

Nuclear, Missile & Space Digest

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A Fortnightly Newsletter from the MP-IDSA

April 30, 2024

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A. India

Modernised Indian military has reduced its dependence on Russian arms: US

Business Standard, April 16, 2024

India in 2023 showcased itself as a global leader as it demonstrated a greater willingness to counter China's activity throughout the Indo-Pacific region and took steps to modernise its military and reduce its dependency on Russian origin-equipment, the top US intelligence official has told Congress.

The remarks by Lt Gen Jeffrey Kruse, Director of the Defence Intelligence Agency came during a Congressional hearing on defence intelligence countering China.

During the past year, India has showcased itself as a global leader by hosting the Group of 20 economic summit and demonstrated a greater willingness to counter PRC's (People's Republic of China) activity throughout the Indo-Pacific region, Kruse told members of the House Armed Services Committee the subcommittee on intelligence and special operations.

Modernised Indian military has reduced its dependence on Russian arms: US | India News - Business Standard (business-standard.com)

India successfully tests new version of medium-range ballistic missile

Livemint, April 23, 2024

India on Tuesday successfully launched a new version of Medium-Range Ballistic Missile capable of striking targets at distances exceeding 250 km.

"A successful launch of the new variant of a Medium-Range Ballistic Missile was carried out under the aegis of the Strategic Forces Command on April 23, 2024. The user launch has proven the operational capability of the Command and validated new technologies." The missile was developed by Bengaluru-based DRDO laboratory Aeronautical Development Establishment (ADE) along with

contributions from other laboratories and Indian industries.

Romania to Consider Sending One of Its Patriot Defense Systems to Ukraine (livemint.com)

India delivers the fourth BrahMos missile battery to Philippines

Hindustan Times, April 23, 2024

Giving a huge fillip to defence exports, India has sent the fourth 'battery' of land version of BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles to the Philippines today amidst growing tensions due to Chinese assertions in the South China Sea.

It is understood that three 'batteries' of BrahMos missiles have already been handed over with the fourth reaching Manila today as part of the USD 375 million deal signed by the two allies in 2022. Each battery comprises four launchers with three 290 km range missiles with each launcher on a mobile platform for survivability of the conventional deterrent. Given the supersonic speed of the weapon, the missile is very difficult to intercept by land or ship-based Ballistic Missile Defence (BMDs) systems.

The BrahMos Philippines deal has ensured that India's defence exports have already touched Rs. 21083 crores in 2023-2024 with a massive 32.5 per cent year-on-year growth as compared to the past fiscal.

India delivers the fourth BrahMos missile battery to Philippines | Latest News India - Hindustan Times

B. China

China to revise atomic energy law to promote nuclear power development, Xinhua says

Reuters, April 23, 2024

China will revise its atomic energy law to promote the safe development of nuclear power, the official Xinhua news agency said on Tuesday.

The draft of the amended law will clarify the regulatory system for nuclear power and promote research and development and the competitiveness of China's domestic industry, Xinhua said.

The draft has been submitted to an ongoing session of the standing committee of the National People's Congress for deliberation. The draft law, which also contains provisions to strengthen safety oversight of nuclear fuel and its import and export, would "uphold China's image as a responsible nuclear power.

China has the world's largest nuclear fleet and aims to produce 10% of its electricity from nuclear power by 2035 and 18% by 2060 in a bid to advance energy security and decarbonisation goals.

China to revise atomic energy law to promote nuclear power development, Xinhua says | Reuters

Xi orders China's biggest military reorganization since 2015

The Japan times, April 21, 2024

Chinese leader Xi Jinping has ordered what amounts to the biggest reorganization of the nation's military since 2015 in a move that affects the force in charge of capabilities including cyberwarfare.

China will terminate the Strategic Support Force, which was created more than eight years ago to enhance capabilities in space, cyber, political and electronic warfare, the official Xinhua News Agency reported Friday.

Xi is in turn creating a new branch called the Information Support Force. The aerospace and cyber units previously under the Strategic Support Force will now be organizationally parallel to the newly created Information Support Force, the Defense Ministry said in a statement. The aerospace unit will improve China's capability to use space and step up the management of space crises, the ministry said.

The restructuring comes as the world's second-largest economy faces off with the

U.S. in a fight for global influence, with cyberwarfare emerging as a key battleground. The U.S., U.K. and New Zealand accused China last month of sponsoring malicious cyber activity in targeting democratic institutions.

Xi orders China's biggest military reorganization since 2015 - The Japan Times

China's military spending concerning given 'failing economy', US admiral

Reuters, April 23, 2024

The increase in China's defence spending is concerning given its economy is "failing", the head of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command said on Tuesday.

Speaking to reporters in Tokyo, Admiral John Aquilino said China's economy had been battered by turmoil in its real estate sector and asserted that its official growth rates were "not real".

He also said China was spending "drastically more" on its military than the 7.2% increase it declared last month. "Despite a failing economy, there's a conscious decision to fund military capability. That's concerning to me," said Aquilino, who is due to leave his post next month.

