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Russia Showcases New Arms at Drill Near Afghan Border

Soldiers from Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan used new Russian firearms, flamethrowers and surface-to-air missile launchers in military drills which concluded on Tuesday just 20 km (12 miles) from the Tajikistan-Afghanistan border. Moscow and its Central Asian ex-Soviet allies have held two separate sets of military exercises close to Afghanistan this month as Taliban militants overran much of the country's northern provinces directly adjacent to Central Asia. Tajik Defence Minister Serali Mirzo told reporters at the training grounds the drills were being held with Afghanistan in mind. "The situation in Afghanistan is unpredictable," he said... **P3**



Since 2015 Around 570,000 Afghans Asylum Seekers in EU

Six EU member states have sent a letter to the bloc's executive warning against halting deportations of unsuccessful Afghan asylum seekers despite major advances of Taliban militants in their country. The Taliban, fighting to reimpose strict Islamic law after their 2001 ouster, have made sweeping gains in their campaign to defeat the government as US-led foreign forces pull out, capturing a sixth provincial capital on Monday (Aug 9). "Stopping returns sends the wrong signal and is likely to motivate even more Afghan citizens to leave their home for the EU," Austria, Denmark, Belgium, the Netherlands, Greece and Germany said in the letter, which was posted on Twitter by a journalist for Belgium's weekly Knack news magazine. "This is why we urge you and your teams at the Commission to intensify talks with the Afghan government on how returns to Afghanistan can and will continue in the coming months." The... **P2**

UN Seeks Action to Prevent 'Calamitous Consequences' for Afghans



A senior UN official on Tuesday warned that the failure to stem the rising violence and human rights violations and abuses is having disastrous consequences for the people of Afghanistan. The remarks come as civilian casualties continue to mount and reports of violations that may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity continued to emerge. "We know that urban

warfare results in scores of civilians being killed," said UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet. "We have seen it before, too many times." Bachelet said that "at least 183 civilians have been killed and 1,181 injured, including children," in the cities of Lashkar Gah, Kandahar, Herat and Kunduz since July 9. "These are just the civilian casualties we

managed to document," she said, adding that "the real figures will be much higher. The UN official called on parties to the conflict to stop fighting to prevent more bloodshed. "The Taliban must cease their military operations in cities," she said. "Unless all parties return to the negotiating table and reach a peaceful settlement, the already atrocious situation for so many

Afghans will become much worse." Bachelet also urged all States to use their influence – bilaterally and multilaterally – to bring the hostilities to an end. "States have a duty to use any leverage they have to de-escalate the situation and reinvigorate peace processes. The fighting must be brought to an end," the UN high commissioner stressed, noting the peace-related meetings taking place this week in Doha. According to reports documented by the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the UN Human Rights Office, most of the civilian harm is being caused by ground engagements. Airstrikes have also resulted in civilian casualties. In addition, since the start of the May Taliban offensive, at least 241,000 people have been displaced, and the protracted fighting in the cities has resulted in damage to essential infrastructure like roads and bridges, and other civilian objects. In the southern city of Lashkar Gah, the capital of Helmand province, in the 13 days after July 28, when fighting started in the city, the UN received reports of at least 139 civilians killed and 481 injured. The real numbers are expected to be much... **P3**

Jaish Ul-Adl Leader Killed in Clashes with Taliban

A prominent leader in the Jaish ul-Adl militia was killed in clashes with the Taliban group in Afghanistan, Iran's semi-official Tasnim news agency reported on Tuesday. According to the agency, Amir Naroui went to Afghanistan for talks with the Taliban on the situation of his militiamen held by the Afghan group when clashes erupted between the two sides. Naroui was killed in the violence along with a leader of the Taher Shahouzi group and five Taliban militants. The Jaish ul-Adl (Army of Justice) was founded in 2012 at the hand of Naroui's brother Salahuddin Farooqui, and was listed by both the US and Iran as a terrorist group. The group has launched several attacks against Iran, particularly in Sistan and Baluchistan province on claims of defending the Sunni minority in Iran.



