral relationship, but it also underscores the chasm between Japan and South Korea, which have yet to move past territorial disputes and a history of war.

South Korea and Japan will not directly exchange information during the drill and will instead use the U.S. as a “middleman,” the South Korean ministry said.

James Hackett, a senior fellow at the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies, wrote earlier this month that it remains unclear whether this inaugural trilateral exercise will actually advance cooperative capability.

North Korea's missile developments appear to be an area suitable for real progress in this trilateral relationship, he said.

“After all, as well as the commonly perceived dangers from North Korean missile developments, there are some similarities in assets,” including Aegis and other anti-missile systems, he said.

But how much this year's Pacific Dragon will enhance missile-defense cooperation between the three countries depends a lot on the exercise program itself, particularly how much Japan and South Korea interact, he said.

Hackett noted that Defense Secretary Ash Carter has called it a “missile warning” exercise that is “designed to check the three countries' capacity to track ballistic missiles and share relevant information, involving their Aegis destroyers.”

And while that's a far cry from shooting down intercontinental test missiles, exercises such as Pacific Dragon that “incrementally develop trust and cooperation” might be what is needed at this stage, he said.

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### **13. U.S. confirms North Korea's Musudan missile reaches space**

Yonhap News Agency (South Korea), June 27 | Chang Jae-soon

WASHINGTON -- North Korea's Musudan intermediate-range ballistic missile reached space and then re-entered Earth's atmosphere in its sixth test attempt last week, a U.S. defense official confirmed Monday, saying the launch would be a success if Pyongyang had designed the test that way.

"We saw the missile launch. We saw it go up into space and come back down 250 miles away in the Sea of Japan. If that was their intent, then it was a success. But you'd have to ask them," Pentagon spokesman Capt. Jeff Davis told reporters.

"This might have been, but it's really their test and they knew what the parameters are and only they could say if it met those objectives or not," he said.

It was believed to be the first time the U.S. has confirmed the performance of the North's missile launch.

A day after Wednesday's test of the missile believed to be capable of reaching the U.S. territory of Guam, the North claimed success, saying the missile entered space before successfully re-entering the atmosphere and landing in targeted waters about 400 kilometers away.

The launch marks important progress in the North's missile program as re-entry technology has been considered one of the hardest obstacles the North must overcome before developing a nuclear-tipped intercontinental ballistic missile.

The latest test was the North's sixth attempt to test the missile in about two months beginning April 15. All but the sixth launch failed, with the missile exploding in midair or on a mobile launcher, or crashing seconds after launch.

"From our perspective ... it reminds us of the importance of our alliances with Japan and the Republic of Korea to ensure that we can adequately work together to defend against all kinds of missiles, not just these with an intermediate range, but the ones that could potentially threaten our homeland here," Davis said.

The test also underscored the "reason why we need to continue to put pressure on North Korea to abide by its U.N. Security Council resolutions, its obligations under U.N. Security Council resolutions, and to be a good neighbor in the region, which they're clearly not being," he said.

The official also stressed the U.S. is ready to counter the threats as it always tries to outpace them.

"Long before they ever tested this system, we were already doing things to make sure we are postured in the region. We have Aegis cooperation we do with Japan. We have TPY-2 radars in Japan. Long before they ever paraded out a KN-08, we had already put in ground-based interceptors in Alaska and Hawaii. We've got THAAD in Guam. We have things that we're doing. We're making sure we're outpacing this threat constantly," he said.

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## EUROPE

### 14. Brexit casts doubt over new EU and NATO defense strategy

Reuters, June 27 | Robin Emmott

BRUSSELS -- Britain's departure from the European Union risks undermining Europe's new defense strategy, days before NATO and EU governments sign a landmark pact to confront a range of threats from Russia to the Mediterranean, officials say.

The European Union and the United States plan to use two separate EU and NATO summits in the coming days to push reforms of the West's two main security pillars, aimed at reducing Europe's reliance on Washington in its own neighborhood.

"Things are going to be a lot harder," said a senior Western defense official involved in EU-NATO cooperation. "NATO planned on linking itself up to a stronger European Union, not being the default option for a weakened, divided bloc."

Facing a more aggressive Russia, a migrant crisis and failing states on its borders, the European Union needs to "act autonomously if and when necessary", EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini will tell EU leaders on Tuesday as she unveils a five-year global strategy plan seen by Reuters.

That symbolic step, which urges governments to coordinate defense spending, has strong support from Germany and France. But it could look hollow without Britain, which has the largest military budget in the EU, diplomats say.

One of five EU countries with the resources to command an overseas military mission for the bloc, Britain has been a big contributor to EU-led operations, paying about 15 percent of the costs and providing assets.

Britain also leads the EU's counter-piracy "Operation Atalanta" mission off the Horn of Africa, has ships patrolling the Mediterranean and is committed to providing troops for EU battle groups, although they have never been deployed.

Mogherini's proposals to EU leaders will include a call for EU-led missions to work with a new EU border guard to control migrant flows. That could be harder without British ships.

"What Britain does matters," said NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg. "Britain is the biggest security provider in Europe."

But fearing plans for an EU army, Britain has resisted closer European defense cooperation. British Defence Secretary Michael Fallon told Reuters this month: "Nobody wants to see their troops controlled from Brussels."

Some hope that, without London blocking EU plans, France and Germany could lead what Berlin calls a "common defense union" to develop and share assets. France has pushed the idea of an EU military headquarters, independent of NATO, to run missions.

NO "LITTLE ENGLAND"

After financial crises that have cut defense spending and Russia's annexation of Ukraine's Crimea, EU governments have said they will do more to guarantee their own security and cannot rely on the United States indefinitely.

As part of that, NATO and the European Union will cement their growing cooperation from the Baltics to the Aegean at a NATO summit in Warsaw in July. At the EU level, governments are discussing a common defense fund to pool resources to develop helicopters, drones, ships and satellites.

Until Britain's referendum vote to leave the EU, the United States had been looking to Britain, its main ally in Europe, to act as a bridge between NATO and the EU in the process.

That was designed to allow Washington to focus on other worries, including a resurgent Taliban in Afghanistan and China's militarization of islands in the South China Sea.

Such concerns were underscored by U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry on Monday, who flew to Brussels to meet Mogherini and Stoltenberg.

"The United States cares about a strong EU," Kerry said.

Immediately after Britain's referendum last week, Stoltenberg said Britain had assured him it remained committed to upholding Western stability.

Stoltenberg said Britain's Fallon had told him London would not jeopardize joint EU-NATO efforts to counter potential Russian cyber attacks, joint naval operations in the Mediterranean to stem an influx of migrants into Europe or plans to soon begin enforcing a U.N. arms embargo on Libya.

Britain could also join EU missions, even outside the bloc, as Canada and non-EU member Norway have done, although it would not be able to shape long-term strategy.

For now, the United States' focus appears to be urging Britain to take an even bigger role in NATO and avoid isolation. The alliance's summit in Warsaw will be London's first chance to reaffirm its Atlanticist credentials.

"NATO becomes even more important to keep Britain engaged internationally," the senior Western official said. "We don't want Britain to become a Little England."

*--Additional reporting by Paul Taylor*

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## **15. U.S. Looks to Shore Up Its Allies**

Wall Street Journal, June 28, Pg. A7 | Carol E. Lee

WASHINGTON -- The U.K.'s decision to leave the European Union dramatically expands the portfolio of foreign-policy challenges the next U.S. president will inherit, complicating critical decisions to address instability across the globe.

President Barack Obama is unexpectedly embarking on a high-stakes effort during his last months in office to work out what a senior administration official called "alternative pathways" for Europe, an effort that accelerates during a trip to Poland next week.

But given the scant time remaining, it is Mr. Obama's successor who will have to navigate the new dynamic there while also managing a confluence of crises from Syria and Islamic State to relations with Russia and China.

"The next president is going to inherit a world in considerable disarray, and Brexit, the uncertainty about the EU and the uncertainty about the future in the United Kingdom is just going to add to it," said Richard Haass, president of the Council on Foreign Relations, a think tank.

The White House is urging a slow process for the U.K.'s exit from the EU while also pressing the bloc's 27 other members to address the concerns that led to last week's referendum and risks prompting a cascade of similar votes across the continent.

