

## Vahidi Urges Turkey, Syria Dialog

Defense Minister Brigadier General Ahmad Vahidi said on Wednesday that existing tensions on Syria-Turkey borders will be harmful to peace and security of the region and the two sides should resolve their differences through talks.

Speaking to reporters after a cabinet session, he said the two sides should try to ease tensions along their borders, IRNA reported.

"The issue could turn into a bigger problem which might engulf all countries of the region, he underlined.

To resolve the issue, the two sides should hold dialog,



expand cooperation and respect each other's sovereignty, he said.

NATO has adopted a politically-motivated stand in dealing with the issue which is not right, the general pointed out.

The issue between two Islamic states has nothing to do with western countries, Vahidi underlined.

Interference of NATO or any other foreign forces will be harmful and will endanger friendly ties among regional countries, he said.

The minister ruled out the news that Iran, Russia and China are to conduct a joint military war game in Syrian territory.

Iran is now self-sufficient in production of various missiles with high accuracy, he added.

Tensions have been running high between Ankara and Damascus since Syria shot down a Turkish fighter jet reportedly crossing into Syrian airspace earlier this month.

On June 22, Syria said its air defense forces shot down a Turkish F-4 Phantom in the Syrian airspace "according to the laws that govern such situations". The aircraft crashed into the Mediterranean Sea.

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu told TRT television on June 24, "According to our conclusions, our plane was shot down in international airspace, 13 nautical miles from Syria."

On June 26, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Ankara would retaliate "with determination" and take "necessary steps by determining the time, place and method by itself."

"The rules of engagement of the Turkish Armed Forces have changed given this new development," Erdogan told the Turkish parliament.

He made the remarks a day after Syrian Foreign Ministry spokesman Jihad Makdissi said in a press conference in Damascus that the Turkish warplane "violated Syrian airspace, and in turn Syrian air defenses fired back and the plane crashed inside Syrian territorial waters".

## ICRC, IRCS For Stronger Ties

Director General of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Yves Daccord ended a two-day visit to Tehran during which he signed a memorandum of understanding with Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) and held talks with senior Iranian government officials.

The primary objective of the memorandum of understanding is to reinforce the strategic partnership between the ICRC and the IRCS to strengthen the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement through joint activities benefiting the partners and ultimately the people receiving aid, a press release issued by the UN Information Center (UNIC) said.

"The memorandum reaffirms the commitment of the two movement partners to boost their cooperation, particularly in joint operations—whether in Iran or in other parts of the world where both are active," said Daccord.

"The memorandum of understanding confirms the close cooperation between our two organizations and our joint ambitions in the fields of physical rehabilitation, promotion of international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles, and weapon clearance," said Abolhassan Faqih, the president of the Iranian Red Crescent Society.

After meeting with General Kalantari, Iran's deputy defense minister for international affairs, communication and defensive studies, Daccord said, "The focus of our discussions was on providing support for the Iranian Mine Action Center and Developing Joint Cooperation."

During his stay in Iran, the ICRC director general also visited the Iranian Red Crescent's General Rehabilitation Center, its Relief and Rescue Organization, Helal Iran Textile Industries (which is owned by the Red Crescent), Soha (a manufacturer of disposable medical devices which is affiliated with the Red Crescent), and the Iranian Red Crescent museum.

# Call to Raise Trade Within ECO Iran Expects Rational EU Approach



Ali Akbar Salehi

Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi said trade exchanges within the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) were insufficient and urged member states to take necessary steps to increase economic cooperation.

In remarks in Astana on Wednesday at the 12th meeting Iran-Kazakhstan joint trade, economic, scientific, technical and cultural committee, he said that the two countries, as ECO members, should move toward increasing trade within the grouping.

He further said that bilateral trade exchanges was not in line with the capacities of the two countries and noted that Iran for its turn has taken big steps to provide access for Central Asian countries especially Kazakhstan to free waters.

### > Ready to Host Talks

As Iran and the six major world powers (G5+1) plan to continue talks at an expert level in the future, Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev said Astana is ready to host negotiations between the two sides.

In a meeting with Salehi in Astana, Nazarbayev said Kazakhstan's readiness to host future talks between Iran and the G5+1 was a goodwill gesture, ISNA reported.

He expressed the country's readiness to expand economic and trade ties with Iran given the potentials of both sides.

The minister noted that Kazakhstan has taken practical measures to improve ties with Iran in all fields.

Salehi, for his part, described relations between Tehran and Astana as "good and growing" and called for strengthening cooperation in all fields.

The minister pointed to the latest regional developments, particularly the Syrian issue, and said it is an improper approach to impose a government on a country when this responsibility lies with the people of that country.

Salehi arrived in Kazakhstan Wednesday morning to participate in the 12th meeting of the Tehran-Astana economic cooperation commission.

He was greeted on arrival at the airport by Kazakh deputy transportation minister and Iran's Ambassador to Astana Qorban Seifi early Wednesday morning.

He held a meeting with Kazakhstan's Foreign Minister Yerzhan Kazykhanov later in the day.

