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China-Russia joint exercise sends a message to Washington

July 25, 2019 spacedaily.com reported: "An unprecedented joint China-Russia bomber patrol over disputed territory off the coast of South Korea and Japan was a 'massive development' in their bid to challenge US influence in the region, analysts said Wednesday.

The joint patrol caused outcry from Washington's two main allies in the region after both Tokyo and Seoul claimed a Russian plane violated their airspace.

Seoul said a Russian warplane twice entered South Korean airspace near the disputed Dokdo islets — which Tokyo also claims and calls Takeshima — and that it fired warning shots in return. Japan also said it scrambled fighter jets in response.

'It's a big deal because it displays confidence that the air forces of the two nations can coordinate a patrol of this nature in ways that the region will almost certainly find destabilising,' said Lyle Morris, senior policy analyst at RAND Corporation..."

Royal Navy warship becomes first to escort British tankers through Gulf strait

July 25, 2019 lmtonline.com reported: "The British navy has begun escorting vessels traveling through the Strait of Hormuz after Iranian forces seized a British-flagged tanker.

In a statement Thursday, Britain's Defense Ministry said that "the Royal Navy has been tasked to accompany British-flagged ships through the Strait of Hormuz, either individually or in groups, should sufficient notice be given of their passage."

The HMS Montrose, a Royal Navy Type 23 frigate, became the first navy ship to offer an escort in the narrow waterway, Sky News reported Thursday, citing shipping industry sources.

Britain made the decision after Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps on July 19 seized the Stena Impero, a British-flagged tanker, as it passed through the Strait of Hormuz. Iran claimed the Stena Impero was using the wrong channel through the strait and had turned off its signals for longer than allowed.

But the seizure was widely interpreted as a response to British marines taking part in the seizure of an Iranian-flagged tanker near Gibraltar, a British overseas territory. Britain said it sent Royal Marines to board and take control of the Grace 1 tanker because it was suspected of transporting oil to Syria in violation of European Union sanctions targeting Syria's government.

On Wednesday, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani appeared to suggest that Tehran would consider releasing the Stena Impero if Britain released the Grace 1." ..."

North Korea launches two 'short-range missiles' in show of defiance to Donald Trump

July 24, 2019 thesun.co.uk reported: "Kim Jong-un tonight launched two short-range military missiles in a shocking show of defiance to Donald Trump. Military leaders in neighbouring South Korea say the surprise launch took place in the Wonsan region in east of the rogue state. Both projectiles travelled around 270 miles before falling into the Sea of Japan - also known as the East Sea - say reports from the troubled region.

It is the first missile test reported since President Trump and North Korean leader met at the demilitarised zone (DMZ) between the two Koreas at the end of June.

The White House, Pentagon and US State Department did not immediately respond to requests for comment. However, the joint chiefs said South Korean and US militaries were reportedly analysing details of the launches. A US defence official said the secret launch appears to be similar to the recent May 2019 launch where two short range missiles were also launched.

"North Korea is clearly upset that the US and South Korea are conducting joint military exercises," said Harry Kazianis of Washington's Center for the National Interest." ..."

Pyongyang resumed missile tests following a moratorium of over a year, as negotiations with Donald Trump over disarmament and denuclearisation stalled.

North Korea's most recent test was in May when a pair of missiles timed precisely 9 minutes before and 9 minutes after a US test of a nuclear Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM). In a brazen taunt, dictator Kim watched the firing of the weapon at North Korea's Academy of Defence Science." ..."

U.S. may have brought down two Iranian drones

July 24, 2019 Arutz Sheva 7 reported: "The US believes it may have brought down two Iranian drones last week, rather than just the one that has been reported, CENTCOM Commander Gen. Kenneth McKenzie told CBS News on Tuesday.

Asked whether the USS Boxer downed 'only one drone,' McKenzie revealed that he believed the ship had engaged two drones 'successfully' and perhaps even more.

'As always it was a complex tactical picture, we believe two drones. We believe two drones were successfully — there may have been more that we are not aware of — those are the two that we engaged successfully,' said McKenzie. Pressed if the ship had actually brought down two drones, not just one, he replied, 'We are confident we brought down one drone, we may have brought down a second.' ..."



2HMS Montrose

China defends air patrol with Russia after South Korea, Japan fury

July 24, 2019 spacedaily.com reported: “China on Wednesday defended a joint air force exercise with Russia that triggered a furious response from regional US allies South Korea and Japan over a perceived airspace violation.

