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France, Germany offer NATO plans after 'brain death' row

November 20, 2019 Spacewar.com reported: "France and Germany outlined separate proposals for reforming NATO on Wednesday after President Emmanuel Macron slammed the alliance as experiencing "brain death", causing uproar just weeks before a crucial summit.

French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian used the one-day meeting with his 28 NATO counterparts to explain Macron's damning verdict and offer ideas for improvement. Macron argued in an Economist interview that Turkey's military incursion into Syria and US unpredictability under President Donald Trump indicated a failure of strategic thinking at NATO.

Le Drian suggested a "small group of eminent persons" be formed to reflect on "the vision the alliance has of its values and aims" and report back to leaders at their summit in 2021.

The experts should focus on NATO's relationship with Russia and the future security challenges -- in particular terrorism, the rise of China and the impact of new military technology, Le Drian told the ministers."...

NATO has not had a happy 70th birthday year. Macron's comments came alongside Trump's insistent complaints about weak European defence spending and growing concerns about Turkey, which has bought missiles from Russia and launched a military operation in Syria with scant regard for allies.

French officials insist Macron made a bold and necessary step by starkly spelling out truths that other allies preferred to gloss over. But Macron's arguments that Europe should try to ensure its own security without relying on the US provoked anger from eastern European allies who feel directly threatened by Russia.

Diplomats from other countries point out that it is for now wholly unrealistic for Europe to think it can defend itself without US help -- expert estimates suggest filling the gap would cost hundreds of billions of euros.

"There is currently no credible alternative to NATO. We need American capabilities," one diplomat said." ..."

FM urges international community to issue 'military threat' against Iran

November 21, 2019 timesofisrael.com reported: "Foreign Minister Israel Katz...called on the international community to back up its warnings against Iran's nuclear program with an 'effective military threat,' further upping Jerusalem's increasingly belligerent rhetoric against Tehran.

The Islamic Republic is the 'main threat to the region,' he said, listing the regime's efforts to obtain nuclear weapons capability, its ballistic missiles program and its support for terror organizations such as Hezbollah, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

'The US sanctions against Iran are important and effective and the maximum pressure campaign must be continued,' he said, speaking at the Jerusalem Post's Diplomatic Conference in the capital. He noted that the current civil unrest in Iran, Iraq and Lebanon shows that the economic pressure is working.

'The publics in the Arab states and in Iran itself are rising up against Iran's brutal oppression,' the foreign minister said..."

Russia: Israel has 'sharply' increased strikes on Syria

November 21, 2019 jpost.com reported: "The intensity of Israeli airstrikes on Syria have 'sharply' increased and add tension and raise the potential for conflict in the war-torn country, Russia's Foreign Ministry said following strikes by the Jewish state.

Russia accused Israel of violating the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria and other states in the region, and stated that 'Such developments are of the most serious concern and are rejected by Moscow.

'Israeli actions add tension and increase the conflict potential of the situation around Syria, and are contrary to efforts to normalize the situation and achieve stability in Syria, including a political settlement in this country,' read the statement. On Tuesday morning, Israeli jets struck over 20 Iranian and Syrian targets, including warehouses and command centers, in response to four rockets being fired towards Israel's Golan Heights the previous morning..."

Iran Mobilizes Half a Million Paramilitary Fighters to Suppress Protests

November 20, 2019 Breitbart.com reported: "Iran on Tuesday claimed 'calm has been restored in the country' following protests triggered by a massive hike in gasoline prices, but the Internet remained down and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) announced it was mobilizing half a million members of a brutal paramilitary force known as the Basij to control the streets.

Reuters noted that even as a spokesman for the Iranian judiciary declared the protests were 'eighty percent' over with only 'minor problems' remaining, social media posts smuggled past the government's Internet blockade showed demonstrations continuing in several cities.

'State news agency IRNA said handouts to the poor, the most consistent supporters of the clerical establishment, had started on Tuesday,' Reuters added. The Iranian government claims it hiked gas prices primarily to raise more money for welfare programs..."

In sudden switch, Canada backs pro-Palestine UN resolution

November 20, 2019 timesofisrael.com reported: "Canada on Tuesday supported a United Nations resolution calling for the establishment of a Palestinian state, in an unexpected move that led Israeli officials and Canadian supporters of the Jewish state to express disappointment and concern over what they said was a possible indication of a pivot from Ottawa's decade-long pro-Israel voting pattern.



NATO Headquarters

Canada joined 165 other nations by voting yes on the resolution entitled 'The right of the Palestinian people to self-determination' at the UN General Assembly's Third Committee.

Over the last decade, both Liberal and Conservative Canadian governments have annually voted against the resolution, which, among other things, urges an 'end to the Israeli occupation' and calls for the preservation of the 'territorial unity, contiguity and integrity of all of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.'