He also criticised China's increasingly aggressive rhetoric and actions in the South and East China Seas, specifically around the disputed Second Thomas Shoal and Taiwan.

China's military spending concerning given 'failing economy', US admiral says | Reuters

China urges Japan to take a U-turn on its militarisation drive

Airforce Technology, April 29, 2024

China's spokesperson for the Ministry of National Defense (MND), Senior Colonel Wu Qian, urged Japan to 'wake up from the old dream of militarism at an early date' according to a release from the MND on 25 April 2024.

The release took issue with Japan's characterisation of China in the 2024 Diplomatic Bluebook, one that identifies China as an unprecedented, and the greatest, strategic challenge to Japan.

China and Japan have both made significant investments in their military capabilities in recent years.

For its part, Japan has doubled its commitment for defence spending, raising a long standing cap of no more than 1% of GDP for its military, so that it will spend 2% on its forces. Under the new spending commitments, Japan will have the third largest military in the world within four years.

China urges Japan to take a U-turn on its militarisation drive - Airforce Technology (airforce-technology.com)

Why China axed the Strategic Support Force and reshuffled the military

Defense News, April 26, 2024

Chinese President Xi Jinping instigated a significant restructuring of the People's Liberation Army on April 19 by axing the Strategic Support Force and replacing it with a new Information Support Force.

While it's unclear exactly why Xi enacted this major reshuffle, analysts suspect both military capability and political control contributed to his decision.

China created the SSF on Dec. 31, 2015. Its successor, the Information Support Force, will now handle network information systems and communications support, and possibly network defense. The four arms are directly subordinate to the Central Military Commission, which is the top political party organ that oversees China's armed forces. This means the commission's leaders can directly deal with individual support forces rather than having to go through the SSF headquarters.

Why China axed the Strategic Support Force and reshuffled the military (defensenews.com)

C. Russia

Shoigu tests commando vehicle, calls for additional machineguns

TASS, April 17, 2024

Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu personally tested a new commando vehicle and called to arm the fire support robot with additional machineguns, the Defense Ministry said.

"Sergey Shoigu instructed to add machineguns to the multirole robotic complex of fire support, object security and evacuation of the wounded that will help engage it in assault operations. The minister personally tested the special transportation vehicle and its running qualities," it said.

The light and protected vehicles transport personnel and assist assault units with their firearms, it added.

<https://tass.com/defense/1776319>

Russia shares counter-UAV experience with CIS

TASS, April 17, 2024

Russia shares with CIS partners its experience obtained in the military operation in Ukraine in fighting unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV), deputy chair of the Coordinating committee for air defense at the CIS council of defense ministers and Russian Deputy Commander-in-Chief for armaments Colonel General Yury Grekhov said.

"The issues of drone engagement have become vital. The last year developments showed the protection of important military, industrial and administrative facilities against drone strikes is one of the most important tasks. The Russian Federation constantly shares with CIS partners its experience in countering UAVs," he told reporters.

In February-March 2024, the Military Aerospace Defense Academy held training of CIS specialists in counter-drone fight. An international conference was

held on air defense in conditions of a massive impact of various unmanned aerial vehicles.

<https://tass.com/defense/1776533>

US retrieves weapons previously banned under INF treaty – Russian ambassador

TASS, April 17, 2024

The United States is bringing destabilizing weapons, previously banned under the Intermediate and Shorter-Range Missile Treaty (INF) into the limelight for operational deployment in the Asia-Pacific Region, Russia's ambassador to Washington, Anatoly Antonov, has told the media.

"The Pentagon's public demonstration of its ability to deploy operational missiles, previously banned under the INF Treaty, in the Asia-Pacific Region causes deep concern. In fact, the Americans are bringing to the forefront a whole class of destabilizing weapons in attempts to ensure their military superiority over adversaries," Antonov said in a comment on the Russian embassy's Telegram channel.

He emphasized that such steps were another powerful blow to strategic stability.

"Asia has already accumulated a lot of 'hot' material and the region is being rapidly militarized," Antonov said about the ongoing US-Philippine exercises Salaknib 24 in the northern Philippines. As the US Indo-Pacific Command has said the US forces for the first time deployed a medium-range missile system of the MRC (Mid-Range Capability) class.

Earlier, the US Army said the US was going to deploy medium-range missiles in Asia to deter China. Under the provisions of the Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles, signed between the Soviet Union and the United States in 1987, Washington could not deploy missile launchers, land-based ballistic missiles and cruise missiles with a range of 500 to 5,500 kilometers. However, in 2019, the US withdrew from this agreement.

<https://tass.com/defense/1776689>

US deploying missiles in Philippines to endanger global security – Russian envoy

TASS, April 17, 2024

The United States deploying intermediate-range missiles in the Philippines will become a black day for international security, Russian Ambassador to Washington Anatoly Antonov told reporters.

"The deployment of medium-range missiles by the Pentagon will be a 'black day' for international security," the envoy's commentary published on the Russian Embassy's Telegram channel said.

