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11.07.19

French President Macron: we are experiencing the death of NATO

- - News Placed in Dec 4 spot – Wednesday

Dec. 4 NATO summit in London

11.07.19 - - News Placed in Nov 7 spot – Thursday

Jordan Economy buckling under burden of 1.3 million Syrian civil war refugees

11.06.19 - - News Placed in Nov 6 spot – Wednesday

Iran's Natanz enrichment site held an IAEA inspector & seized her travel documents

11.06.19 - - News Placed in Oct 12 spot – Saturday

Israel aiding Syria's Kurds, advocating for them with U.S.

Netanyahu offered humanitarian aid to the "gallant Kurdish people" on Oct. 10

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Dec. 4 summit in London

French President Macron: NATO is 'brain dead'

The French president said there is a lack of strategic coordination between European allies on the one hand and the United States and Turkey, with NATO's second largest military, on the other

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France's president warned fellow European countries on Thursday that NATO is dying because of American unpredictability under President Donald Trump, a view quickly rejected by Germany.

In an interview with British weekly The Economist, Emmanuel Macron expressed doubt about U.S.-led NATO's security maxim that an attack on one ally is an attack on all, which has underpinned transatlantic ties since the alliance's 1949 foundation.

"What we are currently experiencing is the brain death of NATO," Macron said. Asked whether he still believed in the Article Five collective defense guarantee of NATO's treaty, Macron answered, "I don't know," although he said the United States would remain an ally.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, in Leipzig ahead of the 30th anniversary on Saturday of the fall of the Berlin Wall that is seen by many as NATO's crowning

achievement through its four-decade-long role blunting Soviet expansionism, said the alliance was perhaps one of the most important "in all recorded history."

Macron has said there is a lack of strategic coordination between European allies on the one hand and the United States and Turkey, with NATO's second largest military, on the other.

While France has traditionally had an ambivalent role in NATO, taking no part in its strategic military planning from 1966-2009 despite being a founding member, Macron's comments - a month before NATO's **Dec. 4 summit in London** - were unexpected.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg and many allies want to project an image of unity at the summit at a time of rising Chinese military might and what NATO leaders see as Russian attempts to undermine Western democracies through cyber-attacks, disinformation campaigns and covert operations.

NATO was shaken by Trump's portrayal of it as being in crisis at the last summit in Brussels in July, and its image of unity took a hit when Turkey defied its allies to launch a military incursion into Syria on Oct. 9.

Macron had earlier decried NATO's inability to react to what he called **Turkey's "crazy" offensive** and said **it was time Europe stopped acting like a junior ally when it came to the Middle East.**

In his interview, he also said the **United States** was showing signs of **"turning its back on us"**, as demonstrated by **Trump's sudden decision last month to pull troops** out of northeastern Syria **without consulting the allies**, the French leader said.

German Chancellor Angela **Merkel said he was overreacting.**

"The French president has found rather drastic words to express his views. This is not how I see the state of cooperation at NATO," she told a news conference alongside Stoltenberg in Berlin.

Stoltenberg told Reuters that NATO had overcome differences in the past, citing the 1956 Suez Crisis and the 2003 Iraq War.

Once seen by some as a Cold War relic until Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea, **NATO needs all its 29 allies** on side as it confronts militant attacks in Europe and seeks to defend against the threat of ballistic missiles from Iran to North Korea.

Macron lauded nascent European defense integration initiatives independent of the United States.

His so-called European Intervention Initiative has so far brought together nine willing militaries ready to react to crises near Europe's borders without NATO or the United States.

The **European Union** has also recently **launched its own multi-billion-euro defense plans** to develop and deploy military assets together after years of spending cuts that have left European militaries without vital capabilities and reliant on Washington.

"The European Union cannot defend Europe," Stoltenberg said in a speech in Berlin.

Since taking office in 2017, Trump has accused European NATO allies of not shouldering their **fair share of the cost of defending Europe**. He demanded they double NATO's defense spending goal of 2% of economic output, set in 2014.