Administration officials say the impact on U.S. foreign policy depends heavily on the pace of separation. They would prefer that the U.K. not officially start the process until October, as Prime Minister David Cameron has signaled, and that the exit play out over two years, as expected, or more.

Mr. Obama will meet with the leaders of the European Commission and European Council—two EU institutions—during a trip to Warsaw next week for a North Atlantic Treaty Organization summit.

They will discuss "alternative pathways for the EU to respond to the message that was sent by British voters and the broader dissent across European electorates," the senior administration official said.

As part of those discussions, Mr. Obama will encourage EU leaders to show "greater flexibility" on the economy to reduce unemployment and stimulate growth and to further address the migrant crisis, the official said.

He'll also discuss potential changes to EU competences and ways to improve communication between elites and the public.

One option under discussion in Warsaw will be the creation of a joint NATO-EU commission that would give the U.S. a seat at the table when EU security issues are discussed, U.S. officials said.

"There are initiatives that will be embraced in Warsaw that have to do with NATO-EU cooperation on multiple fronts," the senior administration official said. "The trend line moving forward will be more and more cooperation between NATO and the EU."

Another issue that could be affected during Mr. Obama's remaining time in office is trade. Mr. Obama has negotiated for several years with Europe on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, or TTIP, and said in April that the window to strike a deal would soon close.

White House spokesman Eric Schultz said Monday that Mr. Obama plans to press ahead with negotiations to complete TTIP this year. He added that Britain could have to negotiate a separate trade agreement from "a different starting point."

Secretary of State John Kerry said in Brussels on Monday that the U.S. will "do everything in our power to make this transitional process as sensible and as smooth as it can be."

While U.S. officials say a slower process may soften the blow, the exit from the EU of a country as significant as the U.K. will have a lasting impact on American foreign policy.

"Everything we do in the world will be made a little bit harder if one of our top allies is coping with economic instability and slower growth, renegotiating its relationship with the EU, and conceivably disintegrating as Scotland looks to separate and join the EU and Northern Ireland worries about getting cut out," said Philip Gordon, who was assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian affairs during Mr. Obama's first term.

"And to the extent that U.K. is with us," Mr. Gordon said, "it won't have a seat at the table where the EU makes critical decisions that affect the U.S."

The U.S. dynamic with Europe had taken on new complexities in the year before the U.K. referendum, with terrorism concerns and a migration crisis eclipsing the economic issues that dominated relations for much of Mr. Obama's time in office.

Julianne Smith, a former director of European policy at the Defense Department and adviser on national-security issues to Vice President Joe Biden, said the U.K.'s departure diminishes any hope of a trans-Atlantic effort to address global challenges during what she said will be "a pretty ugly two years."

"We're going to have a very distracted Europe and because of that it's going to be hard for the next U.S. president to ask Europeans to double down on helping us resolve crises," Ms. Smith said. "Basically anything that you look at—whether it's the resurgent Russia or Syria or Iran or the South China or East China Sea—it's a very different dynamic now."

Mr. Obama's efforts over the next several months are intended to leave whoever wins in November with a plan in place that leaves the U.S. as unscathed as possible.

Richard Morningstar, a former U.S. ambassador to the EU now at the Atlantic Council, said the U.S. will be a trusted interlocutor as negotiations on a host of issues unfold.

"We can't make decisions for either Britain or the EU, but as close confidants of both we can help to influence constructive discussions to ease the uncertainty and serious concerns that have arisen," he said.

Another former diplomat suggested Mr. Obama add London and Brussels to his trip next week, which takes him to Poland and Spain.

"He should make a bigger, more important effort and really emphasize that while we are engaged in the Middle East and while we are engaged in Asia as we rebalance, what happens in Europe is fundamental to our foreign policy and our security policy," said Ivo Daalder, who was U.S. representative to NATO and is now president of the Chicago Council on Global Affairs.

*--Felicia Schwartz and Jay Solomon contributed to this article*

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## **16. Kerry Offers Assistance to Ease the EU's Transition**

Wall Street Journal, June 28, Pg. A7 | Laurence Norman

BRUSSELS -- The U.S. will do everything it can to smooth the transition in the European Union following Britain's vote to leave the bloc, Secretary of State John Kerry said Monday, as he called on European leaders to react calmly to the U.K.'s decision.

Speaking in Brussels alongside the European Union's foreign policy chief, Federica Mogherini, Mr. Kerry acknowledged the British decision threw up challenges and would have "consequences."

However, he said, "there are ways to make certain that we are trying to chart out a path for the future that actually strengthens the EU and serves the interests and values" that unite the U.S. and Europe.

Mr. Kerry said it is "absolutely essential" in the period ahead that "people don't start ginning up scatterbrained or revengeful" stances following Britain's vote. "It is my intention...to do everything in our power to make this transitional process as sensible and smooth as it can be," he said.

Mr. Kerry said the U.S. wants to see a "strong EU" and that it will act to maintain its "special relationship" with the U.K. He later went to London to meet with U.K. Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond.

In her remarks, Ms. Mogherini said the EU's partnership with the U.S. "stays strong and crucial not only for the benefit of our people but also for peace and security in the world." She said Mr. Kerry will join EU foreign ministers for a July 18 meeting in Brussels.

"It is important for us to keep our U.S. friends... completely informed of all the procedures and consequences where we are and where we are going and... somehow walk this moment... hand-in-hand, as friends do."

Among U.S. concerns is how the fallout from the vote will affect the U.K.'s role in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and how a U.K. exit would affect the bloc's positions on international issues like sanctions against Russia and trade talks with the U.S.

Ms. Mogherini will present on Tuesday a new EU strategic review of foreign and security policy, which will underline the bloc's commitment to work with the U.S. and NATO but also aims to give the bloc the military and defense resources to act independently in the world. The U.K. has long pushed Europe to continue to pool its defense resources through NATO.

After traveling to London, Mr. Kerry reiterated that leaders have the responsibility to make "wise choices" in the days ahead, he said.

Any overreaction by either side that might prove harmful to both should be avoided, he said. "I have a sneaking suspicion the penalty is going to be felt far and wide, and I don't think that's good for anybody," he said.

Mr. Kerry said the coming U.K.-EU talks on the exit will be a "difficult needle to thread," but he declined to offer any detailed advice on how negotiations should be handled.

Mr. Hammond, the U.K. foreign secretary, met with Kerry and told reporters the U.K. and the EU had become heavily interdependent and would be poorer if there was no cooperation. He said he hoped there would be an

amicable and calm discussion but acknowledged that "the wound is quite raw...it will take some time for the wound to settle down."

"I understand the reaction of some of our European Union partners because there is a genuine fear about the contagion that would arise from the result of this referendum," he said.

As a country that runs a massive balance of payments deficit with its EU neighbors, "we're saying we want to keep these arrangements, we want to keep this market open, we want to carry on trading with you as we have been doing before," Mr. Hammond said, adding that he hoped economic common sense prevailed.

Mr. Kerry, during his Brussels visit, went to NATO headquarters for a meeting with Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg. Mr. Kerry said ahead of the meeting that the British vote wouldn't change either the U.K.'s engagement with NATO or the European Union's work with the alliance.

"We have high expectations of a very strong NATO meeting and the important deliverables that will not change one iota as a consequence of the vote that has taken place," he said.

Mr. Stoltenberg said that a summit next month in Warsaw will be important to strengthen NATO "especially after the U.K. decided to leave the European Union."

Mr. Stoltenberg has been pushing for more cooperation between NATO and the EU, including work on cyberattacks and so-called hybrid threats, such as the tactics used by Russia in Crimea.

"Cooperation between NATO and the European Union has always been important, but it's even more important now after the decision of the United Kingdom," Mr. Stoltenberg said.

*--Julian Barnes and Nicholas Winning contributed to this article*

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## **AFGHANISTAN/PAKISTAN**

### **17. Kabul to investigate child sex slavery fuelling insider attacks**

Agence France-Presse, June 28 | Anuj Chopra

KABUL -- Afghanistan's president has ordered a "thorough investigation" into institutionalised sexual abuse of children by police, after AFP revealed the Taliban are using child sex slaves to launch deadly insider attacks.

