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TRUMP DENIES SPY CLAIMS ... SOME SENTENCED TO DEATH: IRAN

Kuwait calls for restraint on seizure

Omani official to visit Iran ... Japan will try to ease tensions

CAIRO, July 22, (RTRS): Kuwait said on Sunday that it “follows with extreme concern” the latest escalation in the Gulf region, after Iran seized a British tanker, Kuwait’s news agency (KUNA) reported.

Kuwait also stressed that “the continuation of such acts will increase tensions, expose maritime safety to a direct threat, which requires the international community to intensify its efforts to contain the escalation.”

Kuwait called on all parties to exercise restraint and respect international maritime law to ensure maritime security in the region.

Iran said on Monday it had captured 17 spies working for the CIA and sentenced some of them to death, an announcement US President Donald Trump dismissed as “totally false” amid an escalating international crisis over tankers in the Gulf.

The Iranian announcement came hours before Britain was due to unveil its response to Iran’s seizure of a British oil tanker, a move that has escalated a three-month confrontation that nearly drew the United States and Iran into a shooting war.

“The Report of Iran capturing CIA spies is totally false. Zero truth. Just more lies and propaganda (like their shot-down drone) put out by a Religious Regime that is Badly Failing and has no idea what to do. Their Economy is dead, and will get much worse. Iran is a total mess!” tweeted Trump.

Iranian state television published images it said showed CIA officers who had been in touch with the suspected spies. The Ministry of Intelligence said the 17 spies had been arrested in the 12 months to March 2019. Some had been sentenced to death, according to another report.

Such announcements are not unusual in Iran and are often made for domestic consumption. But the timing suggested a hardening of the Iranian position as the Gulf crisis escalates.

In London, Prime Minister Theresa May led a meeting of her government’s COBR emergency committee to respond to Friday’s capture of the Stena Impero tanker by Iranian commandoes who abseiled onto its deck from helicopters in the Strait of Hormuz.

British ministers were expected to unveil their plans in a speech to parliament later on Monday. Regional experts say London has few good options to exert leverage over Iran at a time when Washington has already imposed the maximum possible economic sanctions, banning Iran’s global oil exports.

But the incident may prompt Britain and other countries to be more forthcoming as Washington has asked its reluctant allies to provide more ships to help secure the Gulf.

Asked on Fox News about any possible US role over the seized tanker, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said pointedly: “The responsibility ... falls to the United Kingdom to take care of their ships.”

Confrontation between the United States and Iran has spiralled since last year when Trump pulled out of an international agreement signed by his predecessor Barack Obama which guaranteed Iran access to world trade in return for curbs to its nuclear programme.

In May this year Washington closed loopholes in sanctions, effectively barring all countries from buying Iranian oil.

Since then, Iran has stepped up its nuclear activity beyond limits in the deal and Washington has accused Tehran of attacking ships in the Gulf. In June, after Iran shot down a US drone, Trump ordered retaliatory air strikes, only to abort them minutes before impact, the closest the United States has come to bombing Iran in their 40 year history of animosity.

Last week the United States said it had shot down an Iranian drone, which Tehran denied.

Opposed

Washington’s major European allies Britain, France and Germany opposed Trump’s decision to quit the nuclear deal and have tried to remain neutral. But Britain was drawn more directly into the confrontation on July 4 when its Royal Marines seized an Iranian tanker off Gibraltar, accused of violating European sanctions on Syria.

Iran repeatedly threatened to retaliate for that incident and has made little secret that its capture of the Stena Impero two weeks later was intended as a retaliatory move. It says the ship is being held over safety concerns and the 23-member crew, including 18 Indians and no British citizens, are safe.

As Britain weighed its next step, a recording emerged on Sunday of Britain’s only warship in the Gulf radioing in vain to try to persuade Iranian forces not to board Stena Impero. That showed the difficulty a mid-sized naval power would have in protecting ships in the strait between Iran and the Arabian Peninsula, the most important waterway of the global oil trade.

Oman’s minister responsible for foreign affairs, Yousuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah, will visit Iran on Saturday to discuss regional developments, Oman’s state news agency said on Monday. It did not give further details. The sultanate on Sunday urged Tehran to release the British-flagged tanker Stena Impero, which Iran seized on Friday, and called on all parties to exercise restraint and resolve differences diplomatically.

Japan wants to make every effort to reduce tension between the United States and Iran before responding to an expected US request to send its navy to safeguard strategic waters off Iran, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said on Monday.

Japanese media have said Washington’s proposal to boost surveillance of vital Middle East oil shipping lanes off Iran and Yemen, where it blames Iran and its proxies for tanker attacks, could be on the agenda during a visit to Tokyo this week by US national security adviser John Bolton.

Opinion

UAE-China partnership, knowledge and development

By Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

HE works for the future and is keen on bringing all useful experiences to his country. He implements mega projects that move the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to an advanced level of development and modernization. Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed insists on being accompanied by UAE personalities from all sectors during his foreign visits to ensure such visits are productive and culminate in quick implementation of agreements between the countries they visit and his country.

