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## ISRAEL PRESENTS RED LINES TO RUSSIA ON GOLAN, IRAN

**March 17, 2016** Arutz Sheva 7 reported: "Israeli President Reuven Rivlin met with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin in Moscow on Wednesday ahead of a planned Russian withdrawal from Syria. Rivlin conveyed to the Russian leader Israel's concerns about Iranian activity in Syria, and the active role the Hezbollah terror group has assumed in the Syrian civil war.

The Israeli leader also touched on the future status of the Golan Heights, which Syria continues to claim as sovereign territory, despite Israel's annexation of the area in 1981. Rivlin reportedly told Putin that borders of both Syria and Iraq were arbitrarily drawn during the First World War, and did not reflect present realities. Rivlin even suggested that the borders of both countries be altered, suggesting support not only for recognition of Israel's annexation of the Golan, but possibly the partition of both Iraq and Syria.

The Israeli President emphasized Israel's concerns, laying out the country's red lines vis-à-vis Syria. Israel would not accept, Rivlin told Putin, the presence of Iranian armed forces near the Golan Heights. Rivlin expressed hope that the United Nations peacekeeping force separating Israel and Syria would return, restoring the buffer between the two countries that has been absent since 2013.

Rivlin also noted that the future of the Golan Heights was non-negotiable, and that the area must remain under Israeli control."..."

## JAPAN SUBMARINE TO VISIT PHILIPPINES, OTHER SHIPS TO VIETNAM

**March 16, 2016** spacedaily.com reported: "A Japanese submarine will make a port call in the Philippines for the first time in 15 years while accompanying naval ships will visit Vietnam's Cam Ranh Bay for the first time ever, Japan's navy said. The announcement came days after China accused its Asian rival of interfering in the South China Sea.

Japan, which occupied the Philippines and Vietnam during World War II, is now strengthening relations. All three countries share growing concerns about China's increasing military muscle amid a series of maritime disputes.

China claims almost all the South China Sea. It is also embroiled in a separate row with Japan over disputed islands in the East China Sea that has seen relations sour badly in recent years. Tensions in the South China Sea -- through which one-third of the world's oil passes -- have mounted in recent months since China transformed contested reefs into artificial islands capable of supporting military facilities.

Brunei, Malaysia, Vietnam and Taiwan also claim all or part of the Spratlys chain in the Sea, while Vietnam and Taiwan have rival claims with China in the Paracels chain there.



2Japan

The Japanese submarine Oyashio and two escort vessels will visit Subic Bay in the Philippines for annual open sea drills, a spokesman for Japan's Maritime Staff Office confirmed to AFP. The escort ships will also subsequently visit Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam. The exercise, joined by some 500 personnel including officer candidates, is scheduled from Saturday through April 27.

It will be the first call at a Philippine port by a Japanese submarine since 2001, while the visit by the escort ships to Cam Ranh Bay will mark a first for Japan's navy, the spokesman said. The submarine will not go to Vietnam, he said.

Beijing accused Tokyo of interfering in the South China Sea after Manila said it would lease five Japanese military planes.

Philippine President Benigno Aquino said last week that Manila would lease five TC-90 training aircraft from Japan to "help our navy patrol our territory", pointing to the disputed South China Sea in particular.

China immediately reacted, saying it was "firmly opposed" to challenges to its sovereignty and security and would "remain on high alert."

## RUSSIA OPPOSES UN SANCTIONS ON IRAN OVER MISSILE TESTS

**March 15, 2016** SpaceDaily.com reports: "Russia on Monday opposed slapping sanctions on Iran over recent ballistic missile tests that Moscow's UN envoy said did not violate a UN resolution adopted after the landmark nuclear deal.

The UN Security Council held a closed-door meeting on the missile launches at the request of the United States, which along with Britain had pushed for a special report to decide on possible sanctions.

But the meeting concluded with no specific follow-up action other than further discussion on the test-launches within a designated Security Council committee on Iran.

'We did agree that it's not a violation,' Russian Ambassador Vitaly Churkin told reporters, welcoming 'a very satisfactory outcome of the discussion.'

Russia's stance as a veto-wielding member of the council effectively ruled out the possibility of UN sanctions against Iran..."

## SPACE TRAVEL RULES NEEDED WITHIN 5 YEARS: UN

**March 15, 2016** yahoo.com reported: "The UN aviation agency called on Tuesday for regulations on space travel to be enacted within five years in order to bolster a burgeoning space tourism and transportation sector.

The International Civil Aviation Organization "recognizes that sub-orbital and outer space flights will foster new tourism and transport markets, and that investments in related research and development remain at a very healthy level," ICAO Council President Olumuyiwa Benard Aliu said.