There has been international condemnation of paedophilic "bacha bazi" -- literally "boy play" -- which AFP found has been exploited by the Taliban to mount a series of Trojan Horse attacks over two years that have killed hundreds of policemen in the remote southern province of Uruzgan.

"The president has ordered a thorough investigation (in Uruzgan) and immediate action based on findings of the investigation," the presidential palace said of Ashraf Ghani in a statement.

"Anyone, regardless of rank within the forces, found guilty will be prosecuted and punished in accordance and in full compliance of the Afghan laws and our international obligations," the English language statement said.



The ancient custom of bacha bazi, one of the country's worst human rights violations, sees young boys -- sometimes dressed as women -- recruited to police outposts for sexual companionship and to bear arms.

It is deeply entrenched in Uruzgan, where police commanders, judges, government officials and survivors of such attacks told AFP that the Taliban are recruiting bacha bazi victims to attack their abusers.

The claims -- strongly denied by the Taliban -- expose child abuse by both parties in Afghanistan's worsening conflict.

The presidential statement said there was "no place" in the Afghan establishment for abusers, adding it will do "whatever it takes" to punish them.

The announcement follows a flurry of international reaction to AFP's report.

"We strongly condemn any abuses of the horrific nature described in the article," the US embassy in Kabul said.

"We urge the Afghan government... to protect and support victims and their families, while also strongly encouraging justice and accountability under Afghan law for offenders."

In a letter last week to US Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter, Congressman Duncan Hunter demanded a proactive American role to end bacha bazi in Afghan forces.

"I remain concerned... that the Taliban is increasing its use of children to access security positions and mount insider attacks against... Afghan police," Hunter said in the letter seen by AFP.

"It is my belief that we can begin taking immediate steps to stop child rape from occurring in the presence of US forces and reduce any risk of coinciding insider attacks. This includes imposing a zero-tolerance policy."

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) said bacha bazi is of "high concern" for the international community.

"UNAMA continues to receive anecdotal reports of bacha bazi, including within Afghan security forces, and continues its engagement with government to ensure the criminalisation and prevention of all forms of exploitation and abuse of children," Mark Bowden, the UN deputy special representative for Afghanistan, told AFP.

The Afghan government announcement, which did not specify a timeframe for the investigation, comes ahead of two crucial donor conferences on Afghanistan in Warsaw and Brussels this year.

The war-battered country remains heavily dependent on international financial and military assistance, which helps sustain security forces -- including police.

Any perception of apathy about bacha bazi risks jeopardising that assistance, said Michael Kugelman, an analyst at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington.

"No donor in good conscience can justify funding police forces that engage in such reprehensible practices," Kugelman told AFP.

"There's already much talk of donor fatigue, but as donors hear more about bacha bazi, there's bound to be donor fear as well - fear of bankrolling institutions that do morally reprehensible things."

The Afghan interior ministry has said it is committed to institutional reforms, while acknowledging that bacha bazi within police ranks is a "serious crime".

The government last year launched a probe into sexual abuse and the illegal recruitment of child conscripts around Afghanistan.

But the country has yet to pass legislation criminalising bacha bazi and no initiatives have been publicly announced to rescue any children enslaved by police.

"The absence of any initiatives to release and recover children from their abusers is a serious failure on the part of Afghan authorities," Charu Lata Hogg, an associate fellow at London-based Chatham House think tank, told AFP, adding that donors must pressure Kabul for change.

"Abuse of children cannot be passed off as cultural practice."

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## **18. Former Afghan warlord scuttles peace deal with Kabul**

Associated Press, June 27 | Kathy Gannon

ISLAMABAD — A former Afghan warlord announced Monday that a much-touted peace deal between his militant group and the Kabul government was effectively "dead."

The comments by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar came after the armed wing of his Hezb-i-Islami party effectively scuttled the deal, drafted weeks ago, with new demands. Hekmatyar called Afghanistan's government illegal and said he would not recognize it.

In his lengthy diatribe against the Kabul government in the Daily Shahdat magazine belonging to his group, Hekmatyar said the Afghan administration negotiated in bad faith and made demands it could not meet.

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani's government had hoped an agreement with Hekmatyar would be an incentive for other insurgent groups to come to the negotiating table.

But in recent weeks, Hezb-i-Islami made additional, impossible-to-meet conditions, including the scrapping of Kabul's current security pact with the United States and a public timetable for the withdrawal of international forces from Afghanistan.

Hekmatyar, writing under his pen name Haqpal, said Afghan government negotiators called the security pact with the United States "a red line that we cannot cross."

Hekmatyar said only a handful of his group's demands were met in the draft agreement, yet last month when his representatives left Kabul they said they had a final deal that needed only Hekmatyar's signature. Instead Hekmatyar returned the agreement with the additional demands.

He sent the revised deal in a letter his son was to deliver to Ghani. In that letter, Hekmatyar made his demands and said further negotiations should be restricted to the two leaders. His proposals were rejected.

Hekmatyar's military strength pales in comparison to the Taliban and is largely limited to the east and northeast of the country. Hekmatyar also has differences with the Taliban and his fighters have clashed with them on several occasions in eastern Afghanistan.

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## **AFRICA**

### **19. Study: Militant Islamist attacks in Africa growing**

TheHill.com, June 27 | Kristina Wong

The number of militant Islamist attacks in Africa has more than quadrupled in just the past six years, according to new research published Monday.

Militant Islamist attacks grew from just 171 across Africa in 2009, to 738 attacks in 2015, according to new analysis by IHS Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Centre.

Deaths from the attacks have grown from 541 in 2009 to 4,600 fatalities — an increase of more than 750 percent.

Experts say there are three new trends causing this rise: Collaboration between Boko Haram and the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS); competition between al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and ISIS for territory and recruits; and the continuing resilience of al Qaeda's Somalia branch, al-Shabab.

Since Boko Haram pledged allegiance to ISIS in March 2015, there has been an increase in the number and lethality of suicide bombings in Nigeria and neighboring countries, said Matthew Henman, head of the Terrorism and Insurgency Centre.

"The punitive nature of such violence and the calculatedly shocking use of young females as suicide bombers echoed key tactical and operational practices of the Islamic State," he said.

He also said the Nigerian terrorist group's propaganda immediately grew more sophisticated to match ISIS's.

Henman also said there are multiple indications that ISIS has created links between its affiliates in Libya and West Africa and has sought to exploit longstanding smuggling routes through the Sahel between North and West Africa.

At the same time, Henman said a "revitalized" AQIM is seeking to outdo ISIS in West Africa, which could see violence spread to Senegal and Ghana.

"The increased competition between the Islamic State and AQIM raises terrorism risks in West Africa and indicates that attack numbers are unfortunately likely to rise in the six month outlook," Henman said.

“There is also a growing risk of further attacks in countries that have not previously been the target of militant Islamist violence, particularly Senegal and Ghana,” he added.

Meanwhile, al-Shabab has expanded its capabilities over 2015 and 2016 and has increasingly begun attacking and overrunning African Union Mission in Somalia peacekeeper bases and inflicting substantial casualties, the research said.

In May, U.S. forces called in an air strike after Ugandan soldiers they were advising as part of the African Union mission got into a firefight with about 15 to 20 al-Shabab fighters. The airstrike killed five al-Shabab fighters, according to the Pentagon.

The United States has about 50 military personnel inside Somalia and has repeatedly targeted the group and its leaders in recent months.

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## **20. Boko Haram Fighters Prey on Niger After Fleeing Bases in Nigeria**

Bloomberg, June 28 | Olivier Monnier

ABIDJAN -- Driven from its stronghold in northeastern Nigeria, the Islamist militant group Boko Haram is targeting the world's least developed country: Niger.

The Nigeria-based militants stepped up attacks in southeastern Niger this month, raiding villages for food and cattle and attacking the town of Bosso, near Lake Chad, to steal weapons. A looting spree in villages near the lake on June 21 was the latest in a string of raids that have left more than 40 people dead.

"Boko Haram is on the defensive and trying to replenish their reserves," Vincent Foucher, a political analyst at the Brussels-based International Crisis Group, said by phone from Senegal. The organization is facing "a regional response that's become much more coherent."

