



Kabul
3 / 1



Herat
9 / 1



Nangarhar
13 / 8



Balkh
5 / 0



Heart of Asia

Your Gateway to Afghanistan & the Region

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China Calls for Orderly U.S. Pullout from Afghanistan

China has asked the Trump administration to pull out its troops from Afghanistan in an orderly and responsible manner.

There are mounting concerns that Afghanistan, bordering China's restive Xinjiang province, could become a breeding ground for Uighur Muslim extremists.

Defense Secretary Christopher Miller told Pentagon reporters last week the Trump administration would reduce its military presence in Afghanistan to 2,500 troops from 4,500 by mid-January.

In Beijing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said foreign forces should exit Afghanistan in a responsible way so as to deny terrorists any breathing space.

An orderly US pullout would ... **P2**



Iran urges UN to facilitate inter-Afghan talks

Stating that the United Nations must play a key role in facilitating inter-Afghan dialogue, Foreign Minister Zarif said that Iran is ready to cooperate in this regard. Speaking at the 2020 Afghanistan Conference in Geneva via videoconference, Mohammad Javad Zarif described the war in Afghanistan as a great tragedy 20 years after the Bonn Conference.

"For more than 40 years, the people of Afghanistan have been suffering from killing, mostly from abroad," he said. Stating that the military approach to peacebuilding has failed and the presence of foreign forces has become a long-standing problem, Zarif added, "The responsible withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan - along with the smooth and effective transfer of their duties to the Afghan security forces - will be a step towards lasting peace."

"Iran has always supported Afghan-led inter-Afghan dialogue," he highlighted, adding, "These talks must also involve the Taliban and preserve the achievements of post-2001: ... **P2**

International Donors Pledge more Aid to Afghanistan



childhood," Afghan President Ashraf Ghani said, joining the virtual conference in a video link from Kabul.

Also addressing the conference, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called for a ceasefire as soon as possible, with violence escalating while peace negotiators have struggled to make progress since talks began in Qatar in September.

Keeping financing on a tight rein could provide foreign governments with some leverage to inject a greater sense of urgency into the peace process, diplomats said.

Uncertainty whether the compromises needed for peace might lead to backsliding on human and women's rights, has made some countries wary about making long-term commitments

to an Afghan administration, which needs foreign money to cover about three-quarters of its spending. Also, most governments are under intense pressure to make savings as they ramp up spending to help their own economies recover from impact of the coronavirus pandemic, and diplomats said.

The European Union pledged 1.2 billion euros (\$1.43 billion) over

four years but emphasised aid was conditional on strict requirements. "Afghanistan's future trajectory must preserve the democratic and human rights gains since 2001, most notably as regards to women and children's rights," said EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell.

"Any attempt to restore an Islamic emirate would have an impact on our political and financial engagement," he added, referring to the Taliban's previous rule between 1996 and 2001.

Britain, one of the country's top bilateral donors, said in a statement it would pledge \$227 million in annual civilian and food aid.

Finland and the United Nations, who are organising the conference with the Afghan government, urged the international community not to abandon their commitments to the country as the United States withdraws troops.

"(Afghans) will need the ongoing support of the international community: political, financial, and technical. Now is the time to walk away," said Deborah Lyons, head of the UN's mission to Afghanistan.

EU calls for Afghan Ceasefire, Warns Against Islamic Emirate

The European Union (EU) foreign policy chief called on Tuesday for an immediate ceasefire in Afghanistan and said that any move to set up an Islamic emirate would affect the bloc's support.

Josep Borrell, EU High Representative, told an Afghanistan fund-raising conference in Geneva: "A ceasefire should not be an outcome of the (peace) process, it should accompany the process from today... Any attempt to restore an Islamic emirate would have an impact on our political and financial engagement."



Ghani Explains Three Pillar Approach to a Better Afghanistan

President Ashraf Ghani called for a moment of silence on Tuesday, while delivering his keynote remarks virtually at the Geneva Conference, for victims of recent attacks, including the Kabul University attack.

