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## **Iranian boats 'tried to intercept British tanker'**

*July 11, 2019* bbcnews.com reported: "Iranian boats tried to impede a British oil tanker near the Gulf – before being driven off by a Royal Navy ship, the Ministry of Defence has said.

HMS Montrose, a British frigate shadowing the tanker British Heritage, was forced to move between the three boats and the tanker, a spokesman said. He described the Iranians' actions as 'contrary to international law'.

Iran had threatened to retaliate for the seizure of one of its own tankers, but denied any attempted seizure. Boats believed to belong to Iran's Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) approached British Heritage and tried to bring it to a halt as it was moving out of the Gulf into the Strait of Hormuz..."

## **EU against relocation of embassies to Jerusalem**

*July 11, 2019* Arutz Sheva 7 reported: "The European Union (EU) tried to prevent the continued trend of member states opening representative offices in Jerusalem but the initiative failed, Kan 11 News reported on Wednesday.

According to the report, the EU did not like the decision of some European countries to open economic offices in Jerusalem and senior officials tried to lead to the drafting of an official document that would obligate all EU member states and determine, 'Until a final agreement on Jerusalem is reached, the EU and its member states will continue to respect the international agreement on the location of the diplomatic missions.'

Israel understood that such a decision would eliminate the chances of continuing to pressure European countries to relocate their embassies or open a diplomatic representation in the capital.

However, consent of all the EU member states was needed in order to publish the document, and the Czech Republic and Hungary, member states which are considered close friends of Israel, were required to agree to the document and thwarted it..."



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## **As standoff deepens, US tries coalition-building on Iran**

*July 10, 2019* spacedaily.com reported: "In seeking a coalition at sea to monitor Iran, the United States is hoping to present a united front at a time when its hawkish policy has aggravated tensions and key allies are at loggerheads. General Joseph Dunford, the top US military officer, said the United States would take the commanding role and provide surveillance as other countries escort vessels under their own flags.

"I think probably over the next couple weeks we'll identify which nations have the political will to support that initiative and then we'll work directly with the militaries to identify the specific capabilities that'll support that," Dunford said Tuesday.

He said the coalition would operate both in the Strait of Hormuz – the chokepoint to the Gulf through which 20 percent of the world's oil flows – and the Bab el-Mandeb, the crucial shipping line into the Red Sea off war-battered Yemen. The budding coalition comes as tensions soar with Iran, which shot down a US spy drone and has been blamed by Washington for a series of sabotage attacks on oil tankers.

Many observers see Iran as trying to extract a price on President Donald Trump's administration, which imposed crippling sanctions and has tried to stop all of Tehran's oil sales in hopes of weakening the clerical regime.

Trump, who exited a nuclear accord with Iran negotiated by his predecessor Barack Obama, on Wednesday vowed to keep ramping up sanctions – but he also has indicated he does not want war, calling off a planned strike last month at the 11th hour.

In a familiar priority for Trump, he has accused other nations of not paying enough for their own ships' security – a point stressed by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo as he visited allies Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates last month." ..."

## **Brand-New S-500 Missile Systems Can Tackle Attack From Space**

*July 10, 2019* SpaceDaily.com reports: "In late June, Sergei Chemezov, chief executive of the country's defence industry giant Rostec, said that Russia had recently started manufacturing the sophisticated S-500 missile systems.

The new S-500 air defence system will specifically be aimed at countering an attack from outer space, Yuri Muravkin, the deputy chief of the Russian Aerospace Forces' anti-aircraft missile troops, told the Russian daily Krasnaya Zvezda.

'Realizing the fact that nowadays and in the foreseeable future, the boundaries between air and space are being and will be erased as the aerial enemy gradually becomes an aerospace one, it is safe to say that the S-500 Prometey missile systems entering service is [already] in the pipeline', Muravkin pointed out.

The remarks come after Sergei Chemezov, CEO of the state-run corporation Rostec, said in an interview with the Russian broadcaster Rossiya 1 in late June that they are 'already starting to produce the S-500'..."

## **China demands US cancel arms sale to Taiwan**

*July 9, 2019* sinodaily.com reported: China demanded Tuesday that the United States "immediately cancel" a potential sale of \$2.2 billion in arms to self-ruled Taiwan, including battle tanks and anti-aircraft missiles, adding fuel to tensions between the two powers. It would be the first big-ticket US military sale to the democratically-governed island in decades, and comes as ties between Washington and Beijing are already strained by their trade war.