Fishing and farming in the fertile Lake Chad region have almost ground to a halt, causing hunger among the 280,000 people who have sought refuge in the area. The United Nations said it has received less than a third of the \$112 million needed to alleviate the crisis. Even if Boko Haram's first incursion into Niger dates from early last year, attacks were more sporadic and mainly targeted the military.

"It's been three years since Niger has been affected, but it's now that we really see the magnitude of the crisis," Benoit Moreno, a spokesman for the UN refugee agency, said by phone. "The economy is in complete disorder."

About 50,000 people fled after the June 3 attack on Bosso, which left 26 soldiers dead and scores of houses burnt to the ground. The town was a target because the army was stocking military equipment in preparation of an offensive against Boko Haram, according to Niger's government. The uranium producer ranks last in the United Nations Human Development Index out of 188 nations surveyed last year.

The scale of the attack prompted President Mahamadou Issoufou to fly to Chad for talks with his counterpart Idriss Deby, whose army plays a key role in a regional task force set up to combat the group. Nigeria intensified its military offensive against Boko Haram after President Muhammadu Buhari took office last year, triggering a

spillover of violence into Cameroon, Niger and Chad that prompted regional heads of state to join forces. The U.S. and France provide drones and intelligence.

"Countries in the region that used to be suspicious of each other, harbor frustration toward each other, they finally understood that they needed to collaborate on this issue," Foucher said. "That's been one of the biggest changes."

Cameroon and Nigeria increased joint patrols following a series of bombings in villages in Cameroon's Far North region earlier this year. Most bombings were carried out by teenagers with explosives strapped to their bodies and occurred in crowded places, prompting authorities to close local markets.

Cameroon said last month that its troops, together with Nigerian soldiers, destroyed Boko Haram training camps and captured a prominent commander during a raid in Nigeria. The strengthened cooperation between Nigeria and Cameroon has probably pushed Boko Haram to attack Niger, according to Verner Ayukegba, an analyst for Sub-Saharan Africa at IHS Country Risk, in an e-mailed note.

Attacks in Cameroon haven't subsided completely after suspected Boko Haram militants killed at least four civilians in fatal incursions on June 24.

The most effective way to quash the group will be by fighting them in Nigeria, where they're based, Niger's defense minister, Hassoumi Massaoudou, said this month.

"We thought that they were reduced to suicide attacks," Massaoudou told Radio France Internationale. "We now see that we were wrong. They've rebuilt their military force."

--With assistance from Divine Ntaryike Jr.

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## ARMY

### **21. Sweaty Soldiers Plead for Right to Keep Arms Bare**

#### ***Long sleeves granted leave from Army's Fort Hood; Rollback time?***

Wall Street Journal (A-Hed), June 28, Pg. A1 | Paul Sonne

Army Specialist Cortne Mitchell, originally from Staten Island, N.Y., moved to Texas for his assignment at Fort Hood and learned the meaning of hot.

Spc. Mitchell and his fellow petroleum-supply specialists labor in summer temperatures that can hover around 100 degrees. Humidity can reach 90%.

Maybe it was the heat. Maybe it was the humidity. But the transplanted New Yorker and his colleagues had a vision: If they could only roll up their sleeves.

"It has always been a conversation amongst me and my buddies," Spc. Mitchell said. "How nice it would be."

When top Army officials visited Fort Hood this month, Spc. Mitchell saw his chance. He raised his hand at a question-and-answer session and suggested a summer uniform.

"What do you want, shorts?" Spc. Mitchell recalled the official saying.

No, he said, but what about rolling up sleeves? Army Chief of Staff Gen. Mark Milley met with Spc. Mitchell and agreed. The service declared Fort Hood would begin a 10-day trial "to evaluate the practicality of sleeve-rolling across the Army."

Spc. Mitchell rolled up and rejoiced.

The 10-day trial ends Monday, and Gen. Milley will decide two main things. First, should sleeve-rolling be allowed Army-wide. And, if so, how and when soldiers' sleeves should be rolled up. One idea is to follow daylight savings.

"I've been getting a lot of calls from my friends," Spc. Mitchell said. "They just say, 'Thank you,' and stuff."

For years, members of the Air Force, Navy and Coast Guard have enjoyed the privilege of rolled sleeves in accordance, of course, with uniform protocols and permission from commanders.

The Air Force, for example, allows airmen in battle-dress uniform to roll sleeves only when authorized by commanders. The rolled sleeve must rest "at, or within 1 inch of, the forearm when the arm is bent at a 90-degree angle."

Sailors have their own regimen. "Sleeves may be worn rolled up as directed by appropriate authority," the guide to the Navy working uniform reads, dictating a 3-inch-wide sleeve band. "The termination point of the roll is approximately 2 inches above the elbow. This manner of sleeve roll presents a short sleeve appearance and facilitates expeditious de-rolling and fastening during emergent situations."

The Coast Guard, meanwhile, rolls its sleeves in "accordion fashion." In 2014, the Marines permitted sleeve-rolling after a yearslong prohibition of the practice, prompting widespread elation.

The Army, though, kept a ban on sleeve-rolling that accompanied the introduction of a new uniform in the mid 2000s. At the time, the war in Iraq had begun, and troops kept sleeves down anyway for protection in combat.

"We said that since we're in the field, and we're training all the time and we'll be in conflict, we just made a conscious decision not to roll sleeves for that period," Sergeant Major of the Army Daniel Dailey said.

The 10-day sleeves-up trial at Fort Hood has drawn some attention. Some soldiers at the base have shown off their bare arms on social media, prompting envy among soldiers elsewhere.

"I personally haven't rolled my sleeves up, so I can't tell you personally how it feels," Capt. Matthew Castiglione said. He nonetheless approves of the idea. The soldiers under his command at Fort Hood have taken advantage of the change, he said, and as mechanics working outdoors, they are thankful.

There also are holdouts. "My personal opinion is that it looks very tacky in this new uniform," Sgt. First Class Jye Green said.

The unit looks unprofessional when some soldiers have their sleeves rolled up and others don't, Sgt. Green said. "I think everyone is kind of shocked," he said, adding that he won't roll up his own sleeves "unless I'm forced to."

About 10% of the thousands of soldiers who responded to a poll by the Army Times disapproved of rolled sleeves, said Sgt. Maj. Dailey.

"Everybody has their personal biases," he said. "We expect that of soldiers. They're humans."

Gen. Milley will issue a directive as soon as this week based on survey data, as well as the Fort Hood experience and feedback from across the Army.

Spc. Mitchell is confident the Army will roll out the change for all soldiers.

The victory may be harder to savor in his next assignment. He is heading to Fort Drum in upstate New York, where soldiers train for arctic warfare.

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## **22. Why his Medal of Honor was denied**

### ***Probe into war hero's lesser award reveals subjectivity in bestowal***

Washington Post, June 28, Pg. A17 | Dan Lamothe

Army Sgt. 1st Class Earl D. Plumlee had just taken a photograph with other members of his unit when an enormous explosion shook his base in Afghanistan. The elite Special Forces soldiers didn't know it yet, but Taliban militants had detonated a 400-pound car bomb and were about to start pouring through a hole in the installation's exterior wall.

The ensuing battle on Aug. 28, 2013, caused the death of Army Staff Sgt. Michael Ollis, 24, and the wounding of several coalition service members and spurred a sharp debate: If the top battlefield commanders in Afghanistan at the time all recommended that Plumlee receive the nation's top award for valor in combat, why did the Army last year ultimately award him the Silver Star, a decoration considered two levels lower?

The issue would lead Defense Secretary Ashton B. Carter and Rep. Duncan D. Hunter (R-Calif.) to request a Defense Department inspector general investigation to determine what happened. The investigation concluded in May that the Army broke no rules in downgrading Plumlee's award but raised new questions about the subjectivity under which decorations for valor are awarded.

Plumlee, speaking in his first interview since the controversy erupted, said that "it seems kind of odd" how the situation unfolded but that he does not "lie awake every night burning up with anger" about it. Rather, he wonders whether his case is emblematic of a military awards system whose intricacies and fickle nature have long been questioned by rank-and-file service members and veterans.

