

## IRGC Commander Dismisses Enemy Threats

A senior military commander downplayed the enemies' threats against the Islamic Republic, saying the country has extended its security borders to the East Mediterranean.

"We have extended our security borders to the East Mediterranean and their (the enemies') deceptive ploys failed to stop our movement," Deputy Commander of the Islamic Revolution's Guards Corps (IRGC) Brigadier General Hossein Salami said.

He underlined that the enemy knows well that it will vanish if it launches a military strike against Iran, Press TV wrote on Saturday.

The US, Israel and some of their allies have repeatedly accused Iran of pursuing non-civilian objectives in its nuclear energy program, with the Israeli regime repeatedly threatening to attack Iran's nuclear facilities based on the unfounded allegation.

Iran rejects the allegation over its nuclear energy program, arguing that as a committed signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and a member of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), it has every right to use nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

Salami said that the enemies intend to deprive Iran of its nuclear capability but the country's economic achievements have rendered their plots ineffective.

"Today, despite sanctions, economic pressures, psychological warfare and cultural invasion, Islamophobia is advancing, and the people of this land will not allow the enemy to rejoice in exerting pressure," the IRGC commander pointed out.

He noted that Iran would achieve victory against the enemies under the guidelines of Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

Iranian officials have promised a crushing response to any military strike against the country, warning that any such measure could result in a war that would spread beyond the Middle East.

## US Joint Military Drill Slammed

Navy Commander Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari criticized the US for its upcoming mine sweeping exercises with tens of its allied naval forces in the Persian Gulf in May.

Speaking to reporters at a press conference on the sidelines of a coordination meeting of Navy organs and units on Saturday, Sayyari blasted the US for its Iranophobia plots and said that Washington uses such drills to launch media hype against Iran, but its allies eventually ditched it when the time for action comes, Fars News Agency reported.

"As Americans have declared, they plan to carry out joint mine sweeping drills with around 30 countries, but these measures are all line with (their) Iranophobia" plans, he said.

The Admiral further recalled a similar US Navy plan to conduct joint exercises with 26 countries in the Persian Gulf and said the number of participating nations later dwindled to six and "in the end no country took part in the drills except for the US and Britain".

Yet, he said Iran will not sit silent when enemy troops embark on staging maneuvers in the region.

Sayyari further stated that Iran will start operating a new mine sweeping system in the Persian Gulf in the coming days.

"This week we will bring into operation a mine sweeping system that we are now working on so that if trans-regional enemies make a (hostile) move in this region, we could be able to sweep the seabed," the Navy commander said.

Last month, Iranian Defense Minister Brigadier General Ahmad Vahidi announced Tehran's readiness to share its mine-sweeping experiences and expertise with other countries on humanitarian grounds. He noted that Iran sustained heavy damages during the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war due to excessive use of mines and cluster bombs by Saddam's military forces, and said that the Iranian mine-sweeping experts are prepared to provide assistance to other countries in mine-sweeping.

Brigadier General Vahidi said mines and cluster munitions, characterized by failure to discriminate civilians and non-civilians, not only cause extreme pain for military men but also civilians during war, leaving negative impact on the environment and human communities after the war ends.

## Earthquake Hits Bushehr

An earthquake with a magnitude of 4.2 on the Richter scale jolted Bardkhan district of the southern province of Bushehr Saturday morning.

The Seismological center affiliated to the Geophysics Institute of Tehran University registered the quake at 08:43 hours local time (0413 GMT), IRNA reported.

The quake was epicentered in an area located at 51.60 degrees east longitude and 27.96 degrees north latitude.

There was no report on probable loss of life or damage caused by the quake.

On April 9, a strong earthquake measuring 6.1 on the Richter scale hit the town of Kaki, some 90 kilometers southeast of Bushehr at a depth of 12 kilometers.

At least 39 people were killed and more than 900 others were injured.

The quake was followed by many aftershocks, which also jolted the nearby city of Khor-Mowj.

A 7.5-magnitude earthquake also struck a sparsely populated rural area between the Iranian provincial cities of Saravan and Khash on April 16.

The quake, unprecedented in the past 40 years, prompted officials to declare a state of emergency in the region.

