

Britain announced on Monday it would open a joint military training base in Oman in March 2019, as it looks to bolster its relations with allies in the region.

South Korea, US resume suspended joint marine drills

South Korea and the United States on Monday resumed small-scale military training that was indefinitely suspended following a summit between US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un.

The combined marine drills were among "select" joint exercises that were indefinitely delayed in June, after Trump met with Kim in Singapore and pledged to halt "very provocative" and expensive joint military drills with Seoul, AFP reported.

But the Korean Marine Exchange Program (KMEP), involving some 500 marines from the US and South Korea, resumed for two weeks from Monday in the South's southern city of Pohang, Seoul's Defense Ministry said.

"We have previously said we will conduct US-South Korea battalion-level or small-scale drills as planned," the ministry spokesman Choi Hyun-soo told reporters.

Washington is Seoul's security ally and stations 28,500 troops in the South to protect it from its nuclear-armed neighbor.

The two countries have long carried out joint exercises which they insist are purely defensive in nature, but which Pyongyang sees as a rehearsal for invasion.

Along with the marine drills, Seoul and Washington suspended the annual Ulchi Freedom Guardian training in August involving tens of thousands of troops.

They also agreed to halt the Vigilant Ace air force exercise slated for December.

The resumption in military drills comes just days before US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is set to hold talks



South Korean amphibious assault vehicles fire smoke shells during a landing operation in the southern city of Pohang.

YONHAP/APF

with his North Korean counterpart on denuclearization and plans for a second summit between their leaders.

At their meeting in Singapore, Trump and Kim signed a vaguely worded statement on denuclearization but little progress has been made since.

The two have sparred over the exact terms of the deal, with Washington push-

ing to maintain sanctions against the North until its "final, fully verified denuclearization" and Pyongyang condemning US demands as "gangster-like."

As a latest sign of increasing frustration, the North's Foreign Ministry issued a statement on Friday threatening to resume building nuclear weapons unless US ends sanctions against Pyong-

yang.

The North is under multiple UN Security Council sanctions for its weapons programs.

In an interview with Fox News on Friday, Pompeo reiterated that sanctions will remain until Pyongyang carries out denuclearization commitments made in Singapore.

Taliban hit Afghan checkpoint, kill 13 soldiers, policemen

International Desk

The Taliban launched an attack early Monday on a newly established joint Afghan Army and Police checkpoint in eastern Ghazni Province, killing at least 13 soldiers and policemen, according to a provincial official.

Afghan reinforcements were patched to the site of the attack in Khogyani district but were repeatedly ambushed along the way. And late on Sunday night, a Taliban attack in southern Kandahar Province killed at least four policemen and wounded two others, AP reported.

Arif Noori, spokesman for the provincial governor in Ghazni, said seven soldiers and six policemen were killed in Monday's attack on the checkpoint, and four soldiers were wounded.

According to Noori, six terrorists were killed and more than 10 others were wounded during the ensuing three-hour battle with Afghan forces. Zabihullah Mujahid, a Taliban spokesman, claimed responsibility for the Ghazni and Kandahar attacks.

The joint army-police checkpoint was set up just two days ago in a strategic area to cut off a key supply route for the Taliban but was now completely burned down and destroyed, Noori said.

Reinforcements were rushed to assist the forces under attack but they were ambushed by other Taliban members at least four times while on their way to the checkpoint, said Noori.

The Taliban have stepped up attacks in volatile Ghazni, and in August overran parts of the provincial capital, also called Ghazni. At the time, hundreds of people fled the city amid intense fighting between Afghan forces and the Taliban that killed about 120 members of the security forces and civilians. According to Afghan authorities, nearly 200 terrorists, many of them foreigners, were also killed.

were wounded in Khakrez district, where a checkpoint was also attacked. He said the Taliban fled the area after their attack was repelled.

The assaults came as the Taliban hold nearly half of Afghanistan, with near-daily attacks on Afghan security forces. The US and its allies invaded Afghanistan in 2001 under the guise of the war on terror. Some 17 years on, the Taliban, after their ouster by NATO forces in 2001, have only boosted their campaign of violence across the country, targeting both civilians and security forces in bloody assaults.

In August, Russia proposed holding multilateral peace talks in Moscow, and invited 12 countries and the Taliban to attend a summit the following month. But the meeting was postponed after Afghan President Ashraf Ghani rejected the invitation on the grounds that talks with the Taliban should be led by the Afghan government.

However, Russia's Foreign Ministry said on Saturday that the Afghan president had agreed to send a group of senior politicians to peace talks in Moscow, at which a delegation representing the Taliban would be present.

Representatives from Iran, China, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan are expected to attend, officials said, according to Reuters.

Even though Afghan government officials will not attend the Moscow talks, members of the High Peace Council (HPC), an Afghan body overseeing efforts to start peace talks, are expected to attend.



In this Oct. 30, 2018 photo Afghan security forces guard the gate of the Karti Sakhi Shrine in Kabul, Afghanistan.

RAHMAT GULJAP

Saudi sent experts to cover up Khashoggi murder: Turkey

From Page 1

But despite intensive searches by Turkish police, there is still no trace of his remains.