"I kind of have mixed emotions about it," Plumlee said. "I kind of have a lot of trust in the system, but if somebody says it's broken, maybe it is. But I'm always leery of decisions like this getting reversed."

Plumlee, now deployed to Okinawa, Japan, with a battalion of Green Berets from the 1st Special Forces Group, described the battle in detail. It occurred on Forward Operating Base Ghazni, a major coalition base at the time

about 85 miles southwest of Kabul. He served on a Special Forces team that did not typically see combat and instead supported other Green Beret units in Afghanistan.

That changed after the car bomb detonated, Plumlee said. He and other soldiers, including Sgt. 1st Class Andrew Busic and Sgt. 1st Class Nate Abkemeier, hustled toward the site of the explosion in a Toyota Tacoma pickup truck.

Plumlee, in the front passenger seat, was carrying a sniper rifle and a handgun, he said. Their vehicle began taking rocket, recoilless rifle and small-arms fire from a three-story hotel outside the base, but they pressed on and came across what they thought were Afghan soldiers. Plumlee was about to jump out of the truck and try to organize them to fight, but learned that the men were actually insurgents when they, too, opened fire on the pickup.

Plumlee exited the vehicle because his .308-caliber MK 20 sniper rifle was too long to maneuver from inside and quickly found himself in a battle taking fire from no more than a few dozen yards away.

Meanwhile, two other service members nearby, Army Chief Warrant Officer 3 Mark Colbert and a service member whom Plumlee declined to identify, also were shot.

Another insurgent denoted his vest, mortally wounding Ollis while he shielded a Polish officer, Lt. Karol Cierpica, from the blast.

Several service members have been decorated for valor in the battle, with Ollis posthumously receiving the Silver Star and Colbert and Busic also receiving one. Abkemeier, Plumlee's driver, received a Bronze Star with "V" device, one level below the Silver Star.

Plumlee said the "bitter reaction" from some of his friends to seeing his own award reduced to the Silver Star "stole some of the thunder off of it." He framed his written endorsements for the Medal of Honor from senior commanders in Afghanistan at the time, including Marine Gen. Joseph F. Dunford Jr., now the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Gen. Mark A. Milley, now the Army's top officer.

The inspector general investigation found that an Army awards board recommended the Silver Star and that one of three voting members said his decision came down to Plumlee being a seasoned combat veteran, rather than a young soldier. The investigation did not address why a Distinguished Service Cross, one level below the Medal of Honor, was not selected.

"Nobody I think would say definitively that this guy has to get a Medal of Honor," Plumlee said of his own actions. "I think there are plenty of Medal of Honor recipients out there whose actions surpassed mine. But I think a downgrade to the Distinguished Service Cross wouldn't have got everyone stirred up. It just fed into 800 different conspiracy theories about why I didn't get it and why it had to be downgraded twice."

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## MARINE CORPS

### **23. The Marines will remove the word 'man' from these 19 job titles**

MarineCorpsTimes.com, June 27 | Gina Harkins



Thousands of Marines serving throughout the infantry and in other key positions are about to get new gender-neutral job titles, but the service's top leaders are pushing to leave the word "man" in some of its most iconic occupations.

In all, the Marine Corps plans to rename 19 of its military occupational specialties, or MOSs, as the result of a months-long review mandated by Navy Secretary Ray Mabus. A service-wide message announcing the changes is expected to be published within the next few days.

The terms "rifleman" and "mortarman," are among those that remain untouched, according to a list — obtained by Marine Corps Times on Monday — of 33 MOSs that were reviewed. And that was by careful design, said a Marine official who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

"Names that were not changed, like rifleman, are steeped in Marine Corps history and ethos," the official said. "Things that were changed needed to be updated to align with other MOS names."

In most cases, the word "man" will be replaced by Marine. Those changes are as follows:

- Basic infantry Marine.
- Riverine assault craft Marine.
- Light-armor vehicle Marine.
- Reconnaissance Marine (to include three other recon-related jobs that include the word "man").
- Infantry assault Marine.
- Basic field artillery Marine.
- Field artillery fire control Marine.
- Field artillery sensor support Marine.
- Fire support Marine.
- Basic engineer, construction and equipment Marine.
- Basic tank and assault amphibious vehicle Marine.
- Armor Marine.
- Amphibious assault vehicle Marine.
- Amphibious combat vehicle Marine.

The field artillery operations man MOS is expected to be changed to field artillery operations chief, since that position is typically held by a Marine in the rank of staff sergeant or above.

The anti-tank missileman MOS is the only position that will pick up the word "gunner" in place of "man."

Others on the list — like manpower officer or vertical takeoff unmanned aerial vehicle specialist — will still include the word "man" because it's part of a word that doesn't describe the Marine doing the job.

In addition to the service-wide message that will address the changes, the Marine Corps plans to update its MOS manual, the official said. The full review included more than 33 MOSs, but many weren't affected because they already include gender-neutral descriptors like "specialist" or "chief."

Mabus directed the Marine Corps and Navy to review its job titles and descriptions in January, a month after Defense Secretary Ash Carter announced that all military jobs would open to women.

"As we achieve full integration of the force ... this is an opportunity to update the position titles and descriptions themselves to demonstrate through this language that women are included in these MOSs," Mabus wrote in a January order to Commandant Gen. Robert Neller. "Please review the position titles throughout the Marine Corps and ensure that they are gender-integrated as well, removing 'man' from the titles."

The Navy's review has broadened beyond its original mission of removing the word "man" from as many as 21 job titles and rating names. That review could ax newer titles like aircrew survival equipmentman, as well as timeless ones such as corpsman and yeoman — even seaman.

As of late June, no decisions had been made. The Navy has called for a second review of the proposals, a process likely to take a few months.

The move has proved unpopular with many Marines and sailors, with several branding it political correctness run amok.

"We have reached peak crazy," one reader commented on an earlier story by Marine Corps Times about this topic.

"If a woman isn't going to consider making the Navy her career because she is called a fireman or a corpsman, then I don't think she was going to make the Navy a career period," another reader commented on a Navy Times story. "We don't need [people who are easily offended] like that clogging up the institutions that protect our country."

*--Senior reporter Mark D. Faram contributed to this report*

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#### **24. In desert battle of tortoises v. Marines, tortoises win, for now**

Washington Post, June 28, Pg. E1 | Tony Perry

TWENTYNINE PALMS, CALIF. - Troops sent to the Marine Corps's sprawling base in the Mojave Desert near here for advanced combat training are warned sternly about an unbreakable rule: no harming the desert tortoises or leaving behind food crumbs that are likely to attract ravens, the arch-predator of tortoises.

To further protect the creatures with the high-domed shells on their backs, certain areas of the base are off-limits. And to prop up the tortoise population on base, the Marines have teamed with UCLA for the past decade to run an on-base hatchery.

Yet a battle is brewing between the Marines and the tortoises - or, really, their environmental advocates - that shows how even a fast-moving fighting force must sometimes give way to some of the slowest creatures on Earth.

The issue is a live-fire exercise set for August to train troops in assaulting an enemy from numerous locations. Similar exercises have been done in the past, but this year's event was to have included recently annexed property that is home to numerous desert tortoises.

To protect the tortoises from becoming collateral damage as bombs, mortars and artillery are fired and Humvees rumble around, the Marines were planning to airlift more than 1,100 of them away from the area.

But just weeks before the relocation was to begin, the Center for Biological Diversity in Tucson protested that the effort would mean certain death for large numbers of the tortoises, in violation of the Endangered Species Act. The group warned that it would go to court to stop the operation.

As a result, the airlift is on hold, the training exercise has been downsized and federal officials not aligned with the Marine Corps are reviewing the tortoise relocation to judge its impact on the creatures.

"This proposed translocation is a disaster for the already at-risk desert tortoises in the west Mojave Desert," said Ileene Anderson, a senior scientist with the diversity center.

The desert tortoise is found in the Mojave and Sonoran deserts of California, Nevada, Utah and Arizona. An adult tortoise can reach six inches in height, weigh up to 15 pounds, and live as long as 100 years. The tortoise population in the western Mojave, which includes the Marine base, has declined by 90 percent since the early 1980s, according to the advocacy group Defenders of Wildlife.