On this basis, the Crown Prince’s fourth visit to China — accompanied by about 200 businessmen, officials and ministers — marked a new turning point in the relationship of the two countries which are celebrating 35 years of cooperation.

This renaissance witnessed by the UAE is the result of determination and persistence towards sustainable development; such that projects are implemented for the benefit of everyone and in a bid to give more to the children of the State in particular, and the Gulf in general. In the past few decades, the UAE has become a bee cell with many projects. It has taken great strides in consolidating its Gulf, regional and Arab role as an economic, cultural and knowledge base, in accordance with the principles of tolerance and cooperation for the common good.

In Abu Dhabi, you find Emirati youths speaking Chinese because of the conviction that knowledge of each other’s language enhances cultural exchange. They seek to break down barriers between nations based on the belief that any cooperation should be founded on clarity and certainty.

It is great to see commercial, economic, investment and know-how, as the case between a great country like China and the UAE which seeks modernity by fulfilling all scientific and age requirements to be a faithful translation of the old saying, “Seek knowledge, even in China.” China comes to the UAE through a series of major projects, most importantly the Chinese City and giant trade markets.

These benefits are translated into trade balance between the two countries and indicate mutual trust. After establishing the Chinese City in the United Arab Emirates — a trading center and an investment attraction, non-oil trade reached \$58 billion last year. This is in addition to cooperation in addressing a number of international and regional issues to strengthen security and stability in the region, and to keep the region away from the specter of tensions that threatened it for years.

This is the basis of distinguished relations between Abu Dhabi and Beijing. It is a confirmation of the right vision that Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed translated into development of relations with other countries. This visit is vital for the Gulf nationals and Arabs, because of its positive impact on the Gulf and the Arab world.

Any open window of cooperation activates investment, exchange of knowledge and transfer of technological industries to

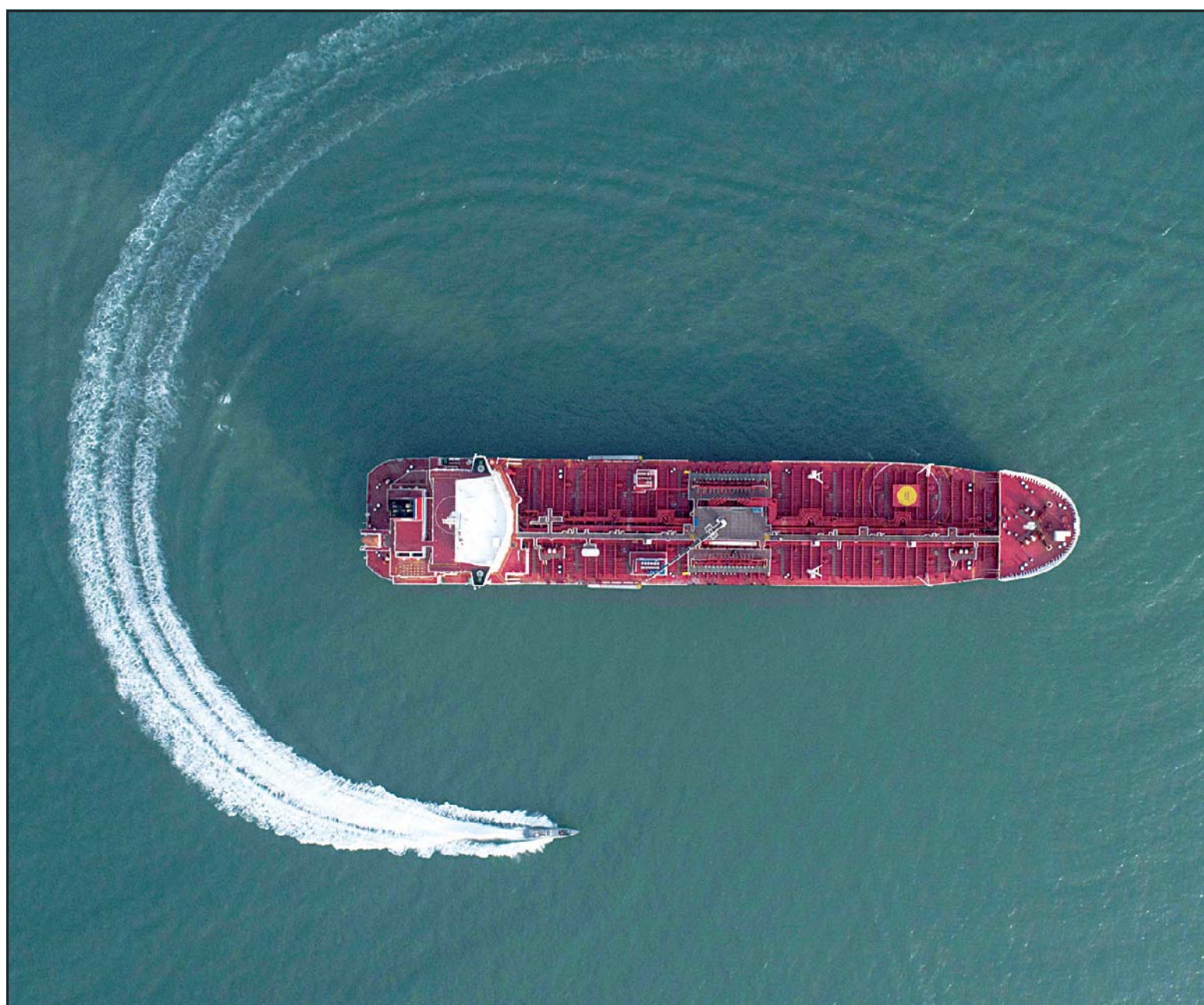
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In this July 21 photo, an aerial view shows a speedboat of Iran’s Revolutionary Guard moving around the British-flagged oil tanker Stena Impero which was seized in the Strait of Hormuz on Friday by the Guard, in the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas. Global stock markets were subdued Monday while the price of oil climbed as tensions in the Arabian Gulf escalated after Iran’s seizure of a British oil tanker on Friday. (AP)

