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## Turkey, Syria, Russia defence ministers meet for first talks since 2011

*December 29, 2022 france24.com* reported: "The defence ministers of Russia, Turkey and Syria met in Moscow on Wednesday, the first such talks since a war broke out in Syria, the Russian defence ministry said. It was also the first meeting between the defence ministers of Turkey and Syria since the start of the war in 2011.

Russia and Turkey are both involved in Syria, with Moscow supporting the Damascus regime against its opponents, and Ankara backing rebels. The meeting came as Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has repeatedly threatened to launch a military offensive in northern Syria against Kurdish groups.

Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu and his Turkish and Syrian counterparts, Hulusi Akar and Ali Mahmoud Abbas, discussed "ways to resolve the Syrian crisis, the problem of refugees, and joint efforts to combat extremist groups in Syria", said the Russian defence ministry.

It added that the meeting had been "constructive" with a need to "continue it in the interests of further stabilising the situation" in Syria and the region.

The Turkish defence ministry struck a similar note, saying the meeting was held in a "constructive atmosphere".

"At the meeting, the Syrian crisis, the refugee problem and joint efforts to combat all terrorist organisations in Syria were discussed," the ministry said.

Syria's state news agency SANA, quoting the defence ministry, said that the Syrian spy chief was also present and the meeting was "positive."..."

## Under New Defense Plan, Japan May Become 'Normal' World Power

*December 28, 2022 newdelhitimes.com* reported: "Japan this month took a major step toward loosening its postwar military restraints, unveiling new policies that will allow the Asian giant to play a much bigger role in regional and global security affairs.

Under a new National Security Strategy (NSS) and two other documents released in mid-December, Japan will roughly double defense spending over the next five years and for the first time deploy missiles that can hit military targets in other countries.

The policies smash through decades-old taboos in Japan, which has embraced a relatively restrained defense posture under its technically pacifist constitution drafted by the United States following Tokyo's defeat in World War II.

"By realizing the vision articulated in the three documents, Japan might finally become a 'normal nation' in terms of its ability to defend itself," said Tobias Harris, a Japan politics specialist and deputy director at the German Marshall Fund.

"But these documents are the result of a long-term process of thinking about Japan's changing threat environment," Harris said in a blog post.

Japan has steadily boosted its de facto military, called the Japan Self-Defense Forces, especially as China has become more powerful and assertive with its neighbors over the last decade or so. But Japan's self-imposed constitutional restraints mean its military power does not measure up to its economic prowess. Though Japan has the world's third-largest economy, it ranks only ninth in global defense spending.

That could soon change. The new plan would boost defense spending to 2% of Japan's GDP, up from the traditional 1%, over the next five years. Japan would then only trail the United States and China in overall defense spending, barring any other changes in the global rankings."..."

## 'The battle isn't over'

*December 27, 2022 Arutz Sheva 7* reported: "Israeli forces struck a 'powerful' blow against the Hamas and Islamic Jihad terrorist organizations in Gaza over the weekend, Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu said Monday morning, as he spoke out on the Egyptian-brokered ceasefire agreement with Hamas.



Japan Self-Defense Forces

“Over the past two days, we struck a powerful blow against Hamas and Islamic Jihad,” said Netanyahu. “We hit more than 350 targets, we hit terrorist leaders and officials and destroyed ‘terrorist towers.’”

Netanyahu added that despite the ceasefire, the battle against Hamas was not over.

“The campaign isn’t finished, and it will require patience and careful judgment. We’re prepared for its continuation.”

“The goal was and remains to secure quiet and bring security to the residents of the south. I send my condolences to the bereaved families and I wish the injured a speedy recovery.” ...”

### **Iranian president vows no mercy for ‘hostile’ protesters**

*December 27, 2022 timesofisrael.com* reported: “Iran will show “no mercy” toward “hostile” opponents of the Islamic Republic, President Ebrahim Raisi said Tuesday, after more than 100 days of protests sparked by death of Iranian-Kurdish woman Mahsa Amini.

The “riots,” as Tehran generally refers to them, were triggered by the September 16 death in custody of Amini, 22, after her arrest for an alleged breach of the strict dress code for women. Addressing a crowd in Tehran, Raisi accused “hypocrites, monarchists and all anti-revolutionary currents” for the widespread demonstrations.

“The embrace of the nation is open to all those who were lured,” said the ultraconservative president at a funeral procession for unidentified soldiers who perished during its eight-year war in the 1980s with neighboring Iraq.

“The embrace of the nation is open to everyone, but we will show no mercy to those who are hostile,” he added.

Iranian officials say hundreds of people have been killed, including members of the security forces, and thousands have been arrested nationwide.” ...”

### **Two Russian nationals, including Putin critic, found dead in hotel in India**

*December 27, 2022 jpost.com* reported: “Russian politician and businessman Pavel Antov was found lying in a pool of blood outside a hotel in eastern India on Monday, just days after his friend, Vladimir Bidenov, died at the same hotel.

Antov was a member of the legislative assembly of the Vladimir Region and founded the Vladimir Standard meat processing plant. He was ranked as the richest civil servant in Russia in 2019, with an income of 9.97 billion rubles.

"Our colleague, a successful entrepreneur, philanthropist Pavel Antov passed away. On behalf of the deputies of the United Russia faction, I express my deep condolences to relatives and friends," said Vice Speaker of the Regional Parliament Vyacheslav Kartukhin.

The fact that Antov fell out of a hotel window sparked concerns of foul play, as opponents of Russian President Vladimir Putin have been killed in similar ways. An unnamed police source told NDTV that Antov's death appeared to be a suicide as Antov was depressed after his friend's death.

On Thursday, Bidenov was found lying unconscious in his room at the hotel, with a few empty wine bottles around him. He was rushed to a local hospital where doctors declared him dead. Odisha Police announced on Tuesday that the inquiry into the two deaths was being taken over by the Crime Branch, Crime Investigation Department of India.” ...”

### **Taiwan reports China's largest incursion yet to air defence zone**

*December 26, 2022 reuters.com* reported: “Seventy-one Chinese air force aircraft including fighter jets and drones entered Taiwan's air defence identification zone in the past 24 hours, the island's government said on Monday, the largest reported incursion to date. Of the aircraft, 43 also crossed the Taiwan Strait's median line, an unofficial buffer between the two sides that lies within the defence zone, Taiwan's Defence Ministry said in a report, as Beijing continues military activities close to the Chinese-claimed island.

The White House said the United States was concerned by China's military activity near Taiwan, which it called “provocative” and “destabilizing,” adding that it risked miscalculations and undermined regional stability.

China, which claims Taiwan as its own territory, said it had conducted “strike drills” in the sea and airspace around Taiwan on Sunday in response to what it said was provocation from the democratically governed island and the United States. Taiwan, which strongly rejects China's sovereignty claims, said the drills showed Beijing was destroying regional peace and trying to intimidate Taiwan's people.” ...”



*Pavel Antov*

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