Afghanistan war: ICRC Treats More Than 4000 Wounded in Last 10 Days

Hundreds of thousands of civilians are at risk as fighting intensifies in and around Kunduz, Lashkar Gah, Kandahar, and other Afghan cities. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is calling on both parties to the conflict for immediate restraint. The ICRC calls for civilians and vital infrastructure such as hospitals to be protected from attack and any collateral damage caused by fighting in populated areas. Since 1 August, 4,042 patients wounded by weapons have been treated at 15 ICRC-supported health facilities, an indication of the intensity of the recent violence. "We are seeing homes destroyed, medical staff and patients put at tremendous risk, and hospitals, electricity and water infrastructure damaged," said



Eloi Fillion, ICRC's head of delegation in Afghanistan. "The use of explosive weaponry in cities is having an indiscriminate impact on the population beyond its target. Many families have no option but to flee in search of a safer place. This must stop." Street-to-street clashes in Kunduz, Lashkar Gah and other cities over the last few days have

injured hundreds of civilians even as medical services are heavily strained due to damage to health facilities and a lack of staff. Electricity is out across several contested cities and water supply systems are barely operational in some places. Many families are trying to leave but cannot find transport to escape or simply do not have the financial means... **P3**

Since...

European Commission said it had received the letter and would reply in due time. The issue is expected to come up at an online crisis meeting of EU domestic affairs ministers on Aug 18, which was arranged mainly to discuss a surge of illegal border crossings from Belarus to EU member state Lithuania. Poland and Latvia have also seen an increased flow of migrants from Belarus. Since 2015, around 570,000 Afghans have requested asylum in the EU, the letter from the six EU countries noted, 44,000 in 2020 alone, making Afghanistan the second most important country of origin last year. "We fully recognize the sensitive situation in Afghanistan in light of the foreseen withdrawal of international troops," the countries said, adding that an estimated 4.6 million Afghans were already displaced, many of them in the region. The six EU members urged the bloc to look into the possibility of providing the best support for refugees in neighboring countries by increasing cooperation with countries such as Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran. Belgium's state secretary for asylum and migration, Sammy Mahdi, defended the initiative against criticism. "That regions of a country are not safe does not mean that each national of that country automatically is entitled to protection," he said on Twitter late on Monday, adding deportations of rejected asylum seekers from Afghanistan who are ordered to leave the country must remain possible.

By: Amin Saikal

Afghanistan: from Peace to Endless War

It is so tragic to see Afghanistan drowning in long-term structural instability and insecurity, savaged by bloody conflict, Covid-19, poor governance and poverty—and betrayed by outside actors. The population is bitterly traumatised, with little hope of recovering in the foreseeable future. This is not the Afghanistan that once was—a functioning state in which peace and security prevailed despite its underdevelopment, and whose policy of neutrality in world politics was widely respected. By the start of the 1970s, and after nearly four decades of stability, the capital Kabul exuded peace and tranquillity that was reflected across the nation. One could move freely and securely across the city, limited only by the majestic mountains surrounding it. Cyclists peddled around the country and visitors toured it on bus trips from Kathmandu to Munich. While predominantly Islamic but with a mosaic make-up, traditionalist and mainly poverty-stricken and a very slow pace of modernisation, Afghanistan stunned with its natural beauty and its people's hospitality. Women's emancipation, modern education at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels for both boys and girls, and the arts and theatre and print and electronic media had become measures of its progress. The country stood as a model of neutrality and founding member of the Non-Aligned Movement in world affairs. Its ambassador, Abdul Rahman Pazhwak, was elected as the president of the United Nations General Assembly in 1966, and its capital was named as a possible site for the Vietnam peace conference in 1969. Many young Afghans had reason to envision a bright future for their country. Yet that future never came. On 17 July 1973, any expectation of a more promising future was shattered, marking a turning point in Afghanistan's destiny and aspirations. There was a coup in Kabul, ending the 40-year reign of King Zahir Shah and bringing a republican phase. The king had presided over the longest period of stability and security in the landlocked nation's modern history, but his rival cousin, Mohammad Daoud, was impatient with the pace of modernisation and

