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## BEIJING OPPOSES U.S. SANCTIONS ON CHINA FIRM OVER IRAN OIL

# Iran warns ... Not seeking confrontation

Japan not now considering sending military

**MANAGUA, July 23, (Agencies):** Iran's foreign minister warned the West on Monday against "starting a conflict," saying it was not seeking confrontation after its military seized the British-flagged tanker Stena Impero in the Strait of Hormuz last week.

London described the seizure of the Stena Impero as "state piracy" and on Monday called for a European-led naval mission to ensure safe shipping through the Strait of Hormuz.

Speaking in Nicaragua, Foreign Minister Mohammad Zarif said Iran had taken measures against the ship to implement international law, not in retaliation for the British capture of an Iranian tanker two weeks earlier in Gibraltar.

"Starting a conflict is easy, ending it would be impossible," Zarif told reporters after meeting his Nicaraguan counterpart. "It's important for everybody to realize, it's important for Boris Johnson to understand, that Iran does not seek confrontation," he said, referring to the front-runner to become Britain's new prime minister.

"Iran wants to have normal relations based on mutual respect," he added.

Zarif said Iran acted when it observed that the UK ship did not follow regulations.

"The UK ship had turned down its signal for more time than it was allowed to (and) was passing through the wrong channel, endangering the safety and security of shipping and navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, for which we are responsible," Zarif said.

In contrast, he described the seizure of the Iranian ship as "piracy" and "violation of international law" by British and Gibraltar authorities.

China strongly opposes US sanctions on a Chinese energy firm accused of violating curbs on Iran's oil sector levied over Tehran's nuclear programme, its foreign ministry said on Tuesday.

The United States sanctioned the company, Zuhai Zhenrong Co Ltd, because it "knowingly engaged in a significant transaction for the purchase or acquisition of crude oil from Iran", US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on Monday.

Beijing firmly opposed the sanctions, foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said, adding that China's cooperation with Iran was normal under international law.

"We urge the US to correct this wrongdoing and stop its illegal sanctions on companies and individuals," she told reporters at a daily briefing.

"The US has neglected the legitimate rights of all countries and randomly applies sanctions, this is in violation of international law," Hua added.

Japan's top government spokesman said on Tuesday that there was no change in the country's stance that it was not considering sending its Self-Defence Forces for a US-proposed maritime coalition in the Middle East.

Asked if there was a change in the position previously stated by Defence Minister Takeshi Iwaya, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said it was "as Minister Iwaya said."

US national security adviser John Bolton on Monday met Foreign Minister Taro Kono, Iwaya and national security adviser Shotaro Yachi.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said on Monday that before making a decision on joining the United States, Japan wants to fulfil what it sees as a unique role it has to play in reducing tension.

Iran has reassured Iraq that there will be freedom of international maritime navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, Iraq's oil ministry said on Tuesday.

Iran communicated this to Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi during a visit by him to Tehran on Monday, the ministry said in a statement.

"Iranian President Hassan Rouhani (gave) reassurances to the Iraqi delegation... around guaranteeing freedom of navigation in the Gulf and Strait of Hormuz and respect for international law guaranteeing that," the statement said.

### Plan

Representatives from the nations that are still parties to the shaky Iran nuclear deal plan to meet in Vienna on Sunday to see to what extent the agreement can be salvaged in the wake of the United States pulling out and Iran exceeding some of the uranium enrichment thresholds the deal set.

The European Union said in a statement on Tuesday that the meeting of China, Russia, Britain, France, Germany and chaired by the EU "will examine issues linked to the implementation of the (nuclear deal) in all its aspects."

Iran has begun openly exceeding the uranium enrichment levels set in the accord to try to pressure Europe into offsetting the economic pain of US sanctions.

Amid the heightened tensions, Iran seized a British-flagged oil tanker in the Strait of Hormuz on Friday.

Iran observes all US ships in the Gulf region and has an archive of images of their daily movements, the head of Iran's navy, Rear Admiral Hossein Khanzadi, said on Tuesday, according to the Young Journalists Club news site.

Iran and the United States came to the brink of war last month after the Islamic Republic shot down a US drone, nearly prompting a retaliatory attack which US President Donald Trump called off at the last minute.

Tensions have also spiked between Iran and Britain after the Islamic Republic seized a British-flagged tanker last Friday because it had collided with a fishing vessel, according to Iranian officials.

