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WEEKLY WORLD NEWS UPDATE

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US DESTROYER EN ROUTE TO BLACK SEA FOR 'ROUTINE' DRILLS

March 6, 2014 Yahoo.com reported: "A US guided-missile destroyer is en route to the Black Sea but naval officials said Thursday it was a "routine" deployment that was planned before the crisis unfolded in Ukraine. The USS Truxtun departed the Greek port of Souda Bay Thursday to carry out joint training with Romanian and Bulgarian forces, the US Navy said in a statement.

"While in the Black Sea, the ship will conduct a port visit and routine, previously planned exercises with allies and partners in the region," it said. The mission was "scheduled well in advance of her departure from the United States," it said.

Although portrayed as unrelated to tensions in Ukraine, where pro-Russian forces have taken de facto control over the Crimean peninsula, the presence of a US naval destroyer in the Black Sea sends a symbolic message to Moscow. The move comes a day after the Pentagon sought to reassure anxious allies in Central and Eastern Europe over Russia's actions in Ukraine, announcing plans to send more F-15 fighter jets to patrol the skies over Baltic states and stepping up aviation training in Poland.



At the moment, the only US naval ship deployed in the Black Sea is the USS Taylor, a frigate undergoing repairs at the Turkish port of Samsun after having run aground last month."..."

CHINA SAYS HIGHER MILITARY SPENDING IS NEEDED TO KEEP THE PEACE

March 6, 2014 McClatchyDC.com reports: "China's plans to increase its military spending by 12.2 percent this year, a boost over 2013, will surely agitate some neighbors but please Chinese nationalists who want their country to assert itself as a dominant Asian power.

The jump in military spending, announced Wednesday on the first day of the National People's Congress in Beijing, comes amid a war of words between Japan and China over disputed islands in the East China Sea. Relations between the trading partners have soured, and some analysts fear that a maritime mishap could spiral into full-blown war..."

ISRAEL SEIZES SHIP WITH MISSILES HEADING FROM IRAN TO GAZA

March 5, 2014 Haaretz.com reported: "Israeli naval forces on Wednesday intercepted an Iranian arms vessel carrying medium-range missiles in the Red Sea, about 930 miles from the Israeli coast. The shipment was headed for the Gaza Strip via Sudan.

Special forces from the Shayetet 13 (Flotilla 13) unit overpowered the cargo vessel named the KLOS C – which is registered in Panama – in the early morning hours. A search aboard the vessel uncovered dozens of 302mm rockets, which are manufactured in Syria and were fired into Israel by Hezbollah during the 2006 Second Lebanon War. The rockets have a range of about 100 kilometers.

'We have conclusive evidence that there were rockets on board the ship, and we have proof and can say with certainty that Iran is behind this operation,' a senior Israel Defense Forces officer said.

The officer said that the rockets originated in Syria, were loaded onto airplanes at the Damascus airport from which they were transported to Iran. There they were boarded onto the cargo ship, which set sail about 10 days ago en route to a port in Sudan..."

CHINA KNIFE MASSACRE CULPRITS WANTED TO WAGE JIHAD ABROAD, OFFICIAL SAYS

March 5, 2014 The Guardian.co.uk reported: "The group behind Saturday's gruesome knife attack at a Chinese train station turned to violence after failing to leave the country 'to participate in jihad', a senior Communist party official was quoted as saying on Wednesday.

The attack, which left 33 people dead and 143 injured in the south-western city of Kunming, has sent shockwaves through the country; some official media outlets have called it 'China's 9/11'.

China's state newswire Xinhua has reported that there were eight attackers: two women and six men, all of them ethnic Uighur 'separatists' from the distant north-western region of Xinjiang. Four were shot dead at the scene, and four have been detained.

'These eight people originally wanted to participate in jihad,' said Qin Guangrong, the Communist party chief of Yunnan province, which includes Kunming. 'After they were unable to leave from Yunnan, they turned around and went to other places.'

The group then travelled to the southern province Guangdong, and after another failed border crossing, moved on to Honghe, a prefecture in Yunnan that borders Vietnam..."

UKRAINIANS RUSH TO ENLIST FOR ARMY AMID CRISIS IN CRIMEA

March 5, 2014 AFP reported: "There may not be any fighting in Ukraine yet but as tensions ratchet up in Crimea, young men in Kiev were queuing to sign up for the army, ready to take up arms if it comes to a war with Russia.