angry about the king's constitutional exclusion of him from any ministerial positions. Daoud took power in an almost bloodless event, declaring Afghanistan a republic with close ties to the Soviet Union but with a major difference with Pakistan over the Durand Line, the border between the two countries and a point of dispute since Pakistan's creation in 1947. His invocation of the border dispute partly aimed at generating national unity in the diverse population, especially among the ethnic Pashtuns as the largest minority, with ties to their kin in Pakistan.

Daoud acted with the help of a small pro-Soviet communist cluster in the military, which had been largely trained and equipped by the USSR since the mid-1950s. Yet, his personal autocratic and patriotic stance could not allow him to be dictated to by anyone. When he'd been prime minister from 1953 to 1964, Daoud was the architect of Afghanistan's friendship with the Soviet Union, and of the dispute with Pakistan in the context of the Cold War. But once he was confident that he'd consolidated his power as head of the new republic, he sought to reduce his dependence on the local communists and the Soviet Union. In the process, he improved relations with Pakistan and found it expedient to forge close ties with such Soviet detractors as Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi of Iran and President Anwar Sadat of Egypt. He also solicited support from the United States, though without success as Washington was happy at the time to let America's major regional ally, the Shah, handle Afghanistan's vagaries. His political twists and turns left Moscow and its Afghan protégés distrustful of him, and Islamabad rebuffed his claim in the border dispute. With the Shah failing to provide a promised US\$2 billion aid, and Sadat able to give not much more than political support and encouragement, Daoud's plans came unstuck.

His domestic political shake-up seriously disrupted the triangular framework of relations that the monarchy had generated with the Islamic religious establishment and local powerholders, or 'strongmen', as the foundations of stability. He



couldn't replace that framework with anything more effective, paving the way for the Soviet protégés in the military to stage a bloody coup in April 1978. They killed Daoud and most of his family and entourage and declared Afghanistan a democratic republic with fraternal ties to the Soviet Union. The incompetence and inexperience of these revolutionaries made them increasingly dependent on Moscow's support, leading to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan 20 months later. That generated an Afghan resistance, led by several Islamic groups (the mujahideen), reflecting the socially divided nature of the Afghan society. The invasion also provided a unique opportunity for the US to pay back Moscow in kind for the Soviet assistance to North Vietnam that had resulted in America's defeat a decade earlier. The US support of the mujahideen through an unreliable ally in Pakistan enabled America to win the Cold War on the back of such Afghan resistance leaders as the moderate Islamist and nationalist, legendary commander Ahmad Shah Massoud, who valiantly fought the Soviets and later the Pakistan-backed Taliban and their al-Qaeda allies. However, the Americans abandoned Afghanistan in the belief that the Soviet defeat meant their mission was over and that there was no need for their involvement in the post-Soviet transition of Afghanistan. That proved costly, as

the warring mujahideen turned their guns on one another, with Pakistan the main outside catalyst. Massoud's assassination by al-Qaeda agents two days before the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the US brought American military intervention. Washington's specific objective was to destroy al-Qaeda and the Taliban who harboured it. The failure of the US and its Afghan allies to achieve that objective and put Afghanistan on a viable course of change and development has confronted it with a multidimensional crisis whose magnitude and ferocity cannot be underestimated. The pre-conflict peaceful and serene Afghanistan is lost. The US and allied forces have left in defeat, as they left Vietnam, and the neo-fundamentalist theocratic Taliban are closing in on some major cities.

