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Netanyahu: the option of reoccupying Gaza is still on the table

April 4, 2019 jpost.com reported: "Israel has not ruled out the option of reoccupying Gaza, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Thursday morning in an interview with KAN news.

'All the options are still on the table, including entering Gaza and occupying it, out of consideration of what is best for Israel,' he said. 'But that is the last option and not the first,' he said...

Netanyahu explained to KAN news the complex balancing act Israel tries to uphold with regard to Gaza, where it has the firepower to militarily crush Hamas, but has concluded it would be a mistake to do except as an option of last resort.

Israel hasn't recaptured Gaza, because once it does, it would have to continue to hold onto that territory and Israel doesn't want to rule the 2 million Palestinians there, Netanyahu said..."

U.S. Planning Five Hypersonic Test Programs in Marshall Islands

April 4, 2019 SpaceDaily.com reported: "The US armed forces are planning five test programs on hypersonic weapons systems in the Marshall Islands in the central Pacific Ocean, Army Space and Missile Command Chief Lieutenant General James Dickinson said in congressional testimony on Wednesday.

'There are currently five active hypersonic test programs in various stages of planning at RTS [the Ronald Reagan Ballistic Missile Defence Test Site],' Dickinson told the House Armed Services Strategic Subcommittee..."

US Air Force and Raytheon collaborate to modernize space command and control system

April 4, 2019 spacedaily.com reported: The U.S. Air Force Life Cycle Management Center and a consortium of tech firms led by Raytheon are modernizing and simplifying the legacy Space Defense Operations Center, a 1990s-era system that tracks and monitors space debris.

Dave Fuino, program director for Raytheon Intelligence, Information and Services, said: "Within just a few months we brought together a team, developed the technology to modernize it, got it on contract and held a series of demos to prove it worked. We went from concept to proving the solution in less than a year, which is really remarkable."

The SPADOC system reached the end of its planned service life. The U.S. Air Force is planning to replace it with modern systems that will simplify operations and provide greater space situational awareness and collision avoidance capabilities. However, the new system won't come online for several years.

"SPADOC provides critical space-tracking capabilities that we must sustain and maintain while we wait for new systems to come online," said Bob Taylor, U.S. Air Force Legacy Space Branch chief. "At the same time, it's critical that we address the obsolescence risk of an aging SPADOC system. So we came up with a really innovative, modern solution to this problem..."

Trump says he strengthened NATO by insisting on higher contributions

April 2, 2019 spacedaily.com reported: "President Donald Trump said Tuesday he has strengthened NATO by insisting on a "rocket" like increase in military spending by allies that he says used to take advantage of US largesse.

"Tremendous progress has been made and NATO's much stronger," Trump told reporters at a White House meeting with NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg ahead of the alliance's 70th anniversary celebrations in Washington.

"It's a rocket ship up," he said of the spending increase, which he said before his presidency had been on a downward "rollercoaster."

"People are paying and I'm very happy," he said.

Trump has long complained about NATO, accusing Western allies of being freeloaders that do not pull their weight on military spending, taking for granted that they can rely on the US defensive shield.

The Trump administration has been especially incensed with Germany, Europe's largest economy, which is not on track to meet a 2014 pledge by NATO members to spend two percent of GDP on defense." ..."

Pentagon seeks drone-fired lasers to destroy nuclear-armed missiles

April 2, 2019 FoxNews.com reported: "The Missile Defense Agency is engineering air-launched, high-powered, long-range laser weapons to destroy attacking nuclear-armed Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles during launch and even as they travel through space — bringing new levels of offensive and defensive layered firepower to existing missile defense technologies.

The Pentagon is, as an initial phase, looking at 'laser scaling' to integrate enough laser energy and power to 'burn a hole through the metal' of an ICBM, US military officials say.

This involves ground tests, laboratory work and ongoing computer simulations to assess the technical feasibility of firing lasers, traveling at the speed of light, from an air platform to derail, intercept, jam or destroy long-range enemy nuclear weapons — such as an ICBM.

Ground and ship-fired lasers able to target enemy drones, incinerate low-flying aircraft and defend ground assets have existed for years.

Engineering a small, air-fired laser able to hit ICBMs at launch, while approaching space or traveling through space — represents a new step in weapons development. For example, developing laser defenses for certain kinds of cruise missiles and ICBMs would bring new possibilities to warfare..."