Among the causes cited by the group and others for the decline are drought, respiratory disease, a population explosion among ravens, suburban development and increased use of the desert by off-roaders and other recreationalists.

In response to the environmentalists' concerns, the Marines say they have carefully monitored the health of tortoises set to be relocated and will continue to do so through small transmitters on the animals' backs. The Corps has allocated \$50 million for the airlift, environmental assessments, fencing, research and health monitoring of the tortoises through the year 2045.

"We're not just going to throw them over a fence," said Walter Christensen, natural and cultural resources branch manager at the base. Six spots adjacent to the base have been assigned for the relocation, he said. All have sufficient water and food and are far enough away from the tortoises' current homes that they will not try to walk back, he said.

At 1,190 square miles, the Marine base is nearly the size of Rhode Island. Most Marines sent to Iraq and Afghanistan come here for training, under a program known as Mojave Viper.

Faced with the possible lawsuit over the tortoise airlift, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced that it was reviewing its tentative approval of the relocation plan. Since the desert tortoise is listed as a threatened species - a notch below endangered - the service's approval is needed for any such move.

The Marines have reconfigured and downscaled the August training away from tortoise-heavy areas, with fewer tanks and armored vehicles. In addition, no live-firing will be done in Johnson Valley, an area of the base that is central to the dispute.

Training is an everyday event at the base, located 140 miles east of Los Angeles. But the August exercise was meant to be special: It was to be the first time that the Marines used the Johnson Valley property, Marine brass hoped to find out whether the valley would be good not just for large-scale exercises such as this summer's but also for even larger exercises in coming years.

For a decade, the Marines fought environmental groups, local landowners and off-road enthusiasts over annexing Johnson Valley, which was controlled by the federal Bureau of Land Management.

In 2013, after intervention by Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), a deal was cut by Congress: 107,000 acres of Johnson Valley will be designated exclusively for use by the Marine Corps, another 50,000 will be shared between the Marines and civilians. The August exercise is to include sections of both, as well other areas of the base.

The Marines insist they need to use the property to devise a training exercise in which three large infantry groups can practice assaulting a common target, each using artillery, mortars and air power. Without the Johnson Valley area, the corps has no base large enough for such an exercise, officials said.

At the crux of environmentalists' concerns was a tortoise relocation done in 2008 at the Army's Fort Irwin, which is east of Twentynine Palms. That program was suspended after only a year when it was learned that about 30 percent of the relocated tortoises had died.

"It was a debacle," Anderson said of the Fort Irwin program.

To the Center for Biological Diversity, that experience shows that relocation is a dreadful strategy and that the Marines' plan, which would involve many more tortoises, needs further scrutiny.

The Marines assert that the Fort Irwin deaths are misleading. Brian Henen, a civilian ecologist at the Twentynine Palms base, said the mortality rate of the tortoises that were moved was the same as that of tortoises that were not relocated, suggesting the main cause was a drought that decreased water and forage. Federal officials, who did an investigation of the Fort Irwin deaths, also concluded that the deaths most likely were attributable to the drought. Environmental groups disputed the finding.

Brian Croft, a wildlife biologist and division chief with the Fish and Wildlife Service, has sympathy for both sides in this dispute. His agency has dealt with numerous problems related to the moving of tortoises, including ones caused by solar projects and a community college expansion next to the Twentynine Palms base.

"From everything we know from studying translocation, as long as it's planned properly, it can be done without increasing the mortality rate of the animals," Croft said.

The Fish and Wildlife Service expects to decide in September whether the Marines can go ahead with the airlift, Croft said.

Jennifer Loda, the Center for Biological Diversity's attorney for amphibian and reptile issues, said she hopes the final decision will leave the desert tortoises undisturbed. The tortoise's ancestors lived in the Mojave Desert thousands of years before the Army and Marine Corps arrived, she noted.

"They have an inherent right to be here. They have the same right as we do."

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## NAVY

### **25. U.S. Navy turns to cloud technology to reduce drunken driving**

Associated Press, June 28 | Yuri Kageyama

TOKYO — An American sailor has tapped a cloud-based technology for mobile phones to make it easier to have volunteers take turns driving drunk friends home, an initiative that has curtailed drunken driving among the Navy ranks.

The effort, tested at the Naval Sea Systems Command in Charleston, South Carolina, from February, could also help ease tensions on the southwestern Japanese island of Okinawa, where most of the U.S. troops in Japan are assigned.

Public outrage has flared on Okinawa because of the perception that the large military presence has led to more crime.

In the past month, a civilian worker and a sailor at an Okinawan base were arrested on suspicion of drunken driving after their cars crashed. That followed an arrest of a former U.S. Marine, suspected of raping and killing a woman on Okinawa.

Petty Officer Michael Daigle started his Saferide service, using San Diego-based Voxox's Cloud Phone, which costs just \$15 a month.

It has been very successful so far, and Daigle expressed hopes it will be used throughout the Navy, including aircraft carriers that may dock at various ports around the world, as well as overseas bases.

"In the military, DUI tends to be a big issue mostly because it ruins your career and so we end up losing a lot of sailors," he said in a telephone interview Tuesday, using the acronym for "driving under the influence" of alcohol.

Across the military, a person caught drinking and driving can get kicked out, he said.

The technology works like a hotline, allowing intoxicated sailors to call a single number, which has been set up digitally so that the call goes to the various numbers of those sailors on standby, who have volunteered ahead of time to drive.

The volunteers are rewarded by getting better parking spaces. Other perks are being considered such as gift cards for gas, Daigle said. The system allows for up to 10 telephone numbers to work as an extension for that single telephone number.

Saferide is handy for the Navy because sailors aren't allowed to have mobile phones on the job. And so it has been hard for them to call up friends or colleagues to pick them up from bars or other places after a night drinking.

"The Navy has discussed it on a higher level about potentially in the long run considering implementing it Navy-wide, based on its success," said Daigle.

Daigle experimented previously with an outside taxi service, but that proved difficult to monitor, and service members were misusing it for other purposes, such as rides to airports.

The problems in Japan caused the U.S. military on June 6 to ban off-base drinking, but on Tuesday the U.S. Naval Forces Japan lifted the ban, noting "the performance of sailors across Japan has been outstanding."

Drunken driving is a serious problem, both in and outside the military, being behind more than 10,000 crash fatalities a year in the U.S., and costing nearly \$50 billion in damages, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Daigle said five or six drunken driving cases were found over the last year at his naval command. Since Saferide started, there have been no cases.

Ron Kinkade, vice president of marketing and product strategy at Voxox, said Daigle was not a typical customer, which tends to be small businesses, such as online sellers, consultants, realtors, marketing services and others needing an easy to manage cloud-based system to connect remote employees.

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## VETERANS

### **26. Is veteran preference a 'third rail'?**

*Critic of plan to limit federal hiring practice says it's shortsighted*

Washington Post, June 28, Pg. A17 | Lisa Rein

With an effort in Congress to scale back veteran preference in federal hiring awaiting action by a House-Senate conference committee, a former top personnel official says there's a better plan.

Jeffrey Neal, who was in charge of hiring for the Department of Homeland Security until he retired in 2011, says a Senate proposal to limit veteran preference to a single use is flawed because it does not take into account former service members' high job turnover.

The Senate version of this year's defense bill includes language that would give veterans one shot at going to the head of the hiring line: when they apply for a permanent federal job. Once they are working in government, they would not get the extra points they get now for other federal jobs.

Neal, who also led human resources for the Defense Logistics Agency and is now a senior vice president for ICF International, wrote last week on his blog, ChiefHRO.com, that many veterans take a while to find an agency that's a good match for them. This is particularly true of millennials.

"Virtually any study of new hires in government or the private sector shows that turnover in the first 2 years with an organization is much higher than in following years," Neal wrote. "A Partnership for Public Service study showed that turnover for employees under 30 was also high, as is turnover for employees in entry-level jobs. This approach to veteran preference could have an adverse impact on veterans who get a job and learn that it is not a good match for them, or those who need to relocate (e.g., to accompany a spouse)."

Neal added: "The effect could be particularly pronounced for younger veterans who are still searching for the right career. Young veterans have higher unemployment rates than the population as a whole. It is not in our society's interests for those young men and women to serve and then have no job when they complete their service."

