



Bus-tanker collision leaves 13 dead in western Iran

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India's Iranian oil imports in June hit 592,800 bpd

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US softens stance on Iranian sanctions waivers



China vows retaliation for \$200 billion US tariff threat

China accused the United States of bullying and warned it would hit back after the Trump administration raised the stakes in their trade dispute, threatening 10 percent tariffs on \$200 billion of Chinese goods.

China's Commerce Ministry said on Wednesday it was "shocked" and would complain to the World Trade Organization, but did not immediately say how it would retaliate. In a statement, it called the US actions "completely unacceptable". Reuters reported.

The Foreign Ministry described Washington's threats as "typical bullying" and said China needed to counter-attack to protect its interests. "This is a fight between unilateralism and multilateralism, protectionism and free trade, might and rules," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told a regular briefing on Wednesday.

Beijing has said it would hit back against Washington's escalating tariff measures, including through "qualitative measures," a threat that US businesses in China fear could mean anything from stepped-up inspections to delays in investment approvals and even consumer boycotts.

China could also limit visits to the United States by Chinese tourists, a business state media said is worth \$115 billion, or shed some of its US Treasury holdings, Iris Pang, Greater China economist at ING in Hong Kong, wrote in a note.

The \$200 billion far exceeds the total value of goods China imports from the United States, which means Beijing may need to think of creative ways to respond to such US measures.

On Tuesday, US officials issued a list of thousands of Chinese imports the Trump administration wants to hit with the new tariffs, including hundreds of food products as well as tobacco, chemicals, coal, steel and aluminum, prompting criticism from some US industry groups.

It also includes consumer goods ranging from car tires, furniture, wood products, handbags and suitcases, to dog and cat food, baseball gloves, carpets, doors, bicycles, skis, golf bags, toilet paper and beauty products.

Last week, Washington imposed 25 percent tariffs on \$34 billion of Chinese imports, and Beijing responded immediately with matching tariffs on the same amount of US exports to China. Each side is planning tariffs on a further \$16 billion in goods that would bring the totals to \$50 billion.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said that Washington would consider requests from some countries to be exempt from sanctions, which are due to go into effect in November, to prevent Iran from exporting oil.

"There will be a handful of countries that come to the United States and ask for relief from that. We'll consider it," Pompeo said, according to the text of an interview in Abu Dhabi with Sky News Arabia released by the US State Department. He did not identify any countries.

Washington had earlier told countries they

must halt all imports of Iranian oil from Nov. 4 or face US financial measures, with no exemptions.

Among Iran's major oil clients, South Korea and Japan have sought waivers, but China, India and Turkey have indicated they may not heed US measures. Oil customers in Europe may also be seeking exemptions.

The US pulled out of a multinational deal in May to lift sanctions against Iran in return for curbs to its nuclear program.

Efforts by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and other producers have led to a tighter oil market

after a persistent glut.

The prospect of sanctions on oil exports from Iran, the world's fifth-biggest oil producer, has helped push up oil prices in recent weeks with both crude contracts trading near 3 1/2-year highs.

US crude inventories fell last week by 6.8 million barrels, according to data from industry group, the American Petroleum Institute.

That decline was larger than expected, causing crude futures to gain in post-settlement trading.

Reuters and Press TV contributed to this story.

Leader's aide in Moscow, hails 'strategic' ties with Russia



A top adviser to Iran's Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei hailed his country's "strategic relationship" with Russia on Wednesday during a visit to Moscow, part of a diplomatic offensive by Tehran as it braces for renewed US sanctions.

Ali Akbar Velayati, who is in Russia to meet President Vladimir Putin, also took a swipe at US President Donald Trump, saying his "unreliable" actions made Tehran's close ties with Moscow all the more necessary.

The United States pulled out of a multinational deal in May to lift sanctions against Iran in return for curbs to its nuclear program. Washington says it will reimpose sanctions and has told other countries to halt all imports of Iranian oil as of Nov. 4, or face US financial measures.

"The relationship between Iran and the Russian Federation is a strategic relationship and in recent years the collective bilateral and regional relations have expanded," Velayati said on arrival in Moscow.