Antonov has urged the US "not to open Pandora's Box" and follow Russia's suit "by taking all necessary steps to ensure global stability and predictability." "Otherwise, all responsibility for a new surge of tension in the world will fall on Washington," the diplomat stressed. He reiterated that "the unilateral moratorium on the deployment of INF, declared by Russia, has clear conditions: we will not deploy such systems until such American-made means appear in any region of the world."

The US and Philippines are holding joint drills dubbed Salaknib 24. According to US Army Pacific, during the exercise, US forces successfully deployed the Mid-Range Capability (MRC) missile system to Northern Luzon in the Philippines for the first time ever.

<https://tass.com/defense/1776701>

MiG-31I fighters receive air refueling system

TASS, April 18, 2024

MiG-31I fighter jets have been upgraded and received an air refueling system to increase the combat radius, a defense industry source told TASS.

"MiG-I fighters of the Russian long-range aviation received a possibility to refuel in the air and increased the combat engagement distance," the source said.

Another source said MiG-31I differs from previous MiG-K option by “different engines, avionics and missiles.”

TASS has no official confirmation of the report.

The Izvestia daily earlier said MiG-31I will be able to refuel in the air. The fighter has electronic systems that increase the flight characteristics and capabilities. The jet is equipped with an electronic remote control system and onboard computers that automatically bring the jet into the required trajectory and fire a hypersonic missile at the calculated time.

<https://tass.com/defense/1776985>

Russian defense chief checks implementation of orders to develop drones

TASS, April 20, 2024

Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu has visited a testing ground in the Moscow Military District to check the implementation of orders to develop drones and small arms based on the experience gained during the special military operation, the Defense Ministry said in a statement.

“All the presented drones and payload were created from domestic composite materials and elements, which makes it possible to promptly start the mass production of these unmanned aerial vehicles,” the statement reads.

<https://tass.com/defense/1778237>

Almaz-Antey adapts air defense launchers for various missiles

TASS, April 23, 2024

Almaz-Antey Aerospace Defense Company is upgrading air defense systems to fire various missiles, Deputy CEO for scientific-technical development and Deputy Designer General Sergey Druzin told TASS.

“Modern complexes have to fire various types of missiles. If I have to destroy a target 15 kilometers away, it is not wise to engage a missile with a 300-km range. Therefore,

one complex shall have several types of missiles. We are implementing it,” he said.

Head of the Bureau of Military-Political Analysis Alexander Mikhailov told TASS long-range S-300V, S-300V4 and Antey-2500 can already fire various missiles.

“The guideline will develop in short and medium-range missiles. Kupol producer of Tor air defense complexes said it would make a compact and cheaper missile to down drones,” he said.

Druzin said Almaz-Antey upgrades air defense launchers to better down drones right in deployment places in the zone of the Ukrainian military operation.

“We have acquired major experience during the operation. We considerably improved the hardware and algorithms and the capabilities of the complexes. We do it in greenfield without factory conditions. We upgrade ‘the mathematics’ in deployment places,” he said adding specialists of the company successfully cope with the difficult task.

Russian air defense launchers have a bigger range than US Patriot in Ukraine, Druzin said

<https://tass.com/defense/1779135>

Russia vetoes UN vote on stopping arms race in outer space

BBC, April 25, 2024

Russia has vetoed a resolution at the UN Security Council calling on all countries to prevent an arms race in outer space.

The draft resolution, put forward by the US and Japan, sought to reaffirm a principle already set out in the 1967 Outer Space Treaty.

The US has warned that Russia is believed to be developing a space-based, anti-satellite nuclear weapon.

Russia said it was “firmly committed” to the existing treaty.

The draft, put forward on 24 April 2024, called on “all States, in particular those

with major space capabilities, to contribute actively to the objective of the peaceful use of outer space and of the prevention of an arms race in outer space.”

It also called on countries to uphold the Outer Space Treaty, under which all parties agreed “not to place in orbit around the Earth any objects carrying nuclear weapons or any other kinds of weapons of mass destruction”.

Of the council’s 15 members, 13 voted in favour, while Russia - one of five permanent members with a veto - voted against and China abstained.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-68894500>

D. Europe

Embraer’s Q1 push in defence sector sees Hungary take first C-390 flight

Airforce Technology, April 24, 2024

The Hungarian Air Force is starting to absorb its new capabilities with the successful completion of the maiden flight of the C-390 Millennium.

With its aircraft, the Brazilian aerospace player Embraer makes pace in the defence and security sector.

Embraer has spearheaded the development of the C-390 Millennium, positioning it as a platform for defence and security operations. With its maiden flight completed, the aircraft is now undergoing mission systems integration tests, laying the groundwork for its entry into active service.

The C-390 Millennium garners global attention and interest. A recent milestone event further emphasises Embraer’s push in the defence and security sector—the inaugural Embraer Defense Day in the US. At this event, held in Melbourne, Florida, the C-390 Millennium, alongside the A-29 Super Tucano, was showcased to government authorities, military officials, prospects, and partners, highlighting its

capabilities and potential for international collaboration.