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China has lodged formal complaints through diplomatic channels expressing "strong dissatisfaction and resolute opposition" to the move, foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said at a regular press briefing.

The deal includes 108 M1A2T Abrams tanks, 250 Stinger portable anti-aircraft missiles, related equipment and support at an estimated cost of just over \$2.2 billion, according to the US Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA).

The proposed sale "will contribute to the modernization of the recipient's main battle tank fleet", improve its air defense system and "support the foreign policy and national security of the United States by helping to improve the security and defensive capability (of Taiwan)," DSCA said.

It would not alter the "basic military balance in the region," the agency added, and Congress has been notified. US lawmakers have 30 days to object to the sale but are unlikely to do so." ..."

#### **Jordan: No to deal that neglects Palestinian state**

*July 8, 2019* Arutz Sheva 7 reported: "Jordanian Prime Minister Omar Razzaz said on Sunday that Jordan will not accept any deal that neglects the legitimate right of the Palestinians to establish a state. In talks with Palestinian Authority (PA) cabinet leader Mohammad Shtayyeh, Razzaz underlined Jordan's support for the Palestinians in the face of 'Israeli aggression', reported the Xinhua news agency.

Jordan will not accept any deal or solution that does not 'end the occupation and lead to the creation of an independent Palestinian state along 1967 the borders with East Jerusalem as its capital,' the Jordanian prime minister said.

Any economic solution as an alternative to a political solution will also not be accepted, he added, referring to the US-led Bahrain workshop held in late June in which the US unveiled the economic part of its peace plan.

Razzaz also highlighted Jordan's role in safeguarding the holy sites in Jerusalem, saying his country will never concede its custodianship over the Islamic holy sites in the city..."

#### **Iraq launches new operation to secure desert near Syria border**

*July 8, 2019* spacewar.com reported: "Iraq's military announced a new operation Sunday in an attempt to secure the vast western desert leading to the Syrian border, amid fears jihadist sleeper cells were using the area to regroup.

The operation, dubbed 'Will of Victory', began early Sunday morning and would push to clear the remote territory between the provinces of Salahaddin, Nineveh and Anbar, a statement by the military said.

Iraqi armed forces, paramilitary units of the Shiite-dominated Hashed al-Shaabi, tribal groups and US-led coalition warplanes were all taking part, according to the statement.

'There are pockets of Daesh fighters in the northwestern, western, and southwestern parts of Salahaddin province,' a media official from the province's military command told AFP, using the Arabic acronym for the Islamic State group.

'Daesh is still present in these areas, and the operations will continue until they are cleared.'..."

#### **Pentagon seeks ideas for small military space station**

*July 7, 2019* spacedaily.com reported: "The Defense Innovation Unit of the Pentagon announced a call for ideas for a small, autonomous military space station this week.

The 'solicitation brief,' known in civilian circles as a request for proposal, seeks 'solutions for a self-contained and free flying orbital outpost. The solution must be capable of supporting space assembly, microgravity experimentation, logistics and storage, manufacturing, training, test and evaluation, hosting payloads, and other functions.'

It specifies no more than 35 cubic feet of available experimentation space, indicating it is inappropriate for human habitation. The craft must be able to move in its own orbit, be made of material conducive to low Earth orbit, and be ready for flight two years after a contractor is chosen, the brief stipulates.

The space station would be scalable, or expandable, with the capability of carrying attachments, such as an exterior robotic arm, and eventually, human passengers. The brief does not specifically address the craft's purpose, but appears to be a space station exclusively for military purposes.

A 186-pound payload is also specified, as well as 'zero to one atmosphere pressurization,' indication the craft would operate in near-vacuum conditions and further suggesting that it will not be designed for human space travel..."

#### **European powers call on Iran to halt nuke deal breach, but balk at sanctions**

*July 7, 2019* timesofisrael.com reported: "European powers urged Iran to stick to its nuclear commitments Sunday after Tehran announced it would ramp up uranium enrichment levels, but stopped short of threatening to reimpose sanctions lifted under the 2015 nuclear deal.

Germany, the United Kingdom and the EU urged Iran to walk back its intentions to begin enriching uranium to higher levels than allowed under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, while France said new sanctions were not on the table, despite a call from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to swiftly reimpose the measures.

'While the UK remains fully committed to the deal, Iran must immediately stop and reverse all activities inconsistent with its obligations,' the British Foreign Office said in a statement, adding that it was coordinating a response with other nations.

Germany said it was 'extremely concerned' about Iran's announcement, but was waiting for further information from the UN atomic watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency..."