Sponsored by North Korea, Egypt, Nicaragua, Zimbabwe and Palestine, Resolution A/C.3/74/L.58 also recognized the Palestinian people's right to an independent state and urges the international community to 'support and assist the Palestinian people in the early realization of their right to self-determination.'

Only Israel, the US, Nauru, Micronesia and the Marshall Islands voted against the resolution; nine countries, including Australia, Guatemala and Rwanda, abstained..."

Genetically engineered babies 'within two years' as scientists make breakthrough

November 19, 2019 dailystar.co.uk reported: "Genetically engineered designer babies could be just two years away and spark a revolution in editing human embryos, scientists have said. Researchers have predicted the "ethically sound" creation of the so-called designer babies by 2022. It is expected to spark a revolution in a new wave of genetic medication of humans.



Kevin Smith, from Abertay University in Dundee, has published analysis that found the risks of gene editing are now low enough to warrant its use with human embryos. He argued a morally justifiable attempt could be less than two years away.

And he predicted such research could kick-start a revolution in producing genetically-modified (GM) people."

North Korea 'no longer interested' in summits with US: KCNA

November 18, 2019 spacewar.com reported: "North Korea is "no longer interested" in summits with the US unless Washington offers new concessions in their nuclear negotiations, Pyongyang said Monday, hours after Donald Trump hinted at the prospect.

"You should act quickly, get the deal done," Trump tweeted Sunday, referring to North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. "See you soon!"

Kim and Trump have met three times since June last year, but talks have been gridlocked since their Hanoi summit in February broke up in disagreement over sanctions relief, while October's working-level talks rapidly broke down in Sweden.

Pyongyang has set Washington a deadline of the end of the year to come forward with a fresh offer, and foreign ministry advisor Kim Kye Gwan said the US was stalling while "pretending it has made progress".

He interpreted Trump's tweet as a signal for a new summit, he said in a statement carried by state news agency KCNA, but declared: "We are no longer interested in such talks that bring nothing to us."

China Calls on US to 'Stop Flexing Muscles' in South China Sea

November 18, 2019 voanews.com reported: "China on Monday called on the U.S. military to stop flexing its muscles in the South China Sea and to avoid adding 'new uncertainties' over Taiwan, during high-level talks that underscored tension between the world's two largest economies.

The remarks by Chinese Defense Minister Wei Fenghe to U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper, recounted by a Chinese spokesman, came just two weeks after a top White House official denounced Chinese 'intimidation' in the busy waterway.

It also came a day after Esper publicly accused Beijing of 'increasingly resorting to coercion and intimidation to advance its strategic objectives' in the region. During closed-door talks on the sidelines of a gathering of defense ministers in Bangkok, Wei urged Esper to 'stop flexing muscles in the South China Sea and to not provoke and escalate tensions in the South China Sea', the spokesman, Wu Qian, said..."

Turkey says will use Russian S-400 defense system

November 18, 2019 SpaceDaily.com reports: "Turkey will use the S-400 missile defense system it has bought from Russia despite the US threat of sanctions, a senior defense official said Saturday.

The purchase of the Russian system and its subsequent delivery of the system in July has been a major source of friction between two NATO allies Turkey and the United States. Last month the US said Turkey would be spared sanctions under a 2017 law if the S-400 system is not turned on.

'It is not a correct approach to say 'we will not use for someone else's sake' a system we had purchased out of our need and we paid that amount of money,' Ismail Demir, the head of the Defense Industry Directorate, a government body, told private *CNN Turk* broadcaster.

'We will do our duty and (the system) will become usable. How it will be used is a decision to be made later,' he said..."

Space-based radar suggests North Korean nuke equivalent to '17 Hiroshimas'

November 15, 2019 spacedaily.com reported: "North Korea withdrew from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in 2003. It subsequently developed nuclear weapons, with five underground nuclear tests culminating in a suspected thermonuclear explosion (a hydrogen bomb) on 3 September 2017. Now a team of scientists, led by Dr. K. M. Sreejith of the Space Applications Centre, Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), have used satellite data to augment measurements of tests on the ground.

The researchers find that the most recent test shifted the ground by a few metres, and estimate it to be equivalent to 17 times the size of the bomb dropped on Hiroshima in 1945. The new work appears in a paper in *Geophysical Journal International*, a publication of the Royal Astronomical Society...

Based on the deformation of the ground, the ISRO team predict that the explosion created a cavity with a radius of 66 metres. It had a yield of between 245 and 271 kilotonnes, compared with the 15 kilotonnes of the 'Little Boy' bomb used in the attack on Hiroshima in 1945..."