<https://www.airforce-technology.com/news/embraers-q1-push-in-defence-sector-sees-hungary-take-first-c-390-flight/>

British Army moves a step closer to the next generation mobile fires platform

The British Army, April 24, 2024

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and Chancellor Scholz announced our collaboration with Germany on the Remote-Controlled Howitzer 155mm (RCH 155) 52 calibre Wheeled Artillery Systems.

We aim to deliver RCH 155 into service this decade. It will equip Royal Artillery soldiers with a world-class close support artillery system to deliver lethal and decisive effect for ground warfare across the span of operations.

The criticality of artillery fire has never been clearer. Automated artillery systems have packed a powerful punch on the battlefield in Ukraine, and RCH 155 will provide a modernised capability unparalleled in other artillery systems.

RCH 155 delivers increased range and accuracy for artillery engagements, a high rate-of-fire of up to nine rounds-per-minute and possesses a powerful blend of tactical and operational mobility.

Able to deliver multiple rounds onto a target simultaneously in a 360-degree arc at range, it also has a direct fire capability providing close range defence.

As part of the Boxer family, it uses the common Boxer drive module, creating efficiencies in support through platform commonality and modularity, and improving interoperability.

<https://www.army.mod.uk/news-and-events/news/2024/04/british-army-moves-a-step-closer-to-the-next-generation-mobile-fires-platform/>

PM announces 'turning point' in European security as UK set to increase defence spending to 2.5% by 2030

UK Ministry of Defence, April 24, 2024

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak today [Tuesday April 23] has announced the biggest strengthening of the UK's national defence in a generation, with a fully funded plan to grow the defence budget to 2.5% of GDP by 2030.

Delivering a speech alongside NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg in Poland, a country at the vanguard of the continent's defence, the Prime Minister said we are at a turning point in European security and urged allies to step up.

An axis of autocratic states like Russia, Iran and China are increasingly working together to undermine democracies and reshape the world order. They are also investing heavily in their own militaries and in cyber capabilities and in low-cost technology, like the Shahed attack drones Iran fired towards Israel last weekend.

This poses a direct threat to the lives and livelihoods of people in the UK, as well as across Europe and the wider world. The Government has already committed record investment in defence and the UK armed forces are world-leading – but the Prime Minister has said that we must take further action now to deter these growing threats.

With today's announcement, UK defence spending will increase immediately and then rise steadily to reach £87 billion at the end of the decade – hitting 2.5% of GDP by 2030.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-announces-turning-point-in-european-security-as-uk-set-to-increase-defence-spending-to-25-by-2030>

France, Germany push on with 2040 joint tank project

The Economic Times, April 26, 2024

France and Germany agreed on April 26 to move to the next phase of a project to jointly develop a battle tank by 2040, their defence

ministers said, as they seek fresh impetus despite reservations and differences on each side.

Berlin and Paris in 2017 agreed to work on a joint fighter jet under French lead, estimated to cost some 100 billion euros in total, and also a Franco-German tank to succeed the German Leopard 2 and the French Leclerc.

Both projects have been plagued by disagreements and delays, further straining Franco-German ties burdened by differences over energy topics and over how far Europe should become independent from the U.S. in its security policy.

The political decision to move to the next phase is important because French and German companies have their own interests, while Paris and Berlin do not see eye to eye on the concept.

The support of French Defence Minister Sebastien Lecornu and his German counterpart Boris Pistorius to drive things forward maintains some momentum.

Development of a next-generation tank is also seen as vital in highlighting how Europe can create its own defence autonomy, compete with new players like India and China, but also take the lead over Russia and the United States, who have yet to unveil plans for tanks to replace their existing models.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/france-germany-push-on-with-2040-joint-tank-project/articleshow/109627430.cms?from=mdr>

Croatia welcomes first batch of Rafale jets amid modernisation

Airforce Technology, April 26, 2024

Zagreb witnesses the arrival of the first six Rafale jets, signalling Croatia's commitment to enhancing its defence capabilities in collaboration with France.

In a ceremony attended by top government officials, including President Zoran Milanović and Prime Minister

Andrej Plenković, Croatia formally welcomed the arrival of its first six Rafale jets at the 91 operational base near Zagreb. The event marks a milestone in Croatia's efforts to modernise its military and strengthen its defence capabilities.

Acquired from the French Air and Space Force as part of a larger procurement deal initiated in November 2021, these aircraft are set to bolster the operational readiness of the Croatian Air Force, known as Hrvatsko ratno zrakoplovstvo i protuzračna obrana (HRZ i PZO). Trained pilots from Croatia underwent training in France to operate these fighter jets, showcasing the deepening cooperation between the two nations in defence matters.