The militia's opponents, most importantly women, fear for their lives. There's a brain drain and capital flight; the ranks of internally displaced people and the flow of refugees to the outside world are daunting for a country that was once stable and envied in the region. No one should expect the conflict to end soon. The Taliban have the momentum, but the Afghan people, if not their political leaders, have repeatedly proved to be resilient in the face of adversity. They now must defend themselves against medievalist fundamentalist impositions.

By: Joseph Lee

Afghanistan Troop Withdrawal a Strategic Mistake

Withdrawing troops from Afghanistan is a strategic mistake that risks a resurgence of terrorism, a former top UK general has said. Gen Sir Richard Barrons, who was head of UK Joint Forces Command, told the BBC the UK and Western allies have "sold the future of Afghanistan". Most British troops left last month and the Taliban have captured five cities in three days. A senior Tory backbencher called it a "shabby withdrawal". Fighting in Afghanistan intensified in recent weeks after President Joe Biden ordered the withdrawal of US forces, followed by allies such as the UK. Two decades after they were removed from power

by the US over their support for Osama Bin Laden in the wake of the 11 September attacks, Taliban militants are advancing across the country and have seized five regional capitals. Gen Barrons told BBC Radio 4's The World This Weekend: "The withdrawal now is a strategic mistake. I don't believe it's in our own interest." He said the decision had "sold the future of Afghanistan into a very difficult place" and sent a "really unfortunate message" to allies in Asia, Africa and the Middle East. It suggests "we don't have the stomach to see these things through, and we would rather leave than ensure that a humanitarian or political crisis

doesn't occur", Gen Barrons said. "We will run the risk of terrorist entities re-establishing in Afghanistan, to bring harm in Europe and elsewhere," he said. "I think this is a very poor strategic outcome." The UK government advised all British citizens to leave this week because of the worsening security situation. But Gen Barrons said an exodus of the international community "as fair weather friends", followed by the Afghan elite, could undermine the government and its military, accelerating the crisis. He said he feared the country could split in two or be plunged into a decades-long civil war unless political

discussions could resume. Tory MP Tobias Ellwood, chairman of the House of Commons Defence Committee, wrote in the Mail on Sunday that the UK was making a "shabby withdrawal" and "abandoning the country to the very insurgency that drew us there in the first place". "Unless we wake up to the reality of what is taking place, Afghanistan might once again become a terror state. This, remember, is the country that brought us 9/11," he said. The UK and its allies should retain an assistance force of 5,000 troops to give ground, air and intelligence support to the Afghan army in their fight against the Taliban, Mr Ellwood said. By withdrawing, the UK was also giving up a "strategically crucial space to an expansionist China", he said. But Gen Barrons suggested

China would be key to any political resolution, because of its influence on Pakistan - which was one of the few countries to recognise the Taliban when it last held power. He said because China shared a border with Afghanistan it would want to avoid any instability that could mean refugees - or militants - flowing over the border. A UK Government spokeswoman said: "We recognise that the security situation in Afghanistan is serious, and reports of the escalating violence are extremely disturbing. "We do not believe there is any military solution to Afghanistan's conflict, and call on the Taliban to end their campaign of violence and engage in meaningful dialogue with the Afghan government. "There needs to be a negotiated solution to ensure a lasting peace."

Taliban Collecting 60% Of Customs Revenue: Wolesi Jigra

Kabul: Some members of Afghanistan's Wolesi Jigra (Lower House of Parliament) said on Sunday that more than 60% of customs revenue is now being collected by the Taliban after they captured border crossings. MPs said this amount to about 200 million afghanis a day. The financial and budget commission of the Wolesi Jigra said that government should take serious measures to recapture the border crossings, otherwise government will lose more revenue. "Taliban captured about 65 percent of customs and they earn up to 200 million AFN from the customs. Government should take practical action," said Mir Afghan Safi, head of the financial and budget commission of the Wolesi Jigra. MPs have urged government on numerous occasions to conduct operations to retake control of these border crossings, but government has not taken any action so far, MPs said. "Most of our ports including Pol-e- Abrashim, Sheikh Abu Nasr Farahi, Torghundi, and other ports in the north have been captured by Taliban recently. Unfortunately,