Geneva Conference 2020 has brought together about 70 foreign countries and stakeholders who will decide the funding assistance to Afghanistan for the years 2021 to 2024. Addressing delegates Ghani said: "We, the Afghan people, government and the international community-share a vision of a sovereign, unified, democratic Afghanistan at peace with itself, the region and the world, capable of preserving and expanding the gains of the past two decades."

Ghani said the country's "three-pillar approach of peace, state and market-building presented in the second Afghan National



Peace & Development Framework were validated & further enriched through a series of workshops with our partners in a spirit of genuine openness."

Ghani said that we must build a strong regional consensus for a stable and peaceful Afghanistan. "A sovereign, unified and democratic Afghanistan at peace... is a shared vision of all. This is not just the ultimate objective of our negotiations with the Taliban in Doha, but more importantly, it is also

the ultimate goal of the work we do every day," Ghani added.

Ghani says conditions of well-being need to be created and "rules of the game" also need to be created so that Afghanistan does not find itself "pulled backwards by vacuums of governance in which destructive forces can thrive such as corruption and unequal distribution of resources.

Ghani says "peace-making process will, inshallah, result in an agreement on paper. But peace-building ... **P3**

Turkey Winner...

United Arab Emirates (UAE) drone assistance in 2019. Back then, the GNA had about 24 Turkish-made drones and certain anti-aircraft weapons, which were not equipt to respond to Haftar's aerial dominance, while the GNA's Western supporters, Italy, the U.K. and the U.S., refused to provide assistance, even though they were politically and militarily able to do so.

Referring to the January 2020 cease-fire agreement led by Turkey and Russia as a "turning point," the study says Haftar embarrassed his patron Russian President Vladimir Putin by not signing the deal and leaving Moscow. Haftar's aerial dominance soon disappeared after the Turkish Air Force transported the HAWK XXI medium-range surface-to-air missile (SAM) battery to Misrata airport, followed by a second battery.

"Overall, the Egyptians and Emiratis possessed the ability to swing the battle in favor of the LNA (Libyan National Army), if they were willing to fully commit their joint financial and professional military resources. Yet, they decided not to strike the newly arrived Turkish air defense systems," the study said. The authors also argued that the Tripoli war was a "new kind of military conflict" and that Turkey's decisive deployment of drones and its anti-aircraft capabilities will likely be studied and imitated by other countries.

China Calls...

also contribute to the peace and reconciliation process in Afghanistan, Zhao was quoted as saying by Xinhua.

While denouncing the recent Islamic State rocket strikes in different parts of Kabul, he promised China would continue to support the Afghan government and people in their efforts to battle terrorism.

By: Kris Osborn

How to Lose a War in Afghanistan and Embolden Al Qaeda

Al Qaeda is still in Afghanistan. What does the United States need to do about it? U.S. troop levels are being massively decreased but not eliminated. Is that the right moves?

A small, but targeted footprint of Special Operations and U.S. intelligence professionals would, it seems, be the most effective means through which to prevent Al Qaeda from staging terrorist attacks against the United States and its allies abroad. Any kind of large conventional military force, one could now maintain, brings questionable added value for a number of reasons. The Taliban has no Air Force, no Navy, no long-range missiles or heavy weaponry and no real arsenal of rockets, artillery or armored vehicles, a reality which raises what could be called a clear and self-evident question . . . what is the actual threat to the United States?

The answer is one that is both well-known and well documented . . . Al Qaeda. Despite twenty-years of armed attacks against the Taliban and Muslim extremists in Afghanistan, Al Qaeda is still there. But how much does it matter? What kind of a threat to the U.S. and its allies does this present? Does Al Qaeda have the ability to prepare for and coordinate large-scale, extremely lethal terrorist attacks against the United States? Yet, whatever the answers to these questions may be, a question of even greater consequence, what is the best way to counter it? Continued conventional armed combat against the Taliban is not the answer. Finding, containing, monitoring and killing Al Qaeda is the answer.

"Al Qaeda has been in Afghanistan for decades, and the reality is we'd be fools to say they're going to leave tomorrow," a senior defense official told reporters at the Pentagon, according to a transcript of the discussion.