"Personally, as an engineer, I am very excited to see the dream and theory of normalized space flight now becoming such a tangible reality," he told an aerospace symposium in Abu Dhabi.

In making its case, the agency noted an uptick in the number of spacecraft designs that have made the leap from concept to reality, saying more will follow.

The ICAO also cited a steady increase in rocket ship launches, and commercial spaceports are now becoming "operational realities," the Montreal-based agency said in a statement.

Virgin Galactic, the space tourism company owned by British billionaire Richard Branson, last month unveiled a new commercial spaceship 16 months after its predecessor crashed, killing a pilot during a test flight.

The company's SpaceShipOne was the first private spacecraft to reach the edge of space in 2004.

Meanwhile, SpaceX, owned by another billionaire, Elon Musk, has successfully launched a communications satellite into a distant orbit, but failed to land the first stage of its Falcon 9 rocket on an ocean platform earlier this month.

Rules must be put in place soon to ensure safety and security in space, as well as prevent the creation of a patchwork of regulations by individual states, the ICAO said. The agency suggested adapting the existing regulatory framework for aviation, for which the ICAO and national governments are responsible."

## **N. KOREAN SUBMARINE MISSING: REPORTS**

*March 12, 2016* spacewar.com reported: "A North Korean submarine is missing, reports said Saturday, as the reclusive state issued a fresh threat of retaliation against US and South Korean forces involved in joint military drills. The unknown class of vessel had been reportedly operating off the North Korean coast earlier in the week when it disappeared.

A South Korean defence ministry told AFP Seoul was investigating the reports. Pentagon officials declined to comment on the matter. The US military had been observing the submarine off the North's eastern coast, CNN said, citing three US officials familiar with the incident.

American spy satellites, aircraft and ships have been watching as the North Korean navy searched for the missing sub, the report added. The US is unsure if the missing vessel is adrift or whether it has sunk, CNN reported, but officials believe it suffered a failure during an exercise. The US Naval Institute (USNI) News said the submarine was presumed sunk.

"The speculation is that it sank", an unidentified US official was quoted as telling the USNI News.

"The North Koreans have not made an attempt to indicate there is something wrong or that they require help or some type of assistance."

The incident comes as tensions were further heightened on the Korean peninsula by a fresh threat from Pyongyang. The official KCNA news agency, citing a statement from military chiefs, warned of a "pre-emptive retaliatory strike at the enemy groups" involved in the joint US-South Korean drill. Pyongyang added it planned to respond to the drills with an "operation to liberate the whole of South Korea including Seoul" with an "ultra-precision blitzkrieg".

Responding to the statement, South Korea's defence ministry urged Pyongyang to stop making threats or further provocations, according to Yonhap news agency.

North Korea's navy operates a fleet of some 70 submarines, most of them being rusting diesel submarines that are capable of little more than coastal defence and limited offensive capabilities. But the old, low-tech submarines still pose substantial threats to South Korean vessels.

In 2010, a South Korean corvette was reportedly torpedoed by a North Korean submarine near their sea border. In August last year, Seoul said said 70 percent of the North's total submarine fleet -- or around 50 vessels -- had left their bases and disappeared from South's military radar, sparking alarm."

## **NORTH KOREAN LEADER ORDERS FURTHER NUCLEAR TESTS**

*March 11, 2016* spacedaily.com reported: "North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un has ordered further nuclear tests, state media said Friday, as military tensions surge on the Korean peninsula with South Korean and US forces engaged in large-scale joint exercises condemned by Pyongyang. Since the joint drills began Monday, the North has issued daily warnings and statements, talking up its nuclear strike capabilities and threatening to turn Seoul and Washington into "flames and ashes."

Just days after he was photographed posing in front of what state media described as a miniaturised nuclear warhead, Kim said the weapon required further testing. Overseeing a ballistic missile launch on Thursday, Kim ordered "more nuclear explosion tests to estimate the destructive power of the newly produced nuclear warheads," the North's official KCNA news agency said.

Experts are divided as to just how far the North may have gone in shrinking warheads to a size capable of fitting on a ballistic missile -- a major step forward in strike capability that would present a heightened threat to South Korea, other countries in the region and, eventually, the US mainland.

According to KCNA, Thursday's launch of two short-range ballistic missiles, which traversed the eastern part of the country before falling into the East Sea (Sea of Japan), was part of a nuclear strike exercise. The aim was to simulate conditions for "exploding nuclear warheads from the preset altitude above targets in the ports under enemy control," the agency said.

Watching the exercise, Kim reiterated an earlier threat to launch an immediate nuclear attack if the "sabre-rattling" South Korea-US drills should harm "even a single tree or a blade of grass" on North Korean territory.

"I will issue a prompt order to launch attack with all military strike means," he said."..."