Taliban collects government income and is transferring it to Pakistan. The Afghan nation should be united and support security forces in order to change the situation," said Abdul Satar Hussaini, an MP. Meanwhile, Afghan Ministry of Finance (MoF) stated that seven border crossings have fallen to the Taliban and have had a negative impact on government revenue collection. "Unfortunately, the MoF is not active in Islam Qala, Torghundi, Abu Nasr Farahi, Spin Boldak, Ay-Khanum, Dand-e-Patan, and Sher Khan Port, and without any doubt, direct trade has impacted on income. The current problems have a negative impact on income," said Mohammad Rafi Tabi, a spokesman for the MoF. The MP said that running customs by Taliban is not acceptable and will have a negative impact on the country's national revenue income. Meanwhile, the Attorney General's Office has announced that the Anti-corruption Judicial center has upheld the ruling of the center's primary court for two employees of the National Directorate of Security. According to the verdict,



General Sayed Mohammad Azim, active precautionary staff of the "020" Department, and Mohammad Nazem, Director of Investigation of the Department of NDS, were sentenced to five and ten years in prison, respectively, for receiving \$ 25,000 in bribery. According to the Attorney General's statement, the trial of the two men was held in

public on Sunday. According to the statement, the two NDS employees colluded to demand the release of \$30,000 in exchange for the release of a man accused of collaborating with the Taliban to assassinate government employees, who were detained upon receiving \$25,000. The appeals court also sentenced them to pay \$25,000, equivalent to the bribe, as fine.

Russia Showcases...

Shukhrat Khalmukhamedov, chief of the general staff of the Uzbek armed forces, said that "this situation requires us to remain vigilant and to maintain our combat readiness". The drills involved 2,500 servicemen, hundreds of armoured vehicles and 25 aircraft. The Russian forces involved came from the military base located in Tajikistan - Moscow's biggest facility abroad. Russian Central military district commander Alexander Lapin said the showcased weaponry would remain at the Tajik base. Taliban fighters tightened their control of captured territory in northern Afghanistan on Tuesday as residents hid in their homes and a pro-government commander vowed to fight to the death to defend Mazar-i-Sharif, the biggest city in the north.

China...

by governments in Europe, Asia, the US and NATO in July of a similar massive cyber attack carried out by China. China generally denies attribution on the record, but off-the-record complains that the US and other countries have a double standard, saying that even if US businesses do not do espionage, that the NSA does. However, tolerance for Chinese cyber attacks has gone down globally as its popularity has plummeted following its handling of the coronavirus crisis, Hong Kong, issues in the South China Sea and accusations of war crimes in its treatment of the Uyghur sector within China.

UN Seeks...

higher as communication with the city is intermittently cut off and many civilians wounded by the fighting are unable to reach hospitals. By August 5, hospitals were nearly at full capacity. On July 31 a private clinic was significantly damaged by an Afghan National Army airstrike, leaving one civilian dead and five injured. The available food supply in the city is fast diminishing, said UN reports, and shortages of medical supplies were also reported. Electricity and water were cut off in most parts of the city. The UN official said that the sweeping takeover of an estimated 192 district administrative centers by the Taliban, the attacks on provincial capitals including Qala-e-Naw, Kandahar, Lashkar Gah, Herat, Faizabad, Ghazni, Maimana, Gardez, Faizabad, Pul-e- Khumri, and Mazar-e-Sharif, and the takeover of at least six provincial capitals - Zaranj in Nimroz province, Sheberghan in Jawzjan province, Kunduz City in Kunduz province, Taluqan in Takhar province, Sar-e-Pul in Sar-e-Pul province and Aybak in Samangan province "have struck fear and dread into the population." She warned that the proliferation of pro-

