

Iran, Pakistan call for enhancing defense cooperation

The Iranian and Pakistani defense ministers on Wednesday called for mutual cooperation to promote regional stability and security. Iran's Defense Minister Brigadier General Amir Hatami and his Pakistani counterpart Pervez Khattak made the call in a phone conversation, IRNA reported. Hatami also congratulated Khattak on his appointment as the new defense minister of Pakistan.



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He added that as an important Muslim country, Pakistan can play a significant role in regional developments. Hatami said the ongoing crises in the region and Muslim countries do not have military solutions; they should be resolved only through dialogue and political means. The Pakistani minister, for his part, expressed hope that the two countries will improve cooperation in various spheres.

Iran ex-president aides sentenced to prison

A court in Tehran sentenced two aides of Iranian former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to prison terms. The head of Tehran Province's Judiciary, Gholam-Hossein Esmaili, announced on Wednesday that the court sentenced Efsandiar Rahim Mashaei and Ali Akbar Javanfekr to five- and four-year prison terms, respectively, on charges of conspiracy to commit crimes against the country's security, Tasnim News Agency reported. Apart from receiving the five-year prison term, Rahim Mashaei has been given a one-year prison sentence for propaganda against the Islamic Republic and another six-month sentence for contempt of court, he added.



Efsandiar Rahim Mashaei Ali Akbar Javanfekr IRNA

Rahim Mashaei, former president's chief of staff, still faces charges of espionage, Esmaili added, saying the court is going to hear the case.



Iran slams US "provocative and irresponsible" statement about Iraq unrest

Iran dismissed as "surprising, provocative and irresponsible" the US statement about the recent unrest in Iraq which it had blamed Tehran.

The White House issued a statement Tuesday, accusing what it called as Iranian proxies for recent "life-threatening attacks" in Iraq, Fars News Agency wrote.

The US also warned Tehran would be held accountable if US entities are targeted.

Last week, protests broke out in Basra over corruption, unemployment, and failing infrastructure. But on the provocation of some regional countries, some rioters in the guise of protesters set fire to political party headquarters as well as the Iranian consulate there. Rockets were also fired toward the US consulate in Basra and the US embassy in Baghdad. Neither location was damaged.

The statement claimed that the US would hold Tehran accountable for "any attack that results in the injury to our personnel or damage to United States Government facilities".

On Wednesday, Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Bahram Qassemi condemned the statement as "surprising, provocative and irresponsible which lacks legal basis", blaming the US interfering measures and aggressive meddling for the instability, tensions and discord in the region and Iraq.

"The recent conditions and chaos in Iraq, including the attack and setting fire at the Islamic Republic of Iran's



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consulate in Basra, are the result of such policies and their (the US) clear and hidden unwise support for the groups which promote violence and extremism," he added.

Qassemi underlined Iran's principled and permanent policy of protecting peace, stability and security in the regional states, and said, "A secure and developed Iraq has

always been one of the Islamic Republic of Iran's demands and priorities and the plots of third parties cannot prevent development and enhancement of these age-old and strong relations."

Washington's allegations against Iran were raised as Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the second-in-command of the forces commonly known by the Arabic name Hashd

al-Shaabi (popular forces), took the US embassy in Baghdad and its consulate responsible for the recent unrests and attacks against the government buildings in Basra.

"We have complete information and documents showing that the US embassy and consulate should be blamed for unrest in Basra," Muhandis told reporters in a press conference on Sunday.

Envoy: Remaining JCPOA parties should guarantee Iran's interests

The remaining signatories to the 2015 nuclear deal should ensure that the agreement will serve the Islamic Republic's interests, Kazem Gharibabadi, Iran's representative to international organizations based in Vienna, said.

"While Iran has continued its cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in an effective way based on goodwill, unfortunately, our interests have not been fully served based on what has been mentioned in the nuclear deal," Gharibabadi said, addressing an IAEA Board of Governors meeting in Vienna on Wednesday, Tasnim News Agency wrote.

He further described the US withdrawal from the nuclear deal known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and the reimposition of sanctions on Iran as "unilateral and illegal" and "a fundamental violation" of the UN Security Council Resolution 2231.

He added that by such moves, Washington is disrespecting the international community's views on the deal.



tal basis" for the continuation of the JCPOA.

"The remaining parties to this agreement should guarantee Iran's interests by adopting appropriate practical measures," the diplomat said.

On May 8, the US president pulled his country out of the JCPOA, which was signed in Vienna in 2015 after years of negotiations among Iran and the P5+1 (The US, Britain, Russia, France, China and Germany). Later on August 6, Donald Trump signed an executive order re-imposing sanctions on Iran.