They retorted that security is not just about spending targets, but all have since raised their defense outlays, though some remain short of the 2% objective.

In a change of policy, German Defense Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer said on Thursday Berlin would spend 2% of its economic output on defense by 2031, belatedly reaching the goal set by NATO leaders five years ago.

But with its military bases in Europe and nuclear warheads stored in five NATO countries, the United States remains the ultimate protector of European democracies against an increasingly assertive post-Soviet Russia.

In one sign of ongoing cooperation, the **U.S. Air Force flew B-52 bombers** from the U.S. mainland to train with British and Norwegian allies for **almost a month in October** at a time when China and Russia continue to modernize their militaries.

**11.07.19**

**Jordan Economy buckling under burden of 1.3 million Syrian civil war refugees**

**Jordanian official: Economy buckling under burden of Syrian refugees**

Influx of 1.3 million people fleeing years-long civil war has impacted on government expenditure as well as economic growth and trade with neighboring nations

The Media Line |Published: **11.07.19**, 13:20

**Jordan's economy has been suffering due to the presence of some 1.3 million Syrian refugees who have fled that country's eight-year civil war**, according to an official from the Jordanian Planning Ministry.

Issam Al-Majali, spokesperson for the ministry charged with overseeing the refugees, says that the influx "caused a huge increase in governmental expenses between the years 2011 and 2018 due to the costs involved in responding to the refugees' needs."

A document released by the ministry highlights a reduction in core services for the refugees, as well as expenditures that have tripled due to the need to secure the borders and beef up internal security.

According to a report released last month by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, **only 660,000 of the Syrians who have fled to Jordan have registered** with the agency, which provides them with some means of support.

All the above, according to Majali, has caused “a huge decrease in Jordan’s economic growth,” from 6.1% between the years 2000 and 2010, to 2.4% between 2011 and 2018, and an “increase in the Jordanian debt,” from 69% in 2010 to 95% by the end of 2018.

There have been other areas of impact as well.

“Unemployment among Jordanians increased from 12% in 2012 to 19% in the first quarter of 2019, while the poverty level rose from 14.4% in 2010 to 20% by the end of 2016,” he said.

“Despite support for the Jordanian government from the international community in response to the refugees, **their presence has cost Jordan about \$1.4 billion,**” he added.

In addition, he said, closing the border with Syria has harmed the national economy, as that country was a transit point for trade between Jordan and such places as Turkey and Lebanon.

Jordanian economist and analyst Jawad Al-Anani agrees but says the closed borders have also affected bilateral trade.

“Syria used to be one of the most important sources for inexpensive quality goods,” he says. “In addition, Jordan used to export goods to Syria, and we had investments in Syria.”

Anani, too, expounded on the way the refugees have burdened the country.

“Personal incomes have gone down while the Syrians have increased the need for electricity, as well as the load on schools and health services, which means increasing costs for the government,” he said.

Starting in 2016, the **European Union has made more funding available to Jordan** in the form of grants and loans, while facilitating exports to Europe as a way of overcoming lost regional trade.

Majali said that Jordan views the refugees’ presence as only “temporary,” adding that **Amman “will not deport any refugees, which is in line with international law.”**

11.06.19

## Iran's Natanz enrichment site held an IAEA inspector & seized her travel documents

### Iran briefly held IAEA inspector, seized travel documents - diplomats

The nuclear deal, which the IAEA is policing, allows for 130-150 inspectors from the agency designated for Iran but a western diplomat warned the incident may impact their ability to carry out inspections in the future

Reuters|Published: 11.06.19 , 22:30

Iran briefly held an inspector for the U.N. nuclear watchdog in the Islamic Republic and seized her travel documents, diplomats familiar with the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) work said on Wednesday, some describing it as harassment.