The most effective series of solutions or approaches to this predicament, broadly speaking, could fall within the scope of one word . . . intelligence. Electronic intelligence in the form of drones, SIGINT and surveillance planes and human intelligence gathered on the ground in Afghanistan. What this means is, should training Al Qaeda-affiliated training camps, safe houses or small force concentrations be found, or operational



plans uncovered, long-range air-ground precision strikes, or Special Operations raids, can destroy them. Should it be necessary, the United States and NATO forces could also respond to Al Qaeda and Taliban threats, as needed, with drone strikes, cruise missiles and even bombers or fighter jets, all without placing concentrations of U.S. ground troops in the line of Taliban fire.

The other, potentially even more critical approach, would emphasize the use of human intelligence to find, track and monitor Al Qaeda activities. Sustaining cooperative and mutually beneficial relations with friendly Afghans, tribal leaders, elders and other anti-Al Qaeda-Taliban locals is the key to this, as it will enable a continuous flow of vital intelligence information of relevance to possible Al Qaeda activities, plans and motivations which might persist in the region. Drawing upon an interwoven balance of these approaches, it seems, might prove far more impactful than maintaining thousands of armed conventional fighters in Afghanistan.

Part of this approach might almost seem too obvious, simply do more of what has worked in recent years and less of what has not worked. Successful intelligence-gathering, relationship-building and well-planned precision attacks or raids when needed have been conducted by U.S.

Special Forces in Afghanistan for several decades now. This has worked. Perhaps this accounts for why Al Qaeda, while possibly still in Afghanistan to some degree, has not done much. Their ranks, or at least any ability to operate with consequence, have been diminished or even eliminated. Armed engagement against groups of Taliban fighters, temporarily clearing neighborhoods of anti-U.S. fighters and staging larger-scale attacks has not worked. Of course, this is not to suggest that the many years of attacks upon the Taliban and training of Afghan forces have not yielded great results in many instances and been very important, but rather to say perhaps offensive conventional attacks have been "maxed out" or are no longer of the same value. After all, while much of it has proven successful, a lot of it has not worked. Perhaps it is just no longer necessary given what has already been achieved?

"The decision to bring troops home was made at the direction of the President because the two greatest concerns, about the protection of the American people and our interests, and the protection of the Afghan people, have been met, based upon the recommendations of the commanding generals in the theater and national security officials here," a senior Pentagon official told reporters.

By CGTN

Interview with Red Cross director-general on conflict-stricken Afghanistan

Editor's note: Robert Mardini is the director-general of the Assembly of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Two weeks ago, he made a field visit to Afghanistan, the first of its kind since he was appointed and since the COVID-19 pandemic complicated the already dire situation in the country. His visit comes as the conflict between the Afghan government and the Taliban is intensifying and ongoing peace talks between the two sides in Doha have yet to make a breakthrough. During the trip, Mardini met with authorities, members of the civil society and people on both sides of the conflict.

CGTN spoke to Mardini to get his take on topics relating to the medical situation in Afghanistan.

CGTN: Why did you make Afghanistan your first visit?

Robert Mardini: My visit to Afghanistan has been very important in a symbolic and in a practical sense. This was my first visit to the field since I became ICRC director general in March of this year. As you know, the COVID pandemic and all its consequences has, of course, made travel much more difficult and restricted.

ICRC has been present in Afghanistan for 33 years (after 6 years of helping Afghan refugees in Pakistan), and it remains one of

our largest humanitarian operations in the world. We want the people of Afghanistan to know that we will continue to stand by them as their future remains uncertain.

The visit has been important in a practical sense because it allows me to highlight the serious issues of humanitarian concern in Afghanistan – including to donors – at a very critical time. COVID has not only added yet another deadly threat to people already worn down by other crises, but it has made it even harder to secure funding to help people in need. We need to keep shining a spotlight on the massive humanitarian needs in Afghanistan and urge the international community to stay engaged.

CGTN: As negotiations in Doha have yet to make a breakthrough and the Trump administration is pushing to pull more its forces out of Afghanistan, there is a strong possibility that the unabated violence between both sides of the conflict will intensify. In your estimate, hospitals in which region will be most affected?

