



JOHN KERRY: RUSSIA HAS UNTIL MONDAY TO REVERSE COURSE IN UKRAINE

March 13, 2014 WashingtonExaminer.com reported: "Secretary of State John Kerry warned of serious repercussions for Russia on Monday if last-ditch talks over the weekend to resolve the crisis in Ukraine failed to persuade Moscow to soften its stance.

Kerry will travel to London for a Friday meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov ahead of a Sunday referendum vote in the Crimea region to secede from Ukraine and join the Russian Federation. U.S. and European officials argue that Moscow is orchestrating the referendum and waging an intimidation campaign with thousands of Russian troops controlling the region. If Russian-backed lawmakers in Crimea go through with the Sunday referendum, Kerry said the U.S. and its European allies will not recognize it as legitimate under international law.

The U.S. and Europe on Monday would then unite to impose sanctions on Russia, Kerry told a Senate Appropriations subcommittee Thursday during a hearing on the State Department's budget.

"There will be a response of some kind to the referendum itself," Kerry said. "If there is no sign [from Russia] of any capacity to respond to this issue ... there will be a very serious series of steps on Monday."

"Our hope is to have Russia join in respecting international law. ... There is no justification, no legality to this referendum that is taking place," he said. "The hope is that reason will prevail but there is no guarantee of that..."

RUSSIA MASSING MILITARY FORCES NEAR BORDER WITH UKRAINE

March 13, 2014 nytimes.com reported: "Russia's Defense Ministry announced new military operations in several regions near the Ukrainian border on Thursday, even as Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany warned the Kremlin to abandon the politics of the 19th and 20th centuries or face diplomatic and economic retaliation from a united Europe.

The operations came as Ukraine's acting president, Oleksandr V. Turchynov, said in a statement on his official website that he believed Russian forces massed near the border were "ready to intervene in Ukraine at anytime," and that he hoped diplomatic efforts by Ukraine and sympathetic nations would "stop the aggression."

Underscoring the potential gravity of the troop movements, Russia's senior commander, Valery V. Gerasimov, spoke by telephone with his NATO counterpart, Gen. Knud Bartles of Denmark, the news agency Interfax reported, citing a defense source. The details of the conversation were not disclosed.



IRAN AND RUSSIA SIGN ON TO BUILD MORE NUCLEAR PLANTS AT BUSHEHR

March 12, 2014 The Jerusalem Post reported: "Iran and Russia have signed an agreement to build two more nuclear power plants in the southern Iranian city of Bushehr, Iranian Press TV reported on Wednesday. Atomic Energy Organization of Iran officials and Russia's Rosatom State Atomic Energy Corporation negotiated and came to an agreement about the plants, said the spokesman for the AEOI.

Russia built the first reactor at Bushehr, Iran's sole nuclear power plant. The new facilities will be built next to the existing plant. The agreement also includes the construction of two desalination plants. In February, the Iranian ambassador to Moscow Mehdi Sanaei said that Russia could build a second reactor at Iran's Bushehr nuclear power plant in exchange for Iranian oil.

Reuters reported Iran and Russia were negotiating to swap up to 500,000 barrels of oil per day for goods in the deal that would undermine Western efforts to maintain economic pressure on Tehran while global powers seek to curb its nuclear program..."

FIFTEEN YEARS ON, UKRAINE NEIGHBOURS GLAD TO BE IN NATO

March 11, 2014 SpaceDaily.com reported: en years have passed since the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland joined the NATO military alliance, a decision the ex-Soviet satellites now see as fortuitous given today's Ukraine standoff between Russia and the West.

"NATO is the safest alliance Poland ever joined," Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk said Monday, hours before NATO announced it was deploying reconnaissance aircraft in his country and Romania as part of efforts to monitor the crisis in neighbouring Ukraine.

NATO's 1990s overture to the East marked the beginning of the alliance's enlargement to former members of the now-defunct Soviet-led Warsaw Pact. After a decade of tough negotiations, the Czech Republic and Ukraine's neighbours Hungary and Poland joined the alliance on March 12, 1999. This paved the way for a host of other ex-communist Central European states -- Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia -- to follow suit in 2004, thus erasing the divisions of the Cold War.