The incident appears to be the first of its kind since Tehran's landmark deal with major powers was struck in 2015, imposing restrictions on Iran's nuclear activities in exchange for the lifting of international sanctions.

It comes at a time of heightened frictions between Iran and the West, with Tehran breaching the deal's restrictions step-by-step in response to Washington's withdrawal from the deal and renewed sanctions. The IAEA is also in transition, with a new chief due to take office next month.

The issue is due to be discussed at a meeting of the IAEA's 35-nation Board of Governors on Thursday convened at short notice to discuss "two safeguards matters" not specified in the agenda, which was circulated on Monday.

"The agency wants to show how seriously they are taking this. It is a potentially damaging precedent," one Western official said.

Three diplomats familiar with the agency's work said the female inspector had her travel documents taken, and two said she was briefly held while working in Iran.

One of the diplomats said the incident occurred at Iran's enrichment site at Natanz last week. Another one also said the incident took place at Natanz.

"There is a real concern that it will harm how (the IAEA) carry out their inspections in the future," a European diplomat said.

The nuclear deal, which the IAEA is policing, allows for 130-150 inspectors from the agency designated for Iran.

An IAEA spokesman and Iran's ambassador to the agency declined to comment.

The other matter due to be discussed on Thursday is Iran's less than full cooperation with the IAEA in explaining how traces of uranium were found at a site in Tehran that Israel has called a "secret atomic warehouse", diplomats said.

Although the IAEA has declined to confirm officially that it found uranium traces at the site, which Iran has said was a carpet-cleaning facility, it told Iran in September that "time is of the essence" in answering its questions, and it reported an improvement in Iran's cooperation last month.

11.06.19

Israel aiding Syria's Kurds, advocating for them with U.S.  
Netanyahu offered humanitarian aid to the "gallant Kurdish people" on Oct. 10

Israel aiding Syria's Kurds, advocating for them with U.S.

Israel has maintained discreet military, intelligence and business ties with the Kurds since the 1960s, regarding the minority ethnic group whose indigenous population is split between Iraq, Turkey, Syria and Iran - as a buffer against shared adversaries

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Israel is assisting Syrian Kurds battered by a month-old Turkish incursion, seeing them as a counterweight to Iranian influence and advocating for them in talks with the United States, the deputy Israeli foreign minister said on Wednesday.

Ankara launched its assault targeting the Kurdish YPG militia after the abrupt withdrawal of 1,000 U.S. troops from northern Syria in early October, a move Kurds deemed a betrayal by Washington, their partner in fighting Islamic State.

In a rare public dissent with U.S. President Donald Trump, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu offered humanitarian aid to the "gallant Kurdish people" on Oct. 10, saying they faced possible "ethnic cleansing" by Turkey and its Syrian allies.

Tzipi Hotovely, Israel's deputy foreign minister, told parliament on Wednesday that the offer had been taken up. "Israel has received many requests for assistance, mainly in the diplomatic and humanitarian realm," she said. "We identify with the deep distress of the Kurds, and we are assisting them through a range of channels."

Syrian Kurdish officials could not immediately be reached for comment.

Hotovely did not elaborate on the Israeli assistance, other than to say that during "dialogue with the Americans..., we state our truth regarding the Kurds...and we are proud of our taking a stand alongside the Kurdish people".

Israel has maintained discreet military, intelligence and business ties with the Kurds since the 1960s, regarding the minority ethnic group whose indigenous population is split

between Iraq, Turkey, Syria and Iran - as a buffer against shared adversaries.

Chief among those today are Iranian-sponsored forces deploying close to Israel's borders, including within Syria.

"Israel indeed has a salient interest in preserving the strength of the Kurds and the additional minorities in the north Syria area as moderate and pro-Western elements," Hotovely said.

"The possible collapse of the Kurdish hold in north Syria is a negative and dangerous scenario as far as Israel is concerned. It is absolutely clear that such an event would bring about a bolstering of negative elements in the area, headed by Iran.