Robert Mardini: It is true that since intra-Afghan peace talks began in Doha in September, there has been a clear intensification of hostilities inside Afghanistan, with a resulting increase in the numbers of weapon-wounded

being admitted to hospitals. Speaking to hospital staff in areas on both sides of the conflict, we were told that hundreds of casualties were admitted last month, including significant numbers of civilians – particularly in the most volatile frontline regions in the south and east of the country such as Helmand, Kandahar or Ghazni provinces. But clashes and targeted attacks have been increasing elsewhere too, including in the capital Kabul. There were several attacks and targeted killings reported while I was there.

CGTN: There's no doubt that the COVID-19 has posed another deadly threat to Afghans, but do you think the decades-long conflict between government forces and the Taliban is a much greater threat? And if they reach a deal in Doha, do you think that threat will immediately go away?

Robert Mardini: Without doubt, the most pressing humanitarian needs facing people and communities in Afghanistan are as a result of decades of armed conflict. Before the current armed conflict began in 2001, there were successive armed conflicts in the country from the time of the Soviet invasion in 1979. Many Afghans have only known war their entire lives. This has had devastating socio-economic impacts, including on access to ...

P3

Iran urges...

a democratic constitution, the right of the people to self-determination, the rights of ethnic and religious minorities, the rights of women and the fight against terrorism."

"The United Nations must play a key role in facilitating inter-Afghan dialogue, and Iran is ready to cooperate," Iranian FM stressed.

Zarif went on to say, "We all know that poverty and unemployment have provided fertile ground for extremism, terrorism and drug trafficking."

"Peace will not last as long as Afghans find it difficult to survive," he noted.

Iranian Foreign Minister said, "Despite the brutal US economic war against our people, for our part, we have hosted more than three million Afghans," adding, "They have been subsidized food, transportation and medical services. 470,000 Afghan students are attending our schools and 22,000 Afghan students are studying at our universities."

He announced the opening of the Khaf-Herat railway in the coming days, saying, "We connect Afghanistan to the outside world through Chabahar."

"Our power plants provide electricity to the people of Afghanistan, and we can do much more in the field of energy," he added.

"But instead of facilitating these measures, the United States is blocking such cooperation with economic terrorism targeting both Iranians and Afghans," Zarif highlighted.

"Donors of international aids also have a distinctly flawed approach, the simple feedback of which is evident in the order of the speakers at this meeting, which puts the neighbours in the last part of the speech," he said.

"The world must put the people of Afghanistan above all other considerations," Iranian FM stressed.

Britain pledges \$227 million annual civilian and food aid to Afghanistan

Britain said it will pledge \$227 million in annual civilian and food aid for Afghanistan at a conference on Tuesday in Geneva where officials from about 70 countries and humanitarian organisations will pledge billions of dollars for the war-torn nation. Dependent on foreign aid, Afghanistan is at risk of receiving 15-20% less funding than it received at the previous donor conference four years ago, diplomats say, as governments are under intense pressure to make savings as they ramp up spending to help their own economies recover from impact of the coronavirus pandemic. Withholding funds at this point, diplomats say, could at least provide foreign governments with some leverage to inject a greater sense of

urgency into peace talks between the Afghan government and Taliban representatives that began in Qatar in September. Britain, a country with a long and difficult history of involvement in Afghanistan, is the country's third largest bilateral donor, and the amount being pledged in Geneva will be slightly higher than it pledged at the last donor conference in Brussels four years ago. The statement issued by the UK Mission to the United Nations and World Trade Organisation in Geneva said 155 million pounds (\$207 million) would be pledged to support peace and stability in Afghanistan and "improve access to education and vital infrastructure."



Britain would "also announce an extra 15 million pounds (\$20 million) to the United Nations' World Food Programme" for Afghanistan. The latest monetary commitment is separate from the 70 million pounds (\$93.32 million) security pledge for Afghan forces for 2021, which Britain announced last month.