<https://www.airforce-technology.com/news/croatia-welcomes-first-batch-of-rafale-jets-amid-modernisation/>

First AH-64E attack helicopters now operational with Netherlands

Airforce Technology, April 26, 2024

The first of the Netherlands' new Apache AH-64E attack helicopters have returned to service after undergoing an update and modernisation programme, and are expected to remain operational until 2050, according to the country's Ministry of Defence (MOD).

Announcing the development in its weekly update, the Netherlands MOD stated that the first four remanufactured aircraft were now returned to operational capability with the Royal Netherlands' Air Force 301 Squadron, with a further 16 due to be updated in the years ahead.

Six AH-64E aircraft are currently being used for training purposes at Texas Cavazos (formerly Fort Hood) in the United States, with a further two updated platforms to be delivered in 2025.

The Netherlands is upgrading its legacy AH-64D fleet to the 'Echo' (E) Version 6 standard and operates a fleet of 28 airframes, delivered between 1998-2002. A 2022 statement from Boeing said that all 28

AH-64Ds would be upgraded to the Version 6 standard.

<https://www.airforce-technology.com/news/first-ah-64e-attack-helicopters-now-operational-with-netherlands/>

QinetiQ trials the UK's first crewed-uncrewed teaming demo

Airforce Technology, April 26, 2024

British defence supplier QinetiQ has orchestrated the UK's first crewed-uncrewed teaming exercise between a jet and a swarm of autonomous aerial systems.

The trial - which took place in collaboration with the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl), the Royal Navy and the Air and Space Warfare Centre (ASWC) - saw a QinetiQ jet aircraft take off from Ministry of Defence (MOD) site Boscombe Down in Salisbury, UK, while a modified Banshee Jet 80 uncrewed aerial system (UAS) was launched from the MoD Hebrides range, off the north-west coast of Scotland.

Flying at 350 knots, the mission was completed not only by the live Banshee but also by several digital Banshees within a live virtual swarm, successfully acting in a co-ordinated manner.

Banshee was equipped with QinetiQ's Airborne Command and Control for Swarm Interoperable Missions technology, which allows the UAS to communicate with the crewed aircraft using the same communications as the standard Nato Link 16 datalink.

This technology provides an airborne gateway that can receive and translate long-range and short-range communications between UAS. At the same time, an in-built safety system can override the autonomy to ensure the system always stays within a safe operating area.

<https://www.airforce-technology.com/news/qinetiq-trials-the-uks-first-crewed-uncrewed-teaming-demo/>

Polish and Lithuanian leaders oversee military drills along their shared border

AP, April 26, 2024

Polish President Andrzej Duda said Friday that “a potential aggressor must see our readiness” as he and his Lithuanian counterpart monitored a joint military drill along their shared border.

Duda and Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda met on the last day of the week-long Brave Griffin 24/II military exercise along the Suwalki Gap, a strategically important stretch of land that’s considered a potential flashpoint area in case of a standoff between Russia and NATO.

The border, almost 100 kilometers (62 miles) long between NATO members Poland and Lithuania, is also a land corridor between Belarus, a Moscow ally, and Russia’s Baltic Sea exclave of Kaliningrad.

“There is a potential threat, which is why these exercises are going on,” Duda said.

The drill included 1,500 Lithuanian infantry soldiers, nearly 200 members of Poland’s 15th Mechanized Brigade, and U.S. and Portuguese military personnel.

Until recently the land border was seen as vulnerable because if Russia were to ever seize the Suwalki Gap, it could leave Lithuania and the other two Baltic states, Latvia and Estonia, cut off from Poland and other NATO allies.

<https://apnews.com/article/lithuania-poland-russia-suwalki-gap-drill-6bca1b620915a172448fda10a20fd9d9>

E. The United States of America

US and Philippine forces launch combat drills in the disputed South China Sea

AP, April 22, 2024

American and Filipino forces launched their largest combat exercises in years Monday in a show of allied firepower near the disputed South China Sea that has alarmed Beijing.

The annual exercises by the longtime treaty allies will run until May 10 and involve more than 16,000 of their military personnel, along with more than 250 French and Australian forces.

While the Philippine military maintains that the Balikatan — Tagalog for “shoulder-to-shoulder” — trainings are not directed at a particular country, some of their main conflict scenarios are set in or near the disputed South China Sea, where Chinese and Philippine coast guard and accompanying ships have figured in a series of increasingly tense territorial faceoffs since last year.

In encounters in disputed areas, Chinese coast guard vessels have resorting to water cannons, blocking and other dangerous maneuvers that have caused injuries to Philippine navy personnel and damaged supply boats.

The Philippine military said a key focus of this year’s drills is territorial defense. “We’re dead serious about protecting our territory — that’s why we do these Balikatan exercises,” Col. Michael Logico, who speaks for the Philippine military on the combat drills, told The Associated Press.

<https://apnews.com/article/us-philippines-balikatan-combat-exercises-south-china-sea-49a2c4f366ee329be036a0d23756adbe>

US announces new Patriot missiles for Ukraine as part of new \$6 billion aid package

AP, April 27, 2024

The U.S. will provide Ukraine additional Patriot missiles for its air defense systems as part of a massive \$6 billion additional aid package, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin announced Friday.