government militias being mobilized against the Taliban may also put civilians in additional danger. In the areas that have already been captured by the Taliban and in contested areas, Bachelet said the Office was receiving reports of summary executions, attacks against current and former government officials and their family members, military use and destruction of homes, schools and clinics, and the laying of large numbers of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), including pressure-plate IEDs which function as anti-personnel landmines. The UN is also receiving other deeply disturbing reports of serious violations of international humanitarian law such as killings by the Taliban of hors de combat members of Afghan security forces - in some cases after they had even received letters guaranteeing their safety upon surrendering. Orders issued by members of the local Afghan National Police not to spare captured or surrendering Taliban members are also prohibited under international humanitarian law. Bachelet reminded all parties of their obligation to take all necessary measures to protect civilians, especially when fighting in populated areas. Directing attacks against

civilians is a serious violation of international humanitarian law and amounts to a war crime. Perpetrators of serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law must be held accountable, she stressed. The High Commissioner also expressed particular concern about early indications that the Taliban are imposing severe restrictions on human rights in the areas under their control, particularly targeting women. "People rightly fear that a seizure of power by the Taliban will erase the human rights gains of the past two decades," she said. "We have received reports that women and girls in various districts under Taliban control are prohibited from leaving their homes without a Mahram, a male chaperone. These restrictions have a serious impact on the rights of women, including the right to health - and clearly, in the midst of a war, the need to access urgent medical care for themselves and their families is a matter of life and death. Hampering a woman's ability to leave home without a male escort also inevitably leads to a cascade of other violations of the woman's and her family's economic and social rights," Bachelet warned.

Afghanistan...

The ICRC and its partner the Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) are doing as much as they can to evacuate the wounded and transport the mortal remains of those killed as a result of the conflict. In July alone, the ICRC helped nearly 13,000 patients suffering from weapon-related injuries across

the country, and this number appears likely to rise this month as fighting increases in highly populated areas. "Health-care facilities, medical workers, and ambulances must be spared at all cost," said Fillion. "We also call on all fighting parties to allow humanitarian organizations like the ICRC and ARCS to safely evacuate the injured and bring much-

needed assistance to the civilian population." In Afghanistan the ICRC has a team of 1,800 international and national staff who provide diverse humanitarian assistance across the country. Our aim is not only to bring assistance, but also to keep civilians and people deprived of their freedom safe from harm.

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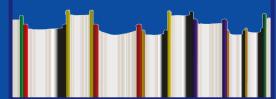
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China Hacks Israel, Iran, for Info. on Tech, Business Advances

China has hacked dozens of Israeli public and private sector groups as well as doing the same in Iran, Saudi Arabia and a variety of other countries, the international cybersecurity company FireEye announced Tuesday. The massive cyber-attack appears to be part of a long-term spying strategy in the area of technology and business competition and advancement, as opposed to any attempt to directly harm any of the target countries or businesses. According to FireEye, Beijing did not discriminate along any of the fault lines in the region, using its cyber tools to spy on a wide array of Middle Eastern countries, which are often at odds with each other, while all doing business with China. The goal seems to have been to gain intelligence into achieving better negotiation outcomes in terms of

pricing by viewing internal email discussions and assessments, and to appropriate certain key technological developments where possible. In addition, the attack is tied to a wide series of cyber exploitation of holes in Microsoft's Sharepoint announced by the Israel National Cyber Directorate (INCD) in 2019, and is not an attack whose maximum impact is being felt currently. The INCD tends not to name specific countries involved and would not name China on Tuesday. Estimates are that some public and private sector Israeli entities started to repel the attack once the Sharepoint vulnerability was announced in 2019, but that in other cases, Chinese spying in Israel continued deep into the end of 2020. The timing of the current announcement seemed to dovetail with the announcement... P3