In Brussels in 2016, Britain had pledged a total of 750 million pounds for four years, which translated into 187.5 million pounds annually. At the Brussels conference, Afghanistan obtained total pledges of \$15.2 billion for 2017 to 2020, equivalent to \$3.8 billion a year. (\$1 = 0.7491 pounds)

Ghani Explains...

is a multi-dimensional, cross-sectoral, long-term process that will allow us to actually implement the components of any peace agreement on paper." Ghani highlighted the need to establish rule of law and security and providing services that build citizen's trust in government in order to sustain a peace agreement. "In this way market-building and state-building are inextricably linked to peace-building". Ghani stated that regional connectivity is not only key to Afghanistan's market and state-building agenda but also a key to the country's peace-building agenda. "We need to create a strong regional consensus for a stable and peaceful Afghanistan," he said. Ghani said Afghanistan is facing daunting challenges but the country needs to adjust to deal with these issues and also acknowledged that "a lot more needs to be done now with a lot less". Ghani also mentioned the Afghan security forces and their ability to safeguard the country. "We have been able to retake most of the districts captured by the Taliban," Ghani said. He also stated that there are less than 10,000 foreign troops in the country currently. "International forces reduced from 150,000 in 2011, to below 10,000 today," he said. Ghani asked international partners to help Afghanistan "do more with less" in the years ahead and said key sectors "are low-hanging fruits for increasing efficiency and output relatively quickly by implementing cost-cutting measures and deflating bloated bureaucracies". Ghani said that Afghanistan is currently focusing on self-sufficiency measures in the education, urban development, energy and infrastructure sectors. "The real test of the strength of our partnership and the virtue of our shared vision is if we are able to avoid an even greater tragedy of our shared history. We must not let history repeat her tragedies here in Afghanistan." UN chief Antonio Guterres delivered a pre-recorded message to the pledging conference and highlighted the achievements Afghanistan has made over the years despite the serious challenges the country has faced over the years including conflict and poverty. Guterres said Afghans have suffered for too long and called for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. Guterres told delegates it's important that the peace process is inclusive and urges Afghanistan's neighbors to support the country in its quest for peace and prosperity.

Interview with...

services such as health and education. With regard to the peace talks in Doha, any sincere efforts to secure peace are, of course, always welcome. But in the meantime, urgent humanitarian needs cannot be overlooked. Even if a peace agreement is reached tomorrow, this does not by itself erase decades of suffering and deep-rooted needs that in some cases span generations. The lasting mental trauma of long-term exposure to violence is just one example. CGTN: Has the ICRC played any role in the Doha talks? Robert Mardini: No, we have not played any direct role in the Doha talks. It is not within our mandate to help negotiate peace between parties. What we can offer, in the framework of peace talks and in our capacity of neutral, independent and impartial humanitarian actor, is our services as a neutral intermediary, provided all parties agree. It is certainly within our remit to advocate for the inclusion of humanitarian matters as components of peace initiatives or agreements. This could include the detainee or the missing dimensions, the protection of the medical mission, or threats caused by explosive remnants of war, victim-activated mines and improvised explosive devices. CGTN: During your visit to Afghanistan, did you notice whether people were anxious to see what the Doha talks will produce? Robert Mardini: To be honest, most Afghans I met - at all levels - seemed rather skeptical about the prospects of peace, which I think is understandable after so many years of war. I think many people are seeing a disconnect between what is being said in Doha and what is actually happening on the ground. As long as fighting is

continuing, and people are continuing to be killed, what is being said thousands of miles away in Doha may seem rather academic. CGTN: You visited health care facilities on both sides. What was the biggest difference? Can you imagine future collaboration between them before or after a peaceful resolution? Robert Mardini: Indeed, I visited Andar district and Ghazni provincial hospitals - two health care facilities managed by authorities on different sides of the conflict. And, it is true, they were not so different; rather, they had a lot of things in common. In Andar district hospital, for example, there is one emergency surgeon serving a catchment area of around 100,000 people. The emergency room currently has only 5 beds. When there is an attack or incident in nearby areas - as there often is - the hospital quickly becomes inundated with casualties, often many of them civilians. Likewise, in Ghazni provincial hospital there are typically hundreds of war-wounded admitted per month - along with all the other patients requiring care - and the 100-bed capacity easily becomes overwhelmed. Both hospitals have water supply and electricity problems, meaning what little equipment they have in many cases can't be used - such as X-ray machines, fridges for blood and other samples. And of course, many people struggle to get to hospital at all - because of lack of transport and insecurity. The point is that healthcare needs are acute everywhere and need to be addressed urgently, regardless of political affiliations. I was encouraged by the positive attitude of health authorities on both sides of the conflict and inspired by the courage of Afghan health workers treating the wounded