British Royal Marines seized an Iranian tanker off the coast of Gibraltar in early July, accusing it of violating sanctions on Syria.

"We observe all enemy ships, particularly (those of) America, point-by-point from their origin until the moment they enter the region," Khanzadi said, noting that images were recorded using Iranian drones.

"We have complete images and a large archive of the daily and moment-by-moment traffic of the coalition forces and America."

Iran will hold joint naval exercises with allied countries for the first time by the end of the Iranian calendar year, which is in March 2020, Khanzadi said.

He did not specify which countries might take part in the exercise.

The United States has sanctioned Chinese state-run energy company Zuhai Zhenrong Co Ltd for allegedly violating restrictions imposed on Iran's oil sector, Pompeo said in a speech on Monday.

"We've said that we will sanction any sanctionable behavior, and we mean it," Pompeo said in a speech in Florida in which he announced the move.

It comes amid increased tensions between Iran and the West as well as between the United States and China, which have been engaged in a major trade war.

### Opinion

## Appreciation for Sabah Al-Ahmad ... yes, that is the solution

By Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

THE foundation of countries is a long-term vision. Empowerment of future generations is required by the era, as well as the progress and development of knowledge tools which qualify them to participate in the renaissance decision.

Kuwait is not an exception; so initiatives come from the farsighted head of State who is keen on seeing the progress of the country after decades, thereby, contributing to the modern movement.

In all countries in the world, even in the most deep-rooted democracies, the last decision is in the hands of the ruler who either leads his country's ship towards safety or leaves it to struggle in the middle of the turbulent sea; falling into the trap of problems, and then losing its prestige along with the death of its law and its people being lost among bargainers.

His Highness the Amir is one of the men who make the future of their countries through wisdom of choice and guidance of directives. Even when authorities neglected their work, he pushed them by taking a firm decision with solutions coming from drawers to start the work.

Therefore, he issued directives to relieve Kuwait of a chronic headache that lasted for decades and tarnished its image, contrary to its humanitarian demeanor. I mean here the Bedouin issue which, in fact, is the 'cause' of the century for Kuwait. As per the directives of His Highness, the solutions should be humanitarian in order to give everyone their rights; provided such solutions do not violate the constitutional and legal texts, and most importantly, the traditions and human covenants. It is then imperative to close this file that contains a lot of tragedies.

This file has been a source of political and electoral investments and playing with the emotions and feelings of Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis for decades. In the National Assembly, it has been transformed into a subject of conflict between MPs and candidates. It has been a tool for bargaining in the face of the government, up to the extent that laws passed by the Assembly in connection with solutions to the issue have been hampered. Nevertheless, the political investment was useless, so the players left the issue in the shelf until it became a paper used by some international bodies against Kuwait.

Sabah Al-Ahmad, a man with sensitive national feelings, is the Amir who closely follows up every small and big issue. His wisdom overrides anything else. He knows where the supreme interest of the country is, so he works as head of all authorities to give motivation and outline solutions.

This was the case when infrastructure institutions failed to launch major projects such as Sabah Al-Salem University, Sheikh Jaber Bridge and hospitals in a number of areas; in addition to the failure to complete the infrastructure that makes Kuwait an outstanding Arab cultural figure.

Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center and other cultural institutions which raised the name of Kuwait in the region, the Arab world and the international community are concrete pieces of evidence.

This was a natural prelude to the transformation of Kuwait into a global financial and trade center, and to serve as a point of contact between important countries. The North Economic Zone Project, including the Free Trade Zone along

Continued on Page 5

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## Amir congratulates Britain's new PM



Boris Johnson gestures as he speaks after being announced as the new leader of the Conservative Party in London on July 23. Brexit champion Boris Johnson won the contest to lead Britain's governing Conservative Party on Tuesday and will become the country's next prime minister. (AP)

### 'Distinguished historic relations'

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Tuesday a cable of congratulations to Boris Johnson on being appointed Britain's new prime minister, wishing him every success.

In the cable, His Highness the Amir extolled the "distinguished historic relations" between the State of Kuwait and the United Kingdom.

His Highness the Amir stressed that the two sides are looking forward to enhancing these relations and bilateral cooperation to achieve

interests of their nations. He wished Johnson good health and Britain further success and prosperity.

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

— See Also Page 9

### NewsWatch

**TARMIYAH, Iraq:** Iraqi security forces were sweeping villages and farmland north of Baghdad on Tuesday as part of an operation aimed at clearing remnants of the Islamic State group from around the capital.