If Congress wants to prevent veterans from going to the head of the line over and over, Neal says, a better strategy would be to restrict the benefit to those in full-time, permanent positions.

That way, someone on probation, or working part time, could get extra points twice or even three times. But the approach "does not punish the veteran who finds s/he accepted a job that isn't working out, or who needs to relocate and must look for another job," Neal writes.

Neal calls veterans preference a "third rail of civil service reform."

Almost 1 in 2 people hired to a permanent federal job is a veteran, with former service members making up 47.4 percent of new hires to full-time positions in fiscal 2014, the last year for which the government has provided data. Starting in 2009, President Obama boosted the extra credit veterans get to give them a greater edge in getting federal jobs, setting hiring goals for veterans at each agency and directing managers to be graded on how many former service members they bring aboard.

The Senate plan, the first change to the Obama administration's high-profile push to hire veterans into the federal government, has generated controversy. Veterans service organizations oppose it as an effort to chip away at a benefit that helps reintegrate those who served into the workforce.

But top Defense Department officials pressed Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, for the change, to ensure that qualified non-veterans are considered equally with veterans for specialized, hard-to-fill positions. Limiting preference to one use would apply government-wide, but defense officials have told lawmakers that in some cases, veteran preference is blocking them from hiring more-qualified candidates who did not serve.

The plan now has a bill opposing it, sponsored by Rep. Ruben Gallego (D-Ariz.), a Marine Corps veteran. Last week, Gallego introduced an amendment to a financial-services spending bill that would bar any federal money from being used to revise policy to alter preferences for veterans in federal hiring.

The amendment is co-sponsored by Reps. Ann Kirkpatrick (D-Ariz.), Pete Aguilar (D-Calif.) and Mark Takano (D-Calif.) and has been endorsed by major veterans groups.

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## NOTABLE COMMENTARY

### **27. A War Plan Against the House's Pentagon Budget Tricks**

*Congress's plan to raid the overseas war-fighting fund is dangerous and unnecessary*

Bloomberg View, June 27 | Editorial

For the second year in a row, President Barack Obama is poised to veto Congress's annual defense legislation. For the second year in row, he's justified in doing so.

While the congressional approach has several problems -- including a ban on transferring prisoners from Guantanamo Bay -- one of the most egregious is a budgetary gimmick: The spending package approved by the House on June 11 effectively raids the military's emergency war fund to pay for normal Pentagon operations.

The so-called Overseas Contingency Operations money is supposed to be used for the fighting in Afghanistan and the Middle East. Instead, because the money is not subject to the spending caps set by last year's bipartisan budget deal, the House has simply reallocated \$16 billion of the \$60 billion fund. Some of this spending seems more about saving domestic jobs than military readiness.

Not only is the move foolhardy -- the fund could run out by May 1 unless the new president makes an emergency request -- but it is also unnecessary. Trimming \$16 billion from the \$600 billion Pentagon budget, without hurting vital military capabilities, shouldn't be that hard.

This is not hyperbole. A few back-of-the-envelope calculations, based on such publicly available sources as the Congressional Research Service and Bloomberg Government, show how it might be done.

Canceling the House's plan to purchase additional (and buggy) F-35 jets, as well as unnecessary F/A-18 Hornet fighters and Black Hawk helicopters, would save about \$6.9 billion. Disbanding one of the Navy's carrier-group air wings, which hasn't deployed since 2011 and as requested by the Pentagon, would save \$200 million. Reducing personnel by about 37,000 -- again as requested by the Pentagon, which has said it would allow the services to better train and equip the remaining forces -- would save about \$3.25 billion. Delaying and possibly canceling the purchase of two new littoral combat ships -- one of the worst-managed acquisitions in military history -- and slowing down the construction of other craft would save about \$3.1 billion. Delaying non-urgent upgrades of Abrams tanks would save about \$558 million. And putting off the repair of some dilapidated buildings on military bases -- or, better yet, demolishing them -- would save \$2.4 billion.

That all adds up to \$16.4 billion. As the House and Senate meet to reconcile their separate budget plans, they should feel free to make emendations to this list.

Of course, these sorts of short-term savings are paltry compared to long-term plans to spend \$35 billion on three new supercarriers, \$55 billion on a new long-range bomber, and \$350 billion rebuilding the nuclear arsenal. But if Congress could at least show restraint now from dipping into the war-fighting fund, it would set a precedent for smarter decision making to save big money down the road. If lawmakers refuse, Obama should go ahead and wield his veto.

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## **28. An antidote to Brexit**

Washington Post, June 28, Pg. A18 | Editorial

Under David Cameron's leadership, Britain's importance as a U.S. ally has steadily diminished. His government was slow in joining the campaign against the Islamic State and has played no significant role in resisting Russian aggression in Ukraine. Following a rebuff by Parliament, Mr. Cameron retreated from airstrikes against Syria in 2013, prompting a climbdown by President Obama that has had disastrous consequences. Mr. Cameron's most notable foreign policy initiative was his craven courtship of Chinese dictator Xi Jinping in the hope of reaping commercial advantage.

Consequently, the result of Mr. Cameron's last and most calamitous misstep, the promotion of an unnecessary referendum on Britain's membership in the European Union, should logically lead to an acceleration of an existing trend in U.S. foreign relations, rather than an abrupt shift. As it already has, the Obama administration will look more to Germany for help and leadership on transatlantic-Atlantic security issues, while cultivating stronger strategic relations with Asian partners such as India and Japan. It should not expect much help from London in managing new crises in the Middle East and elsewhere in the coming years - but then, that was already pretty much the case.

How much further the "special relationship" between the United States and Britain will be devalued will depend on what now looks like a very unpredictable course of events in London. The government that succeeds that of Mr. Cameron in the coming months will almost certainly have to choose between satisfying promises of restricted immigration and curtailed payments to the E.U. and keeping Britain's current access to the unified European market. If it chooses the latter, Britain's role in Europe and its economic clout may not ultimately diminish that much.

The uncertainty means that neither the Obama administration nor Mr. Obama's successor should rush to forge a new economic or political relationship with a presumably non-E.U. Britain. Some of the pro-Brexit camp have talked of arranging a separate free-trade agreement with the United States, outside the U.S.-E.U. trade pact now under negotiation, or even joining NAFTA. But any consideration of such deals should await Britain's final settlement with the E.U., which will take up to two years from the time it provides notice of its departure.

In the meantime, the United States can best support Britain, and Europe, by becoming a more active and vocal leader of the NATO alliance, which will retain Britain as a member. If the European Union is weakening or even in danger of crumbling, to the delight of Vladimir Putin, Mr. Xi and other adversaries, then one antidote is a reinforced transatlantic military partnership that bridges the incipient gap between London and the continent. NATO's next summit meeting is scheduled for next month in Warsaw, where it is expected to confirm an important new deployment of forces to Eastern European countries bordering Russia. Mr. Obama should take the occasion to reconfirm U.S. commitment to NATO - and presidential candidates Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump should be judged on whether they do the same.

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## **29. Russia is harassing U.S. diplomats all over Europe**

Washington Post Online, June 27 | Josh Rogin

Russian intelligence and security services have been waging a campaign of harassment and intimidation against U.S. diplomats, embassy staff and their families in Moscow and several other European capitals that has rattled ambassadors and prompted Secretary of State John F. Kerry to ask Vladimir Putin to put a stop to it.

At a recent meeting of U.S. ambassadors from Russia and Europe in Washington, U.S. ambassadors to several European countries complained that Russian intelligence officials were constantly perpetrating acts of harassment against their diplomatic staff that ranged from the weird to the downright scary. Some of the intimidation has been routine: following diplomats or their family members, showing up at their social events uninvited or paying reporters to write negative stories about them.

But many of the recent acts of intimidation by Russian security services have crossed the line into apparent criminality. In a series of secret memos sent back to Washington, described to me by several current and former U.S. officials who have written or read them, diplomats reported that Russian intruders had broken into their homes late at night, only to rearrange the furniture or turn on all the lights and televisions, and then leave. One diplomat reported that an intruder had defecated on his living room carpet.