The missiles will be used to replenish previously supplied Patriot systems. The package also includes more munitions for the National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile Systems, or NASAMS, and additional gear to integrate Western air defense launchers, missiles and radars into

Ukraine's existing weaponry, much of which still dates back to the Soviet era.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy discussed the need for Patriots early Friday with the Ukraine Defense Contact Group, a coalition of about 50 countries gathering virtually in a Pentagon-led meeting. The meeting fell on the second anniversary of the group, which Austin said has "moved heaven and earth" since April 2022 to source millions of rounds of ammunition, rocket systems, armored vehicles and even jets to help Ukraine rebuff Russia's invasion.

<https://apnews.com/article/ukraine-funding-war-russia-patriot-missiles-026fc8f9ee064ffb49bbee2422e2908b>

West Asia

F. Israel

IAI Announces Sale of Integrated Air Defense Radar and ESM to a European Country

Israeli Defense, April 17, 2024

Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) has been awarded a contract to provide a Multi-Sensor Multi-Mission Radar (MS-MMR) system for a European country's air defense system. The MS-MMR is an ESM-enhanced air defense radar sensor developed and produced by IAI's ELTA Systems.

MS-MMR comprises an Electronic Support Measures (ESM) system (ELL-8385) integrated into the MMR (ELM-2084). The passive ESM sensor enhances the radar's ability to detect and recognize airborne threats. By identifying the threat's electromagnetic signature, ESM classifies and identifies the targets that the radar detects.

In addition, it assists in discriminating between multiple targets that are too close to each other and can also sense emitting targets with a low radar cross section (RCS). ESM effectively increases the radar's range and detection performance. By combining radar and ESM data, tracking accuracy can also be improved. The MS-MMR thereby

provides the air defense system with a richer and more effective Air-Situational Picture (ASP). It shortens operators' response times to unidentified targets and prevents errors that could arise from incorrect identification of neutral parties.

<https://www.israeldefense.co.il/en/node/61802>

AeroVironment to Supply US Marines with Switchblade 300 Loitering Munition Systems

Israeli Defense, April 30, 2024

AeroVironment (AV), an American provider of intelligent multi-domain robotic systems, uncrewed aircraft and ground systems, sensors, software analytics, and connectivity, announced last week that it had been selected by the U.S. Marine Corps to supply Switchblade 300 Block 20 Loitering Munition Systems. AV was awarded an initial order of \$8.9M under a contract with a maximum potential value of \$249 Million.

AV's Switchblade 300 Block 20 supports the USMC's need for an individually operated, man-portable loitering munition with lightweight, precision-guided capabilities against beyond-line-of-sight adversaries.

The Switchblade 300 has been deployed in support of urgent operational needs in combat theaters since 2012. The Switchblade 300 Block 20 represents the next generation of the system, leveraging over a decade of user assessments, combat deployments, and lessons learned from conflicts such as that in Ukraine, including operations in contested environments.

According to the company, the Switchblade Block 20 system significantly enhances the capabilities of the currently fielded Switchblade 300, including armor-penetrating capability through an Explosively Formed Penetrator (EFP) warhead, increased target attack angle, and significantly extended battery life, flight endurance, and radio link range.

<https://www.israeldefense.co.il/en/node/61864>

Elbit Systems Awarded \$50 Million Contract for a New Air Defense System by Int'l Customer

Israeli Defense, April 30, 2024

Elbit Systems was awarded a contract for approximately \$50 million for its new air defense system, "Red Sky"™, by an international customer. The contract will be executed over 2 years.

The Red Sky is a Tactical Very Short-range Air Defense (VSHORAD) System designed to protect against low-altitude aerial threats. As part of the contract, Elbit Systems will supply two Red Sky batteries, offering a comprehensive solution that integrates both soft-kill and hard-kill defense capabilities. This solution includes Elbit Systems' Redrone, an electronic warfare (EW) solution designed for detecting, identifying, locating, and neutralizing unmanned aerial systems. The Redrone system comprises DAIR Radar, Signal Intelligence (SIGINT) sensors, RF Jammer, and COAPS-L electro-optical (EO) payload. Additionally, the Red Sky solution will incorporate anti-aircraft missile launchers.

<https://www.israeldefense.co.il/en/node/61862>

Israeli UAV Company to Open Factory in Morocco

Israeli Defense, April 30, 2024

Spanish defense media reports another advancement in strengthening security ties between Israel and Morocco. The Zona Militar website states that the Israeli company BlueBird will soon commence local production of its own UAVs. The CEO, Ronen Nadir, confirmed to the Spanish website that the company has already established a factory, with production slated to commence shortly.