One person was killed and five others were injured in the city of Saravan.

Iran sits astride several major faults in the earth's crust and is prone to frequent earthquakes, many of which have been devastating.

# FM for Quartet Talks on Syria



Ali Akbar Salehi

Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi called on Egypt to hold urgent quartet talks to find a solution to the crisis in Syria.

In an interview with the Lebanese Al Mayadeen television channel, the top diplomat voiced Tehran's readiness to host or attend the negotiations in any country and at any level.

During a summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in Mecca in August 2012, Egypt's President Mohamed Morsi presented an initiative to establish a contact group on Syria comprising Iran, Egypt, Turkey and Saudi Arabia.

A high-level meeting of the quartet group was held on September 17, 2012 about a week after preparatory talks in Cairo by lower-ranking officials from the four countries.

The Iranian, Egyptian, and Turkish presidents also met in Cairo on February 6 and called for an immediate solution to the crisis in Syria and an end to the bloodshed.

"Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi's initiative of forming a quartet committee comprising Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey, to resolve the Syrian crisis is very important and effective, given Egypt's position in the Arab

World and the Muslim World," Salehi said.

He added that Iran has made "very few" changes to the initiative, which have nothing to do with the "substance" of the proposal.

Syria has been experiencing unrest since March 2011 and tens of thousands of people, including large numbers of army and security personnel, have been killed in the turmoil.

The Syrian government says the chaos is being orchestrated from outside the country, and there are reports that a very large number of the militants are foreign nationals.

Damascus blames western countries and some of their regional allies including Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey of arming the opposition and fueling the crisis in the country, as reports indicate that a large number of insurgents fighting the Syrian government are foreign nationals.

Several international human rights organizations have accused the foreign-sponsored insurgents of committing war crimes.

Iran has repeatedly rejected foreign intervention in Syria's internal affairs, calling for national dialog as the only way out of the country's prolonged impasse.

## Police Seize Over 2.7 Tons Of Narcotics

Drug combat squads seized a large amount of narcotics in clashes with traffickers along the eastern borders over the past two months, a senior anti-narcotics official announced on Saturday.

"In a series of operations in the eastern parts of the country, over 2.7 tons of different types of narcotics were seized from drug traffickers in the last two months," Undersecretary-General of the Anti-Drug Headquarters for international affairs General Bahram Norouzi said.

He noted that losses to the tune of \$4mln were inflicted on the drug traffickers in the last two months of operations, Fars News Agency reported.

Eastern Iran borders Afghanistan, which is the

world's number one opium and drug producer. Iran's geographical position has made the country a favorite transit corridor for drug traffickers who intend to smuggle their cargoes from Afghanistan to drug dealers in Europe. Meanwhile, Iran leads international efforts in fighting drug networks and narcotic traffickers. According to UN figures, Iran ranks first in the world in preventing entry of drugs and decreasing demand for narcotics.

Each year, the government spends hundreds of millions of dollars erecting barriers along the borders with Pakistan and Afghanistan and pumping resources into checkpoints. Officials said the battle against drug addiction and trafficking costs Iran US\$1 billion a year.



## Cultural Ties With Malawi to Expand

Iran and Malawi agreed to expand cultural relations.

In a meeting in Lilongwe, Iran's Accredited Ambassador to Malawi Mehdi Aqa Jafari and Malawian Culture and Tourism Minister Rachel Mazombwe Zulu explored avenues to expand cultural ties between the two nations.

The two sides agreed to draw up a draft deed for cultural cooperation between the two countries in a bid to pave the way for the endorsement of a final agreement in the near future, Fars News Agency reported.

Iran's cultural attaché in Tanzania Morteza Sab-

ouri and officials of Malawian Ministry of Culture and Tourism were also present during the meeting between Jafari and Zulu.

In 2010, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad voiced Tehran's readiness to boost ties and cooperation between Iran and Malawi, saying that Tehran is keen to assist the southeast African nation in various fields.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran is ready to expand its cooperation with Malawi in different fields," Ahmadinejad said in a meeting with Malawian Ambassador to Tehran Jafari Mousa at the time.