The incident erupted on Tuesday when a Russian A-50 early warning and control plane violated airspace over the Dokdo islands, Seoul said. The islands are also claimed by Tokyo. South Korea scrambled fighter jets, which fired nearly 400 warning shots at the alleged intruder.

The Chinese and Russian warplanes ‘strictly abided by the relevant regulations of international law and did not enter the airspace of other countries’, defence ministry spokesman Wu Qian told a news conference in Beijing. He did not mention an A-50, the Russian plane Seoul said violated its airspace...”

China eyes high-tech army, says U.S. undermines global stability

July 24, 2019 spacedaily.com reported: “China outlined plans to build a modern, high-tech army in a national defence plan published Wednesday, as it accused Washington of undermining global strategic stability and warned against Taiwanese independence.

The first comprehensive white paper since 2012 offers insight into the world’s largest army as it scrambles to catch up to America’s formidable firepower as tensions deepen between the two powers.

‘International strategic competition is on the rise,’ the document says, adding that the United States has adjusted its national security and defence strategies and adopted ‘unilateral policies’.

The US ‘has provoked and intensified competition among major countries, significantly increased its defence expenditure, pushed for additional capacity in nuclear, outer space, cyber and missile defence, and undermined global strategic stability’...”

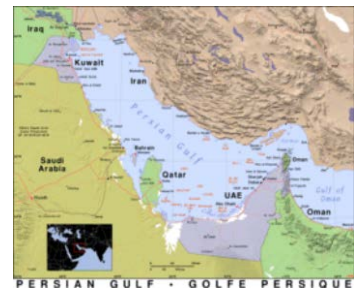
Iran says it’s watching all US ships in Gulf, keeping record of their movements

July 23, 2019 timesofisrael.com reported: “The head of Iran’s navy said Tuesday that Tehran is observing all US ships in the Gulf region and keeps an archive of their movements.

‘We observe all enemy ships, particularly (those of) America, point-by-point from their origin until the moment they enter the region,’ Rear Admiral Hossein Khanzadi said, according to a report on Iran’s Young Journalists news site, cited by Reuters.

‘We have complete images and a large archive of the daily and moment-by-moment traffic of the coalition forces and America,’ Khandazi added, noting that the images of the vessels were captured using drones.

The senior naval officer also said that Iran will hold joint naval exercises with ‘allied countries’ for the first time in March 2020, without specifying which nations would take part in the exercises...”



Iran to meet with nuclear partners amid tanker crisis

July 23, 2019 spacedaily.com reported: “Iran said Tuesday it will attend an urgent meeting with countries still party to the troubled nuclear deal, as it declared itself the ‘guardian of security’ in the Gulf amid a tanker crisis.

The planned July 28 meeting is aimed at salvaging the hard-won deal, on life-support since the United States withdrew from it last year and reimposed biting sanctions against Iran.

Amid rising hostilities with the United States, Iran’s Revolutionary Guards seized a tanker sailing under the flag of US ally Britain on Friday. State television aired new footage of the crew aboard the Stena Impero tanker which Iran has impounded at the port of Bandar Abbas for allegedly breaking ‘international maritime rules’...”

N. Korean leader inspects new submarine as talks with US stall

July 23, 2019 spacedaily.com reported: “North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has inspected a new submarine, paying special attention to its combat weapons systems, a week after the nuclear-armed state warned looming military drills in the South could derail nuclear talks with Washington.

The submarine will be deployed to the East Sea, also known as the Sea of Japan, the North’s official KCNA news agency said Tuesday, without disclosing its specifications or the location of the inspection.

‘The Supreme Leader learned in detail about its operational and tactical data and combat weapon systems,’ KCNA said.

The inspection comes a week after Pyongyang warned next month’s US-South Korea military drills ‘will affect’ proposed working-level nuclear talks with Washington that Kim and President Trump agreed to pursue during an impromptu meeting in the Demilitarized Zone that divides the two Koreas on June 30. But no meetings between the two sides have taken place since then.

There are close to 30,000 US troops stationed in South Korea and their annual drills with tens of thousands of South Korean soldiers have always infuriated the North...”

Iran claims to catch 17 CIA spies, sentences some to death

July 22, 2019 timesofisrael.com reported: “Iran on Monday said that it had caught 17 CIA spies operating in the country at sensitive facilities and that some of them had been sentenced to death. A senior official at the Ministry of Intelligence told a press conference that the spies were found in ‘critical and crucial centers as well as the private sector’ and that some were working as a ‘contractor or consultant,’ Iranian media reported.



The spies were found at nuclear, military, and cyber-crimes centers, the official said. In June, Iran said it had dismantled a CIA spy network operating in the country and that it would provide more details at a later date...”

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