and sick 24/7. Collaboration might just be possible. I would say if the two sides are really sincere about peace, they could start with confidence-building measures where they matter, on the ground. These could be mutual agreements related to issues such as evacuation of the wounded, the transfer of human remains, or respect for the medical mission, for example. Such practical measures would go a long way to creating trust across lines and might just help pave the way to a durable political solution. CGTN: In terms of funding, do you think there is enough attention on Afghanistan? And do you think donor countries pay more attention to Afghanistan than other war-torn countries? Robert Mardini: There are different kinds of funding in question. For example, the international community will come together in Geneva on November 23-24 to make new commitments promoting sustainable development, prosperity and peace in Afghanistan. The four-yearly pledging conference - hosted by the governments of Afghanistan, Finland and the United Nations - will effectively determine how much financial assistance will be allocated to help Afghanistan realize these ambitious goals. But at the same time, much-needed funding for urgent humanitarian needs is in short supply. Our operations for Afghanistan are under-funded right now. So, at the conference, the opportunity must not be missed to also commit adequate and sustainable funding for humanitarian programs - even while pursuing a 'joined-up' approach toward peace, prosperity and self-reliance for the Afghan people. As far as the ICRC is concerned, the more attention paid by donor countries to Afghanistan, the better.

Biden Transition...

Some of Trump's allies had expressed hope that state lawmakers could intervene in selecting Republican electors in states that do not certify. "The people of Michigan have spoken. President-elect Biden

won the State of Michigan by more than 154,000 votes, and he will be our next president on January 20th," Democratic Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer said. Trump's efforts are expected to continue despite his futile

attempts to throw out votes. He had reportedly grown frustrated with his legal team, led by former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani, which has been the subject of mockery due to several erratic public appearances.

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Biden Transition Gets U.S. Government Approval to Move Forward

The US government gave the green light for President-elect Joe Biden's transition, recognising him as the "apparent president-elect" in the November 3 election.

The US General Services Administrator, Emily Murphy, gave the go ahead for Biden to coordinate with federal agencies ahead of the January 20 inauguration, stating in a letter to the president-elect that her decision came following "recent developments involving legal challenges and certifications of election results."

US President Donald Trump, who for weeks has claimed that he won the US election, tweeted that he would recommend the team cooperate with the transition.

"I am recommending that Emily and her team do what needs to be done with regard to initial protocols, and have told my team to do the same," Trump tweeted.

He continues to refuse to concede the election,

however, stating that his team is "moving full speed ahead" and "will never concede."

A growing number of Republicans had also acknowledged Biden's victory after being silent on Trump's claims of fraud.

Murphy, a Trump appointee, had faced criticism for failing to begin the transition process sooner. The move prevented Biden's team from receiving highly classified national security briefings and working with government agency officials on plans for the incoming administration.

"Please know that I came to my decision independently, based on the law and available facts. I was never directly or indirectly pressured by any Executive Branch official — including those who work at the White House or GSA — with regard to the substance or timing of my decision," she wrote in a letter to Biden.

Yohannes Abraham, executive director of the Biden transition, said the decision "is a needed



step to begin tackling the challenges facing our nation, including getting the pandemic under control and our economy back on track."

Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said Murphy's action "is probably the closest thing to

a concession that President Trump could issue." The decision by Murphy came after the key state of Michigan certified the victory of Joe Biden and a federal judge dismissed a lawsuit seeking to prevent certification in Pennsylvania. ... **P3**

A look at the world

Turkey Winner of Libya War, Tactics to Set Precedent for Others, Study says

Foreign actors had significant involvement in the Libyan crisis and the latest round of the war to capture capital Tripoli, but Turkey emerged as the winner, and its tactics will likely set a precedent for others in the future, according to research by the Middle East Institute.

Noting that the war for the capital Tripoli was mainly fought aerially and managed by foreign actors, the foreign policy paper titled "Turning the Tide: How Turkey Won the War for Tripoli" by Jason Pack and Wolfgang Puztai argues that the war was "essentially won by the Turks."

In January, Turkey began deploying soldiers to Libya after Parliament approved a motion



responding to Libya's call for Turkish troops. Libya and Turkey signed agreements in November outlining cooperation in terms of security and maritime affairs, angering Mediterranean countries, including Greece and the Greek Cypriot administration. The diplomatic maneuver prevents the Greeks and Greek Cypriots from unilaterally exploiting energy resources in the region.

Libya's internationally recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) made a formal request for "air, ground and sea" support from the Turkish military to help fend off an offensive by forces loyal to putschist Gen. Khalifa Haftar, who was attempting to take control of the capital, Tripoli. Turkey supports the GNA, which is also backed by the United Nations, against Haftar's militia and mercenaries.

Pack said he opposes referring to the Libyan war as a proxy war, saying it was a cross-border war and that we could see wars being conducted in this manner in the future.

He claims the media attaching too much importance to foreign mercenaries is "deceptive," arguing, "all meaningful ground engagements in which territory was lost or gained were fought by Libyans."

According to the study, Haftar's aerial dominance was mainly based on Russian fighter jets, helicopters and skilled ... **P2**

Russia Accuses U.S. of Violating its Sea Border



Russian Defense Ministry says its frigate ousted US warship from territorial waters in Sea of Japan

The Russian Defense Ministry on Tuesday accused a US military warship of violating the national border in the Sea of Japan.

The USS John S. McCain destroyer entered the territorial waters of Russia in the Peter the Great Gulf, going two kilometers (1.24 miles) beyond the sea border, the Ministry said in a statement.

"A frigate Admiral Vinogradov from the Russian Pacific fleet, which was tracking the US destroyer, warned the foreign ship via an international communication channel about the inadmissibility of such actions and the possibility of using a ramming maneuver to oust the intruder from territorial waters," the ministry said. After getting the warning, the US ship immediately returned to the neutral waters and did not attempt to enter the Russia territory again, it said.

Russia's frigate continued performing tasks close to the US warship, while "Soversheny" corvette was also sent to this area.

In 2017, the USS John S. McCain destroyer collided with a tanker ship off the coast of Singapore. The accident took lives of 10 of its crew members and left five others injured.

Biden Names John Kerry as Special Climate Envoy

US President-elect Joe Biden on Monday named John Kerry, the former state secretary, as a special presidential envoy for climate to lead the country's fight against climate change.

Kerry will be the first official dedicated to climate change that will sit on the National Security Council (NSC) and his role will not require Senate confirmation.

It reflects "the president-elect's commitment to addressing climate change as an urgent national security issue," the Biden transition team said in a statement where they announced Kerry's appointment with other key picks for foreign policy and national



security.

"Secretary Kerry elevated environmental challenges as diplomatic priorities, from oceans to hydrofluorocarbons. He was a key architect of the Paris Climate Accord, and signed the historic agreement to reduce carbon emissions with his granddaughter on his lap."

"America will soon have a government that treats the climate crisis as the urgent national security threat it is. I'm proud to partner with the president-elect, our allies, and the young leaders of the climate movement to take on this crisis as the President's Climate Envoy," Kerry said on Twitter.

Kerry, 76, was leading the US' participation in the Paris agreement on climate change between 2013-2017 when he served as state secretary of the former President Barack Obama administration.

The US formally withdrew from the agreement Nov. 4, a day after the 2020 elections, after starting the process last year under President Donald Trump.

Biden has repeatedly said the climate change will be among his top agenda items as president, eyeing to return to Paris Agreement.



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