In February 2023, Israel and Morocco inked a \$500 million agreement for the supply of Barak MX missile systems from Israel Aerospace Industries. Before this, in 2022, Morocco acquired SkyLock Dome anti-drone systems from the Israeli company SkyLock

<https://www.israeldefense.co.il/en/node/61857>

G. Iran

Air defense system activated as blast heard in Iran's Isfahan: Official

IRNA, April 19, 2024

Iran activated an air defense system in the early hours of Friday after the sound of an explosion heard near a major airbase in the central province of Isfahan, an Iranian official says.

Reuters quoted an Iranian source as saying that the blast prompted the activation of the air defense system.

CNN also claimed that at least eight flights had to change their route in the skies over Iran.

Further, CBS News quoted unnamed US officials as saying that the Israeli regime launched at least one missile strike on Iran the early Friday morning.

A senior Iranian military official in Isfahan, however, clarified the reports and western media speculations on a relatively loud noise at 4 a.m. local time.

Second Brigadier General Siavash Mihandoost said that the sound was heard in the east of Isfahan as the city's air defense fired at a suspicious object.

No damage has been reported in the incident, the official added.

<https://en.irna.ir/news/85449644/Air-defense-system-activated-as-blast-heard-in-Iran-s-Isfahan>

Iran's nuclear facilities 100% secure: Nuclear chief

IRNA, April 22, 2024

Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Mohammad Eslami says the country's nuclear power plants are 100% secure due to a "powerful defense and security system" guarding the facilities.

"With a powerful security system in place, the security of the country's nuclear power plants and centers is now 100% established, and there is no concern in this regard," Eslami told reporters in the southern city of Bushehr on Monday.

He vowed that Iran's Armed Forces will counter any attack on the country's nuclear facilities.

The comment comes against the backdrop of heightened tensions between Iran and the Israeli regime following an unprecedented missile and drone strike by the Iranian armed forces against Israeli military and intelligence targets deep inside the occupied territories earlier this month.

<https://en.irna.ir/news/85453545/Iran-s-nuclear-facilities-100-secure-Nuclear-chief>

Iran, Kuwait negotiate to ensure maritime border security

IRNA, April 22, 2024

Brigadier General Goudarzi met and held talks with Ali Al-Sabah at the Sabah Al-Ahmad Coast Guard Base in Kuwait, IRNA reported citing Kuwait News Agency on Monday.

During the meeting, the two discussed ways to enhance the search and rescue capabilities of commercial and fishing vessels, as well as how to combat drug smuggling and piracy at sea.

They also emphasized the importance of maintaining security and stability in maritime navigation, including securing maritime borders and commercial maritime routes.

<https://en.irna.ir/news/85453546/Iran-Kuwait-negotiate-to-ensure-maritime-border-security>

Drone attack on terrorists' car around Zahedan

IRNA, April 25, 2024

The drone attack of the security forces on the outskirts of Zahedan on the terrorists' car led to the death of 2 terrorists.

According to IRNA's Thursday evening report, during the drone operation of the security forces in Shuro area towards Sarjangel in Zahedan city, the terrorists' car was targeted.

In this successful operation two terrorists were killed.

<https://en.irna.ir/news/85457084/Drone-attack-on-terrorists-car-around-Zahedan>

IRGC developing new kamikaze drone

IRNA, April 28, 2024

The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) is reportedly developing a new home-made suicide drone armed with smart loitering munitions.

The loitering munition, which has been designed for counter-ambush operations, is expected to significantly increase the combat capabilities of IRGC forces, Presstv said on Sunday.

The Iranian unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) is said to bear similarities to the Russian-built ZALA Lancet kamikaze drone.

A loitering munition, also known as a suicide or kamikaze drone, is equipped with a built-in warhead that is typically designed to loiter around a target area until locating and crashing into the target.

<https://en.irna.ir/news/85460064/IRGC-developing-new-kamikaze-drone>

H. Lebanon

Israeli drone strike kills 2 in Lebanon after Hezbollah fires at an Israeli convoy

AP, April 27, 2024

An Israeli drone strike on a car in eastern Lebanon killed two people Friday, Lebanon's state-run National News Agency says. The strike came after Lebanon's militant Hezbollah group carried out an attack along the border that killed an Israeli civilian.

Hezbollah and Israel have traded fire on a near-daily basis along the border since the start of Israel-Hamas war nearly seven months ago.

Egypt sent a high-level delegation to Israel on Friday for talks seeking to push through a cease-fire agreement with Hamas and avert an Israeli offensive on the Gaza Strip city of Rafah, officials said.

More than half of Gaza's population of 2.3 million have sought refuge in Rafah. The city is on the border with Egypt, which warned that a possible Israeli offensive focused on Rafah could have catastrophic consequences to regional stability.

The Israeli military has massed dozens of tanks and armored vehicles in the area in what appears to be preparations for an invasion of the city.

<https://apnews.com/article/israel-iran-hamas-latest-04-26-2024-b0f509827675bd4e173156ba6eaff9bf>

I. Southeast Asia

US Army deploys midrange missile for first time in Philippines

Defense News, April 16, 2024

The Mid-Range Capability missile has landed in Luzon, Philippines, as part of the Salaknib exercise taking place there, marking the first deployment of the new capability deemed vital for the U.S. Army's strategy in the region.