"I want to take part in the fight," said Roman Surzhikov, a 33-year-old engineer and army reservist, one of a steady stream of people going into an army recruitment centre in the city centre on Tuesday, despite a "closed" sign outside.

"Have they declared a general mobilisation yet?" he asked the woman at reception.

Ukraine's Black Sea peninsula of Crimea has been under the de facto control of pro-Kremlin forces in recent days, while President Vladimir Putin has reserved the right to send troops into the autonomous but mainly Russian-speaking region. He denies claims that Russian soldiers are already operating there.

"It's obvious an intervention is under way in Crimea and it's not impossible there will also be one on Ukrainian territory," Surzhikov told AFP as he explained why he wanted to enlist.

"I can't say I look forward to it, but if there is going to be a war, it's my duty. We have to defend the country," he said, adding that "10 million men are prepared to take up arms."

For now, he was told to just come back in a few days and leave his details. So far, only some Ukrainian army reservists are being called up and he was not one of them.

The Ukrainian army was put on alert over the weekend after Russia's parliament gave Putin permission to send troops into Ukraine, a former Soviet state."..."

OBAMA: US WON'T BE ABLE TO DEFEND ISRAEL IF PEACE TALKS FAIL

March 4, 2014 The Times of Israel reported: "Israel can expect to face international isolation and possible sanctions from countries and companies across the world if Benjamin Netanyahu fails to endorse a framework agreement with the Palestinians, US President Barack Obama cautioned on Sunday ahead of a meeting with the Israeli prime minister.

In an interview with Bloomberg, Obama stressed that time was running out for Israel to achieve a peace deal, and added that he believed Netanyahu had the capacity to rally Israel's citizens behind an agreement.

But if Netanyahu 'does not believe that a peace deal with the Palestinians is the right thing to do for Israel, then he needs to articulate an alternative approach,' Obama said.

'There comes a point where you can't manage this anymore, and then you start having to make very difficult choices,' he said.

The president went on to stress that he would convey to Netanyahu, in the spirit of the Jewish sage Hillel the Elder, that the prime minister could lead Israel toward peace if he chose to do so.

'If not now, when? And if not you, Mr. Prime Minister, then who?' Obama said.

The president went on to condemn in no uncertain terms Israel's settlement activities in the West Bank, and said that though his allegiance to the Jewish state was permanent, building settlements across the Green Line was counterproductive and would make it extremely difficult for the US to defend Israel from painful repercussions in the international community..."

The president added that Israel must come to a decision over its future character and weigh whether its current policies are conducive to achieving its true aspirations."..."

KREMLIN ISSUES ULTIMATUMS TO UKRAINIAN FORCES

March 3, 2014 The Telegraph reported: "Russia has issued a series of ultimatums for Ukrainian forces in Crimea to surrender and disarm by this morning or risk coming under attack, the new government in Kiev said last night. As Russian fighters buzzed Ukraine's borders, the Kremlin defied international pressure to back off and instead turned the screw on its neighbour.

President Vladimir Putin visited military units deployed near Russia's frontier with Ukraine, where they are conducting "exercises". The defence ministry in Kiev said the country had been on the receiving end of a series of hostile acts, including incursions by Russian jets flying along its northern border with Belarus.

European Union foreign ministers meeting in Brussels condemned Russia's "act of aggression" in occupying Crimea and said that sanctions would be "considered" unless Russia took "de-escalating steps". All European heads of government will meet for an emergency summit on the Ukraine crisis on Thursday.

Arseniy Yatsenyuk, the new Ukrainian prime minister, said his country would never accept Russia's seizure of Crimea, although he conceded that his government had no military means of resisting.

"I would like to indicate Crimea is territory of Ukraine despite the presence of Russian military," he said. "Any attempt by the Russian military to grab Crimea will have no success at all. Give us some time."

The lack of options open to Ukraine's leadership was underlined by announcements from the defence ministry. Vladyslav Seleznyov, the head of the defence media centre in Crimea, said the commander of Russia's Black Sea fleet had visited two Ukrainian navy vessels in Sevastopol to demand their surrender.

"He demands either to surrender all the weapons or to take Russia's side in the conflict. Otherwise they are threatening to attack," Mr Seleznyov said. A similar message was said to have been delivered to a coastal defence base."..."