## Mashaei: Right of Vote Cannot...

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NAM is an international organization of states considering themselves not formally aligned with or against any major power bloc. NAM is the largest grouping of countries outside of the United Nations. NAM member states represent nearly two-thirds of

the United Nations' members and comprise 55 percent of the world population, particularly countries considered to be developing or part of the Third World.

Iran took over NAM rotating presidency at the opening ceremony of the NAM summit in Tehran on August 26 from Egypt for a period of three years.

## MKO in Syria Under Guise of Medics

A defected member of the terrorist Mujahedin Khalq Organization (MKO) has revealed that the MKO terrorists are active in Syria under the cover of emergency and medical service providers.

According to the ex-MKO member, who spoke on condition of anonymity, the members of the terrorist group are stationed at a base called "Hamif", which is disguised as a hospital, Mehr News Agency reported.

Those working alongside the MKO members at the base do not know Persian and Arabic, and only speak English, the defected MKO member said.

Two members of the terrorist group, who were dispatched from the Turkish city of Istanbul to Syria to participate in the clashes in the Arab country, have recently been killed, the former MKO member said.

The two MKO members were the citizens of Denmark and Sweden.

The MKO earlier cooperated with foreign-backed militants in Syria through the Jordanian borders, but the terrorist group has now shifted to the Turkish border to infiltrate into the Syrian territory, the report said.

In August 2012, a number of MKO terrorists detained by the Syrian government confessed that the MKO is training militants on Turkish soil near the border with Syria, while certain Arab and western states are providing necessary support for their activities.

In the summer of 2012, Iraqi and Syrian security officials announced that a large number of MKO members had entered Syria.

The unrest in Syria began in March 2011, and many people, including large numbers of army and security personnel, have been killed in the violence.

The Syrian government says the chaos is being orchestrated from outside the country, and there are reports that a very large number of the militants are foreign nationals.

Damascus says the West and its regional allies, including Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey are supporting the armed groups.

## Iran, India Plan...

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Chabahar provides the closest alternative for Indian goods to access Afghanistan and Central Asia.

The two sides also reviewed the progress on the proposed North-South corridor which will link Russia with Iran, with Khurshid saying that any obstructions or any hurdles should be resolved.

Khurshid arrived in Tehran on Friday to attend the 17th meeting of Iran-India Joint Economic Commission.

> Nuclear Program Discussed

Iran's nuclear program also came up for discussions and Salehi informed that talks with P5+1 will start this month.

Salehi gave a detailed briefing on the subject to Khurshid who was appreciative of the decision to resume talks.

Iran and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council—Russia, China, France, Britain, and the US—plus Germany have held several rounds of talks on a range of issues, with the main focus being on Iran's nuclear energy program. The two sides wrapped up their latest round of negotiations on April 6 in the Kazakh city of Almaty. An earlier meeting had been held in Almaty on February 26-27.

The United States, Israel, and some of their allies have repeatedly accused Iran of pursuing non-civilian objectives in its nuclear energy program.

Iran strongly rejects the allegation.

> Call for Further Ties

The two sides reiterated the importance of cooperation in expanding trade and banking relations.

They said the level of trade was not reflective of the close relations between the two countries and should be enhanced.

In this respect, agriculture and pharma products and aeronautics were among the areas identified for increased cooperation.

The two sides agreed to study the prospects of joint investment in both countries.

India and Iran, while noting their capabilities in the industrial sector, agreed to diversify their cooperation in this regard.

On Afghanistan, the two countries discussed the developing situation in that country and agreed to remain in regular contact.

Iran and India expressed deep concern over the continuing and unabated violence in Syria and called on all sides in the Arab country to shun violence and resolve all issues peacefully through discussions taking into account the aspirations of its people.

In this regard, the two sides supported the Geneva Communiqué which includes the 6-Point Plan of Kofi Annan and welcomed the efforts of Joint Special Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi.

The sides also signed three memoranda of understanding (MoUs), including one on water resources management.

Khurshid also inaugurated the Indian Cultural Center in Tehran on Friday.

Khurshid earlier called on Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and had meetings with Ali Akbar Velayati, advisor to the Leader and Ali Larjani, speaker of the Majlis.