"If Poland weren't in NATO, then the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) certainly wouldn't be in it either," former Polish president Aleksander Kwasniewski said Sunday.

"There was a kind of security vacuum in this part of the world, which could have been filled by others," he said, adding that without NATO membership the Ukrainian conflict would pose "an extremely serious threat" for Poland and the Baltics.

"But today we're under the NATO umbrella and can sleep more soundly."

Sixty-two percent of Poles say they are happy with NATO membership, while only four percent disapprove, according to a February poll from the CBOS institute.

A new Cold War? - The Ukraine crisis has raised the spectre of the Cold War, with the leaders of Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia comparing Russia's actions in Ukraine to Soviet crackdowns at home during that era."..."

U.S. STATE: 350,000 GUN OWNERS SUDDENLY FELONS

March 11, 2014 WND.com reported: "The state of Connecticut has created a crisis for itself: The possibility of having 350,000 new felons in the state – roughly 20 times the state's current state prison system population. It's all because the legislature adopted a law that said that based on certain physical features, some types of guns and weapons magazines no longer were allowed.

But there was no grandfathering for those who already had them. The guns are just no longer allowed, unless, of course, the owner submitted an application with identifying information such as fingerprints for the state to be able to identify those gun owners. Now estimates are that up to 250,000 or even 350,000 residents didn't meet the state's deadline for submitting that information.

The result? They're felons. Of course they haven't been charged or convicted yet, but the law allows no half-measures. Even possessing the weapon makes a person a felon. And a judge who was asked to suspend the law while a challenge to its constitutionality is debated in the courts jumped down on the side of prosecution, refusing to make that allowance.

The result could be another civil war. Branford resident John Cinque challenged two of the members of the legislature, Sen. Leonard Fasano and Rep. Dave Yaccarino, both Republicans.

'I tell everybody I'm not complying,' Cinque said. 'I can't – you have to be willing to stand up and say no. And there are a lot of us who are going to say no.'..."

ARAB LEAGUE, ABBAS REJECT RECOGNIZING ISRAEL AS 'JEWISH STATE'

March 10, 2014 YnetNews.com reported: "The Arab League on Sunday endorsed Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas's rejection of Israel's demand for recognition as a Jewish state, as US-backed peace talks approach a deadline next month.

The United States want Abbas to make the concession as part of efforts to reach a 'framework agreement' and extend the talks aimed at settling the decades-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

'The council of the Arab League confirms its support for the Palestinian leadership in its effort to end the Israeli occupation over Palestinian lands, and emphasizes its rejection of recognizing Israel as a 'Jewish state',' Arab foreign ministers said in a statement in Cairo.

Arab governments, distracted by the upheaval convulsing the region since the 2011 Arab uprisings, have previously taken few stands on the floundering peace talks, leaving Abbas isolated..."

CHINA TO 'DEFEND EVERY INCH' OF TERRITORY: FOREIGN MINISTER

March 8, 2014 SpaceDaily.com reported: "China's foreign minister on Saturday said his country would vigorously defend its sovereignty, declaring there was "no room for compromise" with Japan over territory or history.



"We will never bully smaller countries yet we will never accept unreasonable demands from smaller countries," Wang Yi told reporters.

"On issues of territory and sovereignty, China's position is firm and clear: We will not take anything that isn't ours, but we will defend every inch of territory that belongs to us."

China is embroiled in disputes with several of its neighbours including the Philippines and Japan, with tensions centered on rival claims in the South China Sea and East China Sea.



Beijing asserts that almost all the South China Sea is its territory but the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan have overlapping claims. The dispute with Tokyo is particularly tense given historical animosities between the two countries over Japan's invasion of China in the 1930s and 40s.

Beijing and Tokyo both claim a small uninhabited archipelago in the East China Sea, administered by Japan as the Senkaku Islands, but which China calls the Diaoyu Islands.

Chinese officials and state media have this year demanded that Japan reflect on its historical aggression and atrocities, in much the same manner as postwar Germany has with its Nazi past.

"On the two issues of principle, history and territory, there is no room for compromise," Wang told reporters on the sidelines of the National People's Congress, China's communist-controlled legislature."..."