He said he would deliver messages to Putin from Ayatollah Khamenei and President Hassan Rouhani and that they would discuss the "very sensitive" global situation.

"Velayati cited Russian and Iranian cooperation in Syria, where they both support President Bashar al-Assad's forces in the seven-year Syrian war against 'terrorism' and its sponsors."

"Only a strategic and long-term relationship (with Russia) can promote the continuation of such a cooperation," said Velayati, who was also due to meet Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak in Moscow.

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UN chief: Rohingya are victims of ethnic cleansing



UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said Rohingya Muslims are victims of ethnic cleansing and the world has failed them.

In a write-up published in The Washington Post on Wednesday, the UN secretary general has recounted the ordeal and the bone-chilling experiences he heard from Rohingya refugees who had fled widespread killings in Myanmar's Rakhine state and sought refuge in Bangladesh.

"Small children butchered in front of their parents. Girls and women gang-raped while family members were tortured and killed. Villages burned to the ground," Guterres wrote.

"These victims of what has been rightly called ethnic

cleansing are suffering an anguish that can only stir a visitor's heartbreak and anger. Their horrific experiences defy comprehension, yet they are the reality for nearly one million Rohingya refugees."

Guterres wrote that systematic human rights abuses by the security forces in Myanmar over the past year were designed to instill terror in the Rohingya population, leaving them with a dreadful choice: Stay on in fear of death or leave everything simply to survive.

Describing Rohingya as the world's fastest-growing refugee crisis, he applauded people and the government of Bangladesh for their humanity shown by opening their borders and hearts to the

Rohingyas, while larger and wealthier countries around the world are closing doors to outsiders.

However, he stressed the need of a global response to the crisis, adding a Global Compact on Refugees is on the way by UN member states to help Bangladesh in responding to a fleeing wave of humanity.

"Expressions of solidarity are not enough; the Rohingya people need genuine assistance."

An international humanitarian appeal for almost \$1 billion is funded at only 26 percent — a shortfall causing malnutrition, lack of access to water and sanitation and basic education and of course inadequate measures to combat monsoon risks, according to the UN secretary general.

He urged Myanmar to create the conditions for the return of the refugees with full rights and the promise of living in safety and dignity.

"Unless the root causes of the violence in Rakhine state are addressed comprehensively, misery and hatred will continue to fuel conflict. The Rohingya people cannot become forgotten victims. We must answer their clear appeals for help with action," Guterres pointed out.

Trump calls Germany 'captive' of Russia



US President Donald Trump traded barbs with German Chancellor Angela Merkel at a two-day NATO summit in Brussels on Wednesday after he accused Berlin of being "captive" to Russia and demanded it immediately step up defense spending.

European alliance members were braced for criticism from Trump on defense spending, but his blistering attack on Germany at a breakfast meeting with NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg took the summit by surprise.

"Germany is a captive of Russia because it is getting so much of its energy from Russia," Trump said, taking particular aim at the proposed Nord Stream II gas pipeline, which he has previously criticized.

He said the pipeline project has made Germany "totally controlled" by Russia.

"I have to say, I think it's very sad when Germany makes a massive oil and gas deal with Russia where we're supposed to be guarding against Russia," Trump said at breakfast with Stoltenberg.

"Everybody's talking about it all over the world, they're saying we're paying you billions of dollars to protect you but you're paying billions of dollars to Russia."

The criticism was an unusual one coming from Trump, who has appeared eager to make nice with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Merkel, who grew up in Soviet-dominated East Germany, ramped up the febrile atmosphere of the summit with a sharp reply on arriving at NATO HQ, saying Germany had the right to make its own policy choices.

"I myself have also experienced a part of Germany being controlled by the Soviet Union," she said.

"I am very glad that we are united today in freedom as the Federal Republic of Germany and that we can therefore also make our own independent policies and make our own independent decisions."

Trump has long complained that European NATO members do not pay enough for their own defense, accusing them of freeloading on America and singling out Germany for particular criticism.

NATO allies agreed at a summit in Wales in 2014 to move towards spending two percent of GDP on defense by 2024. But Germany, Europe's biggest economy, spends just 1.24 percent, compared with 3.5 percent for the US.