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Eyeing China, U.S. to hold missile drill in Japan's Okinawa

January 3, 2019 SpaceDaily.com reported: "The US military will this year conduct its first ever missile drill around the Japanese island of Okinawa, according to a report Thursday, as Washington seeks to counter an increasingly assertive China.

The US military has told its Japanese counterpart it plans to deploy surface-to-ship missiles in the strategically important Okinawa this year for the first such drill by Japan's key ally, the Sankei Shimbun reported, without citing sources.

The drill would involve a mobile rocket launcher seen as a counter-measure to potential attacks from Chinese surface-to-sea ballistic missiles, the paper said.

In recent years, Chinese warships have frequently sailed through waters near Okinawa, where the majority of US troops in Japan are based..."

U.S. warns Iran against space launches, ballistic missiles

January 3, 2018 Reuters reported: "The United States issued a pre-emptive warning to Iran on Thursday against pursuing three planned space rocket launches that it said would violate a U.N. Security Council resolution because they use ballistic missile technology.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Iran had announced plans to launch in the coming months three rockets, called Space Launch Vehicles (SLV), which he said incorporate technology that is "virtually identical" to that used in intercontinental ballistic missiles.

"The United States will not stand by and watch the Iranian regime's destructive policies place international stability and security at risk," Pompeo said in a statement.

"We advise the regime to reconsider these provocative launches and cease all activities related to ballistic missiles in order to avoid deeper economic and diplomatic isolation."

Iranian Deputy Defense Minister General Qassem Taqizadeh in late November was quoted by Iranian media as saying that Iran was planning to launch three satellites into space soon.

"The satellites have been made by domestic experts and will be put on various orbits," Taqizadeh said.

Pompeo said such rocket launches would violate United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231, which endorsed a 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world powers. It calls upon Iran not to undertake activities related to ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons..."

Taiwan reunification with China 'inevitable': X

January 2, 2019 SinoDaily.com reported: "Taiwan's unification with the mainland is 'inevitable', President Xi Jinping said Wednesday, warning against any efforts to promote the island's independence and saying China would not renounce the option of using military force to bring it into the fold.

China still sees democratic Taiwan as part of its territory to be reunified, despite the two sides being ruled separately since the end of a civil war on the mainland in 1949.

'China must and will be united... which is an inevitable requirement for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese people in the new era,' Xi said in a speech commemorating the 40th anniversary of a message sent to Taiwan in 1979, in which Beijing called for unification and an end to military confrontation.

'We make no promise to give up the use of military force and reserve the option of taking all necessary means' against Taiwanese separatist activities and 'outside forces' that interfere with reunification, he said..."

China will not give up use of military force over Taiwan: Xi

January 2, 2019 AFP reported: "China will not give up the use of military force as an option to ensure the reunification of Taiwan, President Xi Jinping said Wednesday, while insisting the island would ultimately be reunified with the mainland.

Beijing "reserves the option of taking all necessary measures" against outside forces that interfere with peaceful reunification and Taiwan independence separatist activities, he said." ..."

Khamenei: Palestinians will establish a government in Tel Aviv

January 1, 2019 Arutz Sheva 7 reported: "Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, predicted on Monday that Palestinian Arabs will eventually 'establish a government in Tel Aviv'. His comments, quoted in the Tehran Times, came during a meeting in Tehran with Ziad al-Nakhala, head of the Islamic Jihad terrorist organization.

'Palestine will remain powerful and the Palestinian nation's final victory will take place in near future with the grace of God,' said Khamenei. Noting that resistance is key to victory, he added, 'As long as there is resistance, the Zionist regime's downfall and demise will continue.'

'During the past years, the Palestinian people's victory was not (to the extent) to establish a government in Tel Aviv, which that will be realized with the grace of God, but the main victory was bringing the Zionist regime to knees, a feat that Arab armies could never accomplish,' continued Khamenei..."

Jesus as Son of God? Muslims now claim Christian beliefs 'mock Islam'

January 1, 2019 World Net Daily reported: "A Christian commentator isn't saying, 'I told you so.'