Lockheed awarded \$2.5B to start work on THAAD systems for Saudis

April 2, 2019 spacedaily.com reported: "Lockheed Martin was awarded an additional \$2.5 billion contract to begin work on production of Terminal High Altitude Area Defense interceptors for Saudi Arabia as part of a \$15 billion for the defensive ballistic missile systems.

Lockheed will provide interceptors and associated one-shot devices, the U.S. Missile Defense Agency announced Monday. With the new contract modification, the value of Lockheed's contract for the systems increased from \$1.4 billion to \$3.9 billion.

The THAAD system is designed to shoot down short- and medium-range ballistic missiles, including weapons of mass destruction, in descent or reentry.

The first flight test occurred in April 1995, and the system has now been deployed by the United States worldwide, in addition to being exported to allies.

The work will be performed in Dallas; Sunnyvale, Cal.; Huntsville, Ala.; Camden, Ark.; and Troy, Ala., and carries an expected completion date of April 1, 2026.

Fiscal 2019 U.S. government procurement funds in the amount of \$922,700 and Saudi foreign military sales funds in the amount of \$1.5 billion are being obligated at time of award.

Last March, Lockheed Martin was awarded a \$945.9 million contract in the first down payment.

For the kingdom, Lockheed will provide 44 THAAD launchers, 360 missile interceptors, 16 THAAD Fire Control and Communications Mobile Tactical Station Group units and seven AN/TPY-2 THAAD radars." ..."

Stick to defence spending pledge, NATO chief tells Germany

April 1, 2019 spacedaily.com reported: "Germany must honour its own promises on defence spending, NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg insisted Monday, as the alliance prepares to mark its 70th anniversary amid unprecedented tensions with Washington.

NATO foreign ministers meet in the US capital this week for a low-key celebration of the alliance's 1949 founding treaty, with US complaints over weak European military spending firmly on the agenda.

US President Donald Trump has repeatedly accused NATO allies -- and economic powerhouse Germany in particular -- of freeloading on America's military muscle and reportedly threatened to "go it alone" if Europe does not step up.

All NATO allies agreed to move towards spending two percent of GDP on defence by 2024, but last month Berlin announced that its own figure was set to fall in the coming years, from 1.37 percent in 2020 to just 1.25 percent in 2023.



The news infuriated Washington, and Stoltenberg said Berlin must live up to commitments it had signed up to at a summit in 2014.

"I expect Germany to make good on the pledge Germany made together with all other NATO allies," Stoltenberg told reporters.

"I expect them to meet spending commitments, and they have submitted to NATO a national plan where they outline how Germany will increase defence spending in real terms by 80 percent over a decade."

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas, speaking in New York ahead of the NATO meeting, said that Berlin had already boosted defence spending by almost 40 percent since 2014 and was one of the alliance's top troop contributors.

"We are grateful for our partnership within NATO, which has enabled us Europeans to enjoy security, stability and prosperity over the last 70 years," he told the American Council on Germany.

"But public debates about burden-sharing in NATO are generating uncertainty -- at a time when Russia is trying to test our unity again and again," he said.

"Europeans know that we need to assume greater responsibility for our security. It lies in our own interest."

In 2018, only seven of NATO's 29 member states hit the two percent target." ..."

Congo Ebola outbreak spreading faster than ever: WHO

April 1, 2019 reuters.com reported: "Democratic Republic of Congo's Ebola outbreak is spreading at its fastest rate yet, eight months after it was first detected, the World Health Organization (WHO) said on Monday.

Each of the past two weeks has registered a record number of new cases, marking a sharp setback for efforts to respond to the second biggest outbreak ever, as militia violence and community resistance have impeded access to affected areas.

Less than three weeks ago, the WHO said the outbreak of the hemorrhagic fever was largely contained and could be stopped by September, noting that weekly case numbers had halved from earlier in the year to about 25.

But the number of cases hit a record 57 the following week, and then jumped to 72 last week, said WHO spokesman Christian Lindmeier..."

More alarmingly, more than half of the Ebola deaths last week occurred outside of treatment centers, according to Congo health ministry data, meaning there is a much greater chance they transmitted the virus to those around them.

"People are becoming infected without access to response measures," Lindmeier told Reuters. The current outbreak is believed to have killed 676 people and infected 406 others. Another 331 patients have recovered." ..."