Water, electricity subsidy for retirees urged

MP proposes 15-day bills preview

Newswatch

By Ahmed Al-Naqeeb
Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, July 22: MP Mohammed Al-Dallaal has submitted a proposal for the Fatwa and Legislation Department to present the government’s draft laws to an audience before referring them to the Parliament.

He pointed out that the success of a draft law depends on its structure and composition, which can be done by taking into consideration the viewpoints of experts. He affirmed the Parliament took a solid stride in this regard by opening an online channel for experts and concerned citizens to contribute to the legislative process.

Therefore, in bid to support what he described as “legislative innovation,” it is vital for the government to follow suit and present its bills to an audience, especially experts on the subject matter before referring them to the Parliament to ascertain that all governmental bills are structurally solid and that all professional views have been taken into consideration.

In order to develop the governmental legislative structure, the Cabinet must instruct the Fatwa and Legislation Department to present a list of governmental bills which have yet to be referred to the Parliament to an audience online, preferably the department’s website. These bills should be forwarded to the Parliament only after posting them on the website for 15 working days and the department should include audience feedback on the draft laws, Al-Dallaal added.

Furthermore, MP Safaa Al-Hashem has submitted a proposal to subsidize water and electricity for retirees — the same way their food is subsidized.

She explained that since the establishment of the Public Institution for Social Security in 1976, its main goal has been to provide a comfortable life for retirees. Following this directive, she submitted the proposal; stressing the electricity and water charges for retirees should be less than that of other citizens.

KUWAIT CITY: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of condolences to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) over the passing away of its Director General Yukiya Amano.

In the cable, His Highness expressed deepest condolences, praising Amano’s considerable efforts and significant contribution to the development of IAEA in preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons in order to promote international peace and security.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah have sent similar cables. (KUNA)

KUWAIT CITY: In response to numerous complaints by two expatriates about obstacles they face, including requiring them to bring a certificate from the embassy of their countries confirming the validity of the data contained in the passport, the Director-General of the General Department of Residency Affairs has issued instructions to all immigration departments in the six governorates of Kuwait not to request the document, reports Al-Anba daily.

According to a circular issued by the Director General of the General Department of Residence Brigadier Abdul Sha’aban on the amendment of the data of foreign resident in Kuwait, the circular said the following: The request of some staff of the Department of Residence Affairs when of a foreigner wants to modify the data in the computer system need not request for the letter from the embassy of the concerned country to simplify procedures for expatriates during the renewal of their residence.

VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis has expressed concern for the humanitarian situation in northwestern Syria and urged a negotiated end to years of fighting, in a letter delivered on Monday to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

The Vatican said the letter was handed over by Cardinal Peter Kodwo Appiah Turkson, who heads the Vatican department for promoting human development.

The letter called for the safe return of millions displaced by years of fighting, the humane treatment of political prisoners and the resumption of negotiations to seek a political solution to the conflict. (RTRS)

AMMAN: Air strikes on a popular market and residential neighbourhoods killed at least 32 people and wounded dozens on Monday in an attack on one of the main opposition-held cities in northwestern Syria, rescuers and residents said.

The raids, believed to be carried out by either Syrian or Russian jets, targeted Maarat al-Numan, a densely populated city in the south of Idlib province, leaving a trail of destruction and carnage, they said. (RTRS)

ANKARA: Turkey would retaliate against what it called an unacceptable threat of US sanctions over Ankara’s purchase of Russian S-400 missile defences, its foreign minister said on Monday, adding he thinks President Donald Trump wants to avoid such measures. Turkey began receiving deliveries of the surface-to-air S-400 systems earlier this month, prompting the United States to begin removing the NATO ally from its F-35 stealth fighter program over security concerns. (RTRS)