But he could. With the most recent developments in Uganda, where, according to a Washington Times report, Muslims are now considering 'any public statement of the Christian faith,' to be an insult to Muslims.

And then they believe they can 'justifiably exact revenge.'

Including violent attacks against Christians making statements about their faith. It is commentator Robert Spencer who has written at FrontPageMag that the Times report explains the 'extraordinary revelation.'

'Muslims now consider any public statement of the Christian faith to be a calculated insult to Muslims, for which they can justifiably exact revenge,' he said.

'This is, or should be, sobering news for the comfortable Christians of the West who have made an idol out of 'interfaith dialogue' and fastidiously avoid saying anything remotely critical about Islam, even as the Muslim persecution of Christians continues worldwide.' ..."

Kim warns N. Korea could consider change of tack

January 1, 2019 AFP reported: Nuclear-armed North Korea wants good relations with the US but could consider a change of approach if Washington maintains its sanctions, leader Kim Jong Un warned in his New Year speech Tuesday after 12 months of diplomatic rapprochement.

At a summit with US President Donald Trump in Singapore in June the two signed a vaguely worded pledge on denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula. But progress has since stalled with Pyongyang and Washington arguing over what that means.

"If the US fails to carry out its promise to the world... and remains unchanged in its sanctions and pressure upon the DPRK," Kim said Tuesday, "we might be compelled to explore a new path for defending the sovereignty of our country and supreme interests of our state".

He was willing to meet Trump again at any time, he added, "to produce results welcomed by the international community".

The North is demanding sanctions relief -- it is subject to multiple measures over its banned nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programmes -- and has condemned US insistence on its nuclear disarmament as "gangster-like".

Washington is pushing to maintain the measures against the North until its "final, fully verified denuclearisation".

Kim's speech "expressed his frustration with the lack of progress in negotiations so far", said former South Korean vice unification minister Kim Hyung-seok." ..."

IDF annual report: 1,000 rockets fired at Israel from Gaza in 2018

December 31, 2018 jpost.com reported: "The North Korean leader "obviously had certain expectations that the US would take certain steps -- however rudimentary they are -- after the North blew up a nuclear test site and took other steps. But none of them materialised.

"He is faced with this urgent task to improve his 'socialist economy' -- which is impossible to achieve without lifting of the sanctions." ..."

The Jerusalem Post reports: "One thousands rockets and mortars were fired from the Hamas-run Gaza Strip into southern Israel over the past year, a dramatic rise from the past three years when there were less than 100 in total.

According to statistics released by the IDF on Sunday, of the 1,000 rockets and mortars fired from the Strip, 250 were intercepted by Israel's Iron Dome Missile Defense System and 45 projectiles fell in urban areas.

The majority of the rockets and mortars were fired into southern Israel in late November after a botched IDF commando raid in the southern Gazan city of Khan Younis. In the span of 48 hours, close to 500 rockets and mortars were launched, including a Kornet anti-tank missile fired at a bus.

The IDF has struck Gaza a total of 865 times over the past year in response to the firing of rockets towards southern Israel.

While almost every year since Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip in 2007 the number of rockets fired towards Israel was in triple digits, 2018 has seen the most serious peak of violence between Israel and terror groups in the strip like Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) since the end of Operation Protective Edge in 2014..."

Xi strengthens his grip and stands at the pinnacle of power

December 30, 2018 Asia Times Online reported: "Buried beneath a mountain of presents on Christmas Day was the ultimate gift and it landed in President Xi Jinping's lap. On December 25, China's equivalent of the political 'wise men' gathered for an influential meeting of the Politburo Bureau Standing Committee in Beijing.

Naturally, Xi presided over the event where there were more stars on show than you would find on a Yule-time tree.

The outcome was predictable and illustrated the grip that the general-secretary of the ruling Communist Party has on every aspect of political life in the world's second-largest economy.

An extract from the official statement released by the government-run Xinhua news agency underlined Xi's status as China's most powerful leader since Chairman Mao Zedong..."