### > Peaceful Nuclear Program

Speaking to reporters after his meetings with the Kazakh president and Minister of Transport and Communications Askar Zhumagaliyev, Salehi appreciated Kazakh's positive stance on

Tehran's peaceful nuclear program.

He announced that Kazakh officials have voiced preparedness to host the next round of talks between Tehran and the six world powers.

Iran and the Group 5+1 (the five permanent UN Security Council members plus Germany) have held several rounds of talks.

Iran and the six world powers had two days of hectic negotiations in Russia on June 18-19.

At the end of the talks, Iran's top negotiator Saeed Jalili and EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton announced that they will hold a meeting after talks between their deputies.

Baqeri and deputy head of EU's foreign policy affairs Helga Schmid will meet after an expert meeting in Istanbul on July 3.

After a meeting between Baqeri and Schmid, Jalili and Ashton will meet again.

### > Policy of Confrontation

Salehi downplayed the effectiveness of the EU oil ban which is to come into effect later this week, although he stressed that "confrontation serves no one's interests".

The 27 EU member states agreed in January to stop buying Iranian oil exports as of July 1, 2012 in a move to pressure Tehran to give up its nuclear rights.

Speaking to reporters after meeting with the acting deputy foreign minister of Cyprus in Larnaca on Tuesday, the foreign minister played down the start of the EU oil and banking embargos on Iran on July 1, and noted, "We are accustomed to sanctions and this is nothing new."

He called on the EU to show more rationality, and cautioned, "Confrontation serves no one's interests."

Salehi said, "We see no reason (for the other side) to move in a wrong direction because interaction is the correct path," and noted, "Countries can have differences but at the same time can cooperate with each other."

Washington and its allies accuse Iran of trying to develop nuclear weapons under the cover of a civilian nuclear program.

Iran denies the charges and insists that its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes only.

Despite the rules enshrined in the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) entitling every member state, including Iran, to the right of uranium enrichment, Tehran is now under four rounds of UN Security Council sanctions for turning down West's calls to give up its right of uranium enrichment.

Tehran has dismissed the West's demand as politically tainted and illogical, stressing sanctions and pressures merely consolidate Iranians' national resolve to continue the path.

## Wahhabi Terrorist Gang Broken Up

Iranian intelligence and security forces managed to disband a Wahhabi terrorist group which plotted to carry out sabotage operations in Iran.

According to Fars News Agency dispatches, the terrorist team was sponsored by extremist groups (Salafists) and organized by anti-revolutionary elements outside the country.

One of the detainees has said that the gang intended to "assassinate a number of senior clerics" and a sum of one billion rials (about \$80,000) had been offered for the operation.

Wahhabism is a strictly orthodox Sunni Muslim sect from Saudi Arabia.

The sect was founded by Abdul Wahhab (1703-1792). They claim to be striving to purify Islamic beliefs and are strongly opposed to Shiism. Osama bin Laden, head of the Al-Qaeda terrorist group, was a Wahhabi Muslim.

Officials not just in Iran, but throughout the region have on various occasions denounced extremism of the Wahhabis in certain countries, urging Muslim communities to be more vigilant and united.

## Saudi FM's Remarks Denounced

Iran has slammed the recent remarks by Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Saud Al-Faisal accusing Tehran of meddling in the internal affairs of other countries.

"Infringing on all international rules and conventions, Saudi military forces have interfered in the internal affairs of their neighboring state and engage in repressing defenseless civilians," Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast said on Wednesday, ISNA reported.

The Iranian official was referring to the deployment of Saudi troops to crisis-hit Bahrain last year.

On March 14, 2011, Saudi Arabia deployed troops to its neighboring state at Manama rulers' request to help crush the nationwide anti-government protests there.



Anti-regime demonstrations continue in Bahrain despite the regime's violent crackdown. The Bahraini demonstrators hold King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa responsible for the killing of protesters during the uprisings that began in February 2011.

Mehmanparast also denounced further remarks by the Saudi foreign minister regarding Iran's negotiations with the G5+1.

"The nuclear policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the corresponding negotiations are pursued totally transparently, explicitly and seriously based on defending Iran's nuclear rights," the Foreign Ministry spokesman said.

Addressing a joint ministerial meeting between the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (PGCC) and the European Union (EU) in Luxembourg on Monday, Faisal had claimed that the talks with Iran over its nuclear energy program are a "waste of time" and should be pushed towards a time-limited process. Iran and the G5+1—Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States plus Germany—wrapped up two days of talks in Moscow on June 19. The two sides agreed to continue the talks on a follow-on technical level in Istanbul, Turkey, on July 3.

Elsewhere, Mehmanparast underlined Iran's stance on the three Persian Gulf islands of Abu Mousa, the Greater Tunb and the Lesser Tunb and stressed that the islands will for ever belong to Iran.

Iran's government and military authorities have issued serious warnings to the United Arab Emirates and its backers, cautioning them to back off from Iranian territories.

International documents clearly show that the islands which were historically owned by Iran, temporarily fell to British control in 1903. They were returned to Iran based on an agreement in 1971 before the UAE was established.

Iran has repeatedly declared that its ownership of the three islands is not open to negotiations.

The UAE continues to make territorial claims against the Islamic Republic despite historical evidence and international regulations.



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