A military helicopter soared overhead as troops searched for weapon caches and bombs in Tarmiyah and Iraqi river police combed the Tigris River. The area is about 50 kms (30 miles) north of Baghdad.

The dragnet is part of the operation dubbed "Will to Victory," which started two weeks ago along the border with Syria and was extended last week to areas north of Baghdad and in the Diyala, Salahuddin and Anbar provinces.

Iraq declared victory against IS in July 2017, but the extremists, who once controlled much of northern and western Iraq, have continued to carry out attacks, including ambushes and kidnappings. (AP)

**BAGHDAD:** The State-run Iraqi Martyrs Foundation on Tuesday announced the exhuming of Kurds' mass graves in Muthanna province south of Iraq.

Corpses and human remains belong to Kurds killed by former Iraqi regime, the foundation said in a statement.

The discovered human bodies belonged to 70 Kurds who had been executed with gunshot by the former regime personnel before they were buried in a mass grave. Among them were women and children from Al-Sheikha area in Al-Samawa desert, added the foundation statement.

Iraqi security forces had found a number of mass graves in Al-Samawa desert where the toppled regime had buried executed Kurds. (KUNA)

**JEDDAH:** The Coalition for Support of Legitimacy in Yemen confirmed on Tuesday it has downed a drone launched by the Iranian-backed terrorist Houthi militia towards civilians in the southern region of Aseer.

Coalition Forces spokesman Colonel Turki Al-Maliki said in a press statement that the

continued attempts by terrorist militias to target civilian infrastructure and civilians in Saudi Arabia clearly reveals the criminal tendency of these militias and their persistence in using terrorist methods and their threat to regional and international security.

He stressed that the leadership of the joint forces of the coalition will take all deterrent measures against the Houthi terrorist organizations in accordance with international humanitarian law and its customary rules. (KUNA)

**AMSTERDAM:** Dutch judges on Tuesday convicted an Islamic State militant of war crimes in Iraq and Syria and sentenced him to 7-1/2 years in prison after he posed with a crucified body and shared images of dead victims online.

**Netherlands-born Oussama Achraf Akhlaifa,** 24, was found guilty of membership of a terrorist organization. He fought alongside IS militants in Mosul in Iraq and in Raqqa, Syria, between 2014 and 2016.

Prosecutors had sought a sentence of 7 years, 8 months.

The court said Akhlaifa had posed smiling next to the crucified body of a man who had been executed by IS, and had posted the picture on Facebook. (RTRS)

**JERUSALEM:** Israeli settlers have established dozens of unauthorized settlement outposts in the West Bank in recent years, most of them founded since President Donald Trump entered office, an Israeli watchdog group said Monday.

Peace Now said in a new report that Israeli settlers have founded 32 remote West Bank outposts since 2012, often with tacit government support.

Israel captured the West Bank, east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip in the 1967 Mideast war. The Palestinians seek these areas as parts of a future state. Most of the international community considers Israeli settlements in the West Bank illegal under international law and an impediment to a two-state solution to the conflict. (AP)

## Abraaj probe focus on senior managers

DUBAI, July 23, (RTRS): Dubai's financial services regulator's probe into collapsed private equity firm Abraaj is focusing on the firm's senior management and people who may have failed to identify or report irregularities, it said on Tuesday.

"We will use all of our powers to deal with those who are found to be culpable," the Dubai Financial Services Authority (DFSA) said in its annual report.

DFSA has been investigating Abraaj Capital Ltd, an entity of the collapsed firm, over a range of matters.

"This investigation is highly complex, on a wide scale and is being pursued vigorously," the regulator said on Tuesday.

"We are focusing our attention on senior management responsible for the conduct of the affairs of the relevant companies and funds, and persons who may have failed in their responsibilities to identify or report irregularities."

Abraaj, which filed for provisional liquidation in June 2018 in the Cayman Islands, was the largest buyout fund in the Middle East and North Africa until it collapsed last year after a row with investors over the use of money in a \$1 billion healthcare fund.

US prosecutors have charged several senior executives of Abraaj including its founder Arif Naqvi with criminal charges, accusing them of taking part in a massive international scheme to defraud investors.

Naqvi, who is in London and on bail, will face a court hearing for an extradition to the United States next year. Naqvi has denied any wrongdoing through a public relations firm that represents him.

DFSA had said in April it was in touch with the US Securities and Exchange Commission about the latest case involving Abraaj.