In Moscow, where the harassment is most pervasive, diplomats reported slashed tires and regular harassment by traffic police. Former ambassador Michael McFaul was hounded by government-paid protesters, and intelligence personnel followed his children to school. The harassment is not new; in the first term of the Obama administration, Russian intelligence personnel broke into the house of the U.S. defense attache in Moscow and killed his dog, according to multiple former officials who read the intelligence reports.

But since the 2014 Russian intervention in Ukraine, which prompted a wide range of U.S. sanctions against Russian officials and businesses close to Putin, harassment and surveillance of U.S. diplomatic staff in Moscow by security personnel and traffic police have increased significantly, State Department press secretary John Kirby confirmed to me.

"Since the return of Putin, Russia has been engaged in an increasingly aggressive gray war across Europe. Now it's in retaliation for Western sanctions because of Ukraine. The widely reported harassment is another front in the gray war," said Norm Eisen, U.S. ambassador to the Czech Republic from 2011 to 2014. "They are hitting American diplomats literally where they live."

The State Department has taken several measures in response to the increased level of nefarious activity by the Russian government. All U.S. diplomats headed for Europe now receive increased training on how to handle Russian harassment, and the European affairs bureau run by Assistant Secretary Victoria Nuland has set up regular interagency meetings on tracking and responding to the incidents.

McFaul told me he and his family were regularly followed and the Russian intelligence services wanted his family to know they were being watched. Other embassy officials also suffered routine harassment that increased significantly after the Ukraine-related sanctions. Those diplomats who were trying to report on Russian activities faced the worst of it.

"It was part of a way to put pressure on government officials who were trying to do their reporting jobs. It definitely escalated when I was there. After the invasion of Ukraine, it got much, much worse," McFaul said. "We were feeling embattled out there in the embassy."

There was a debate inside the Obama administration about how to respond, and ultimately President Obama made the decision not to respond with similar measures against Russian diplomats, McFaul said.

A spokesman for the Russian Embassy in Washington sent me a long statement both tacitly admitting to the harassment and defending it as a response to what he called U.S. provocations and mistreatment of Russian diplomats in the United States.

"The deterioration of U.S.-Russia relations, which was not caused by us, but rather by the current Administrations' policy of sanctions and attempts to isolate Russian, had a negative affect on the functioning of diplomatic missions, both in U.S. and Russia," the spokesman said. "In diplomatic practice there is always the principle of reciprocity and, indeed, for the last couple of years our diplomatic staff in the United States has been facing certain problems. The Russian side has never acted proactively to negatively affect U.S. diplomats in any way."

Evelyn Farkas, who served as deputy assistant secretary of defense for Russia, Ukraine and Eurasia until last year, said that there is no equivalence between whatever restrictions Russian diplomats are subjected to in the United States and the harassment and intimation that U.S. diplomats suffer at the hands of the Russian security services. The fact that the Russian government stands accused of murdering prominent diplomats and defectors in European countries adds a level of fear for Russia's targets.

"When the Russian government singles people out for this kind of intimidation, going from intimidation to harassment to something worse is not inconceivable," Farkas said.

Kirby told me that the State Department takes the safety and well-being of American diplomatic and consular personnel abroad and their accompanying family members extremely seriously. "We have therefore repeatedly raised our concerns about harassment of our diplomatic and consular staff with the Russians, including at the highest levels," he said.

Kerry raised the issue directly with Putin during his visit to Moscow in March. Putin made no promises about ending the harassment, which continued after Kerry returned to Washington. The U.S. ambassadors to Europe are asking the State Department to do more.

Leading members of Congress who are involved in diplomacy with Europe see the lack of a more robust U.S. response as part of an effort by the Obama administration to project a veneer of positive U.S.-Russian relations that doesn't really exist.

"The problem is there have been no consequences for Russia," said Rep. Mike Turner (R-Ohio), who serves as president of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. "The administration continues to pursue a false narrative that Russia can be our partner. They clearly don't want to be our partner, they've identified us as an adversary, and we need to prepare for that type of relationship."

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### **30. China's Great Wall of Confrontation**

*Ahead of South China Sea ruling, a history lesson from its most famous barrier*

Wall Street Journal Online (China's World), June 28 | Andrew Browne

SHANGHAI -- Although the Great Wall has become China's pre-eminent national symbol of pride and strength, the construction of its soaring watchtowers and crenelated parapets actually reflected a moment of dynastic weakness.

And it was, of course, a colossal failure. The present structure (popularly thought to track a wall erected by China's first emperor, Qin Shi Huang) was mostly built during the later Ming dynasty in the 16th century to keep out fierce nomad tribes to the north.

Early Ming emperors had found other ways to pacify these groups: royal marriages, barter trade and other inducements. But as the dynasty crumbled, hard-line factions at court—the ideologues of their day—pushed for an impregnable barrier. It was necessary, they argued, to protect Chinese civilization against the "barbarian" hordes.

Echoes of this history reverberate today in the South China Sea, where China is building massive fortifications—artificial islands dredged from the seabed -- to help defend a "nine-dash line" that encircles almost the entire waterway and reaches almost 1,000 miles from China's coastline.

U.S. Admiral Harry Harris rails against the man-made islands as a "Great Wall of Sand." Defense Secretary Ash Carter warns that China risks building a "Great Wall of self-isolation" through actions that have alarmed its neighbors.

In a few days, a U.N. court in The Hague will pass its verdict on a challenge to China's claim brought by the Philippines.

The decision will address an issue that has preoccupied Chinese dynasties since antiquity: Where does China end?

This has infuriated Chinese leaders; the presumptuousness of foreign jurists sitting in judgment upon what China regards as a matter of Chinese sovereignty is intolerable. Beijing has boycotted the proceedings.

Yet there's an even more fundamental issue at play, one that dominated the debate in the old Ming court and that has rumbled on ever since: How should China conduct its relations with the world?

Now, as then, the question is inextricably wrapped up with China's perceptions of itself. The way China responds to the ruling in The Hague will tell us a lot about the mind-set of a country that has alternated between bouts of isolation and pragmatic engagement.

The West long perceived the Great Wall to be an emblem of an inward-looking people, a closeted "Middle Kingdom," smugly aloof.

But reality was always more complex. As the scholar Arthur Waldron argues in "The Great Wall of China: From History to Myth," China's northern frontier was wide open for much of its imperial history. Its construction in the Ming era didn't reflect an innately shuttered empire; it was a political choice, the result of a debate won by a war faction with a moral certainty about the superiority of Chinese culture and tradition, what today might be termed Chinese "exceptionalism."

This way of thinking clashed with a more open cosmopolitanism embraced by the rulers of the time.

Similarly today, it's a mistake to think—as some in the Pentagon evidently do—that China's ambitions in the South China Sea are cast in stone.

In Beijing, debate is alive. On one side are hawks in the military who want to turn the waterway into a Chinese lake on which to float their expanding navy. They are backed by state energy companies eyeing potentially vast undersea oil and gas reserves. The hypernationalists in this military-industrial complex would probably like to push other claimants, including the Philippines and Vietnam, off the rocks and reefs they control. They might even welcome a short war to put these smaller countries in their place.

Their counsel is opposed by moderates in the foreign-policy establishment, as well as corners of academia, who want China to assert itself more forcefully in the region to reflect its great-power status—but not in ways that damage China's global image. They inherit a tradition that stresses trade and diplomacy over military solutions—exchanges, not walls.

China's modern rulers, like their Ming predecessors, are in a bind. The ideologues are defining national interest in cultural terms, arguing for an enforcement of the nine-dash line on the grounds that everything inside has been China's "since ancient times" and "every inch" of Chinese territory is sacred. Those who take them on risk being branded as weak or, worse, unpatriotic and even traitorous.

It's worth recalling that until a few years ago China was pursuing a diplomatic charm offensive in Southeast Asia, and it still dangles inducements in the form of Chinese-funded infrastructure projects along with threats. But nationalism is rising. The hawks aren't just pressing for physical defenses in the South China Sea but ideological ones, too. Increasingly, they see the waters as an arena for political confrontation with America and the West.

In the end, the Great Wall was futile. In 1644, Manchu horsemen swept past the fortifications and captured the capital, Beijing, establishing China's last imperial dynasty, the Qing. These are the real lessons of the Great Wall of China: Strength derives from compromise, and barriers provoke resistance.

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