Turkey's allegation of the deployment

of a "clean-up" team came after Yasin Aktay, an advisor to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, hinted Friday that the body may even have been destroyed in acid.

Turkish Vice President Fuat Oktay told

the official Anadolu news agency Monday that "all those reports should be investigated."

In an editorial published in The Washington Post Friday, Erdogan said it came from "the highest levels" of the Saudi government, while he did "not believe for a second" that Saudi's King Salman had ordered the crime.

Kashoggi media have pointed the finger at powerful Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and analysts have said Ankara

is keen to have the heir sidelined from the nexus of power in Riyadh.

"Yes, a murder was committed and it was premeditated. Who gave the command for this murder? This is what we are looking for on Turkish soil?" Oktay echoed the president's question in Monday's interview.

However, Erdogan has yet to directly accuse Prince Mohammed, who has condemned the murder "a repulsive incident".

Separatists kidnap 78 pupils in Cameroon's restive northwest

Armed separatists have kidnapped at least 78 students and their principal from a Presbyterian school in Nkwen village in Cameroon's restive northwest region, a governor said Monday.

The kidnapping late on Sunday took place near Bamenda, the capital of the troubled English-speaking region, according to Governor Deben Tchhoffo, AP reported.

A video purportedly of the kidnapped children has been released on social media via men who call themselves Amba boys, a reference to the state of Ambazonia that armed separatists are trying to establish in Cameroon's northwest and southwest regions.

In the video, the kidnapers force several of the young male students to give their names and the names of their parents. The children say they were kidnapped late Sunday by the Amba boys, and they don't know where they are being held.

The men who identify themselves as the kidnapers said they will only release the children when they achieve what they want.

"We shall only release you after the struggle. You will be going to school now here," said the men who identified themselves as Amba boys. While the video could not be independently verified, parents have been reacting on social media saying they recognize their children in the video.

Hundreds have been killed in Cameroon's Anglophone regions in the past year, where violence between armed separatists and the military have increased since a government crackdown against protesters in the northwest and southwest regions who claim that, as the English-speaking minority, they are marginalized by the French-speaking government.

Violent separatists took up arms to destabilize the Anglophone regions to win independence for the areas they want to declare a separate state, which they call Ambazonia.

The turmoil in Cameroon comes as President Paul Biya, who has led since 1982, easily won a seventh term last month in an election that the United States says was marked by irregularities. The government did away with presidential term limits several years ago, part of a trend in Africa that has dismayed many.

Lion Air jet's airspeed indicator malfunctioned on four flights

The "black box" data recorder from a crashed Lion Air jet shows its airspeed indicator malfunctioned on its last four flights, investigators said Monday, just hours after distraught relatives of victims confronted the airline's cofounder at a meeting organized by officials.

National Transportation Safety Committee chairman Soerjanto Tjahjono said the problem was similar on each of the four flights, including the fatal flight on Oct. 29 in which the plane plunged into the Java Sea minutes after taking off from Jakarta, killing all 189 people on board, AP reported.

Erratic speed and altitude on the plane's previous flight, from Denpasar on Bali to Jakarta, were widely reported and "when we opened the black box, yes indeed the technical problem was the airspeed or the speed of the plane," Tjahjono told a news conference. "Data from the black box showed that two flights before Denpasar-Jakarta also experienced the same problem," he said. "In the black box there were four flights that experienced problems with the airspeed indicator."

Indonesian investigators, the plane's manufacturer, Boeing, and the US National Transportation Safety Board are formulating a more specific inspection for Boeing 737 MAX 8 planes related to the airspeed problem, Tjahjono said.

Lion Air has said a technical problem with the jet was fixed after problems with the Bali to Jakarta flight.

Investigator Nurcahyo Utomo said investigators need to review maintenance records, including what problems were reported, what repairs were done including whether components were replaced, and how the repairs were tested before the 2-month-old plane was declared airworthy.



Achmad Ibrahim Kirana bows in front of relatives of the victims in the crashed Lion Air jet during a press conference in Jakarta, Indonesia, on Nov. 5, 2018.

"Currently we are looking for the cause of problem," he said "Whether the trouble came from its indicator, its measuring device or sensor, or a problem with its computer. This is what we do not know yet and we will find it out," he said.

At the meeting with family members, Tjahjono had said that information downloaded from the jet's flight data recorder was consistent with reports that the plane's speed and altitude were erratic after takeoff on its final flight. Searchers are still trying to locate the cockpit voice recorder.

Many families face an agonizing wait for missing relatives to be identified. Police medical experts have received nearly 140 body bags of human remains and have identified 14 victims.

Relatives questioned why the plane had been cleared to fly after suffering problems on its Bali to Jakarta flight on Oct. 28 that included a rapid descent after takeoff that terrified passengers.

Tjahjono said the large amount of small debris and the relatively small area the debris was found in showed the plane hit the water at a very high speed. "The plane was intact when it plunged to the sea, it did not explode in the air, and the aircraft engine was running when it touched the water at high RPM — it's marked by the loss of all blades of the turbine," he said.