He said the US policy is to levy "maximum economic pressure" on the country. Trump also restated his opinion that the 2015 Iran nuclear deal was a "horrible, one-sided deal".

Following the US exit, Iran and the remaining parties launched talks to save the accord. The European Union has vowed to counter US President Donald Trump's renewed sanctions on Iran.

Unlike the US, Iran has behaved responsibly and fulfilled its obligations so far, Gharibabadi said.

The Iranian official noted that full and honest implementation of the obligations of all parties is a "fundamen-

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Nevertheless, there came a moment when the government decided to remove these barricades. The Nicaraguan police started dismantling the barricades. Even the people living in nearby neighborhoods joined the police force and helped remove the barricades. They said they were fed up with the violence and the impossibility of having a normal daily life. Today, there are no more barricades in the streets of Nicaragua and the condition is gradually going back to normal. Even though Nicaragua's economy has been severely damaged, we are rebuilding it little by little. At present, the people of Nicaragua are going to the streets, but to demand peace and justice in a peaceful way.

Did the opposition groups resist when the barricades were being removed?

Yes, they resisted against the police force and since they were armed, 198 people were killed in the conflict.

Previously, we thought that these NGOs were working with honesty, trying to do positive things for Nicaragua. But later, it turned out that they were working to the government's detriment using certain tactics.

What is the reason for US hostility towards the incumbent Nicaraguan government?

I think it is due to the imperialist attitude maintained by the US towards Nicaragua and other states. Nicaragua gained its independence from Spain in 1821. Fourteen years later, in 1835, the US carried out its first invasion of Nicaragua. A man from the southern US, called William Walker, came to Nicaragua and declared himself the president of the Central American country. He wanted to become the president of all Central America. The Nicaraguan people, however, fought against this man's invasion at the time. Once

Walker declared himself the president of Nicaragua, the US government immediately recognized him as the true president of the country.

Years later, in 1933, our national hero called Augusto César Sandino led a rebellion, from 1927 to 1933, against the US military occupation of Nicaragua. Deploying guerrilla tactics, he and his very small group fought against the US Army in Nicaragua and managed to expel it from the country.

Is the US seeking to reap any economic benefits by trying to interfere in Nicaragua's internal affairs?

No, the US sees Latin America as its backyard. Americans say that the region is ours. This has been going on for about 200 years. They adopted the Monroe Doctrine – a US policy opposing European colonialism in the Americas, beginning in 1823 – and espouse American exceptionalism – an ideology holding the US as unique among nations in positive or negative connotations, with respect to its ideas of democracy and personal freedoms. They believe they are an exceptional country whose democracy and system of life should be copied by everyone. Those who refrain from copying them become their enemies.

The US seeks to impose its criteria of what is democracy on Nicaragua, which is a sovereign country.

How would you describe the relationship between Iran and Nicaragua?

Excellent! We are friendly countries and respect each other. In multilateral organizations, such as the UN, we always support each other. The two states have many historical similarities. Both sides' revolutions – the Islamic Revolution and the Nicaraguan Revolution – produced victories in the same year (1979). A coup d'état was launched against

the government of the then Iranian prime minister Mohammad Mosaddegh in 1953.

Nicaragua experienced something similar a little bit before 1953. Both countries have the same principles and values of solidarity and friendship. In addition, they are both anti-imperialist. The government and people of Nicaragua are anti-imperialist. We have nothing against the US or the people of the country. We also have excellent relations with Iran's people, who have a great 5,000-year old culture.

What about the level of Nicaragua-Iran economic ties?

Due to the vast distance between the two countries and, at present, the unilateral US banking sanctions on Iran, making it difficult to transfer money to and from the country, things are going very slowly and the [amount and value of] trade is very low. However, we are doing our best to find ways and means to bypass these sanctions, especially the banking ones.

We are working on raising the possibility of making joint investments. Iranians can invest in Nicaraguan projects, as the country has a very interesting law that is attractive to foreign investors.

Iranians firms can fund Nicaraguan projects in agro and renewable energy sectors.

What has been the Nicaraguan government's official stance on the US withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and Washington's re-imposition of unilateral sanctions on Iran?

We are totally against the US move. We maintain that the US and its president, Donald Trump, made a big mistake by withdrawing [on May 8, 2018] from the JCPOA [signed between Iran and P5+1 in July 2015]. We believe that the US should stick to the international agreement. Nicaragua is totally in favor of the JCPOA and preserving it.

We think the European states should, as they have been doing so far, continue supporting the JCPOA and making efforts to save the deal.