A look at the world

UK's Second-Hand Car Sales Double in Q2 As Restrictions Ease

Britain's used car transactions grew by 108.6 percent in the second quarter (Q2) of this year when compared with the same period last year as COVID-19 restrictions eased, the British Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT) said in a report released Tuesday. During the second quarter, more than 2,167,000 vehicles changed hands, up 6.6 percent on 2019 pre-pandemic levels, said the SMMT in the report. "The increase tracks the country's gradual emergence from lockdown, as businesses reopened, demand for personal mobility increased and stock shortages in the new car market forced some consumers to turn to used models," said the SMMT. Compared to the near standstill of the



economy last year, the used car market saw the biggest growth in April, up 307.4 percent on 2020 with more than 724,000 transactions in the month, and up 5.0 percent on pre-pandemic 2019, said the report. "This is welcome news for the used car market as transactions rebounded following nationwide lockdowns which closed retailers," said Mike Hawes, chief executive of the SMMT. "More motorists are turning to used cars as supply shortages continue to affect the new car market, and the increased need for personal mobility with people remaining wary of public transport as they return to work," Hawes added. In addition, demand for used battery electric (BEV) and plug-in hybrid (PHEV) vehicles continued to mount in Q2, soaring by 353.9 percent and 349.8 percent respectively year-on-year, said the SMMT. England has lifted almost all its remaining COVID-19 restrictions since July 19. Nearly 90 percent of the adults in Britain have had their first dose of vaccine, while more than 74 percent have had their second jab, according to the latest figures. To bring life back to normal, countries such as Britain, China, Russia, the United States as well as the European Union have been racing against time to roll out coronavirus vaccines.

China-Russia Military Exercise Begins



a joint military exercise between China and Russia, kicked off Monday at a combined-arms tactical training base of the People's Liberation Army in Northwest China's Ningxia Hui autonomous region. Li Zuoqiang, a member of the Central Military Commission and chief of staff of the CMC Joint Staff Department, served as the general director of the exercise, Xinhua reported. At the opening ceremony, Li announced the order for the exercise to begin. Participating officers and soldiers from the two militaries were organized into 13 ground formations and two air echelons to be inspected. The joint exercise aims to deepen the joint anti-terrorism operations between the Chinese and Russian militaries and demonstrate the firm determination and strength of the two countries to jointly safeguard international and regional security and stability, according to Chinese and Russian officials. It reflects the new height of the China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for a new era and of the strategic mutual trust, pragmatic exchanges and coordination between the two countries, the officials said. The joint exercise is set to continue till August 13.

Saudi-Led Airstrikes Hit Houthi Reinforcements in Yemen's Marib

Airstrikes by the Saudi-led coalition overnight destroyed at least five pick-up vehicles carrying combatants of the Houthi militia in Yemen's central province of Marib, a military source told Xinhua on Monday. "The vehicles were destroyed in and around the frontline of the southwestern district of Rahabah, killing all aboard," the source in Marib said on condition of anonymity. "Despite the airstrikes, the Houthis continue their attempts



to retake strategic mountains in the district," said the source without elaborating further. Meanwhile, the Houthi-run al-Masirah TV reported six Saudi-led airstrikes on Rahabah and the western district of Sirwah without providing more details. Early on Monday, the Saudi-led coalition said it intercepted and destroyed two bomb-laden drones launched by the Houthis from Yemen towards the Saudi southern city of Khamis Mushait. There was no comment yet from the Houthi group. The Houthis began in February a major offensive on Marib in an attempt to seize control of the oil-rich province, the government's last northern stronghold. Yemen's civil war flared up in late 2014 when the Iran-backed Houthi group seized control of much of the country's north and forced the internationally recognized government of President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi out of the capital Sanaa. The Saudi-led Arab coalition intervened in the Yemeni conflict in March 2015 to support Hadi's government.



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