The 1st Multi-Domain Task Force brought the MRC weapon to the country on April 11, traveling more than 8,000 miles from Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington state for over 15 hours via a C-17 Globemaster cargo aircraft, according to an April 15 statement from U.S. Army Pacific.

"This landmark deployment marks a significant milestone for the new capability while enhancing interoperability, readiness and defense capabilities in coordination with the Armed Forces of the Philippines."

US Army deploys midrange missile for first time in Philippines (defensenews.com)

Philippine Navy Conducts Live Fire Testing of Spike NLOS Missile

Israeli Defense, April 16, 2024

Philippine defense media reported that last week, the Philippine Navy conducted live fire testing of its new Spike NLOS short-range anti-ship missile.

The Philippine website MaxDefense reports that the testing is part of a contract worth about \$128 million to supply 8 Shaldag Mk. 5 fast attack crafts (FAC) manufactured by Israel Shipyards and to provide Typhoon and Mini Typhoon RCWS for all FACs, along with Typhoon-MLS NLOS and Spike NLOS missiles for 4 of the FACs manufactured by Rafael Systems, valued at approximately \$80 million.

The website notes that the Spike NLOS missile has a reported effective range of 30 kilometers, which surpasses the range of the Spike ER missiles aboard the smaller MPAC Mk. III assault crafts operated by the Philippine Navy's Littoral Combat Force.

<https://www.israeldefense.co.il/en/node/61781>

J. East Asia

North Korea Launches Ballistic Missiles in Nuclear Command and Control Test

USNI News, April 22, 2024

North Korea on Monday conducted a firing drill of short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs), with state media Korean Central News Agency reporting that it was a firing of "super-large multiple rocket units" simulating a nuclear counterattack and marking the first use of its Haekbangashoe nuclear weapon combined management system.

The purpose of the North Korean drill, which was overseen by North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, was "to demonstrate the reliability, superiority, might and diverse means of the DPRK's nuclear force

and to strengthen the nuclear force both in quality and quantity as a clear warning signal to the enemies.” KCNA went on to state that the U.S. and South Korea had been staging a combined joint formation drill at Kunsan Air Base since Apr. 12, and was “inciting war fever” by carrying out an average of 100 sorties a day. State media also claimed the drills, which end on Apr. 26, are aimed at North Korea, and that on Thursday, U.S and South Korean Special Operations Forces (SOF) staged a joint airborne infiltration drill for the purpose of rapidly infiltrating any region to remove a target.

North Korea Launches Ballistic Missiles in Nuclear Command and Control Test - USNI News

India, South Korea discuss developments in areas of nuclear disarmament

Business Standard, April 26, 2024

Top officials of India and South Korea on Friday discussed developments in the areas of disarmament and non-proliferation relating to nuclear, chemical and biological domains.

India-Republic of Korea Consultations on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation were held in Seoul, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said in a statement.

“The two sides discussed developments in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation relating to nuclear, chemical and biological domains, as well as regional non-proliferation issues, outer space security-related matters, conventional weapons, including AI in the military domain and multilateral export control regimes.

India, South Korea discuss developments in areas of nuclear disarmament | External Affairs Defence Security News - Business Standard (business-standard.com)

South Korea, Romania pledge defence cooperation amid reports of contract in works

Reuters, April 23, 2024

South Korean and Romanian leaders pledged on Tuesday to boost defense industry cooperation as Seoul pushes to establish itself as the world’s fourth-largest arms exporter amid reports of huge additional contracts in the works.

President Yoon Suk Yeol hosted his Romanian counterpart, Klaus Iohannis, for a summit and pledged to increase cooperation in the defense industry, including joint production of weapons, a statement said.

South Korea’s defense minister Shin Won-sik separately hosted Poland’s deputy defense minister, Pawel Bejda, amid reports of an impending contract for Hanwha Aerospace to supply additional weapons systems and negotiations over financing.

South Korea has emerged as a major player in global defense exports, with Russia’s invasion of Ukraine opening the door for its industries to sign large-scale contracts from Europe, the Middle East and Asia.

South Korea, Romania pledge defence cooperation amid reports of contract in works | Reuters

North Korea claims it tested new command-and-control system in simulated nuclear counterstrike

CNN World, April 23, 2024

North Korea claims it tested a new nuclear weapons command-and-control system Monday, with the firing of projectiles carrying simulated nuclear warheads from multiple rocket launcher units.

Leader Kim Jong Un directed the drill, which simulated a nuclear counterattack, according to a report from the state-run Korean Central News Agency (KCNA),

following what it claimed were “extremely provocative and aggressive” annual joint air force exercises conducted by the United States and South Korea.

North Korea has tested both the rocket launcher system and a simulated nuclear counterstrike before, according to analysts, but KCNA said Monday’s exercise was the first time the “Haekbangashoe” – or nuclear trigger – command-and-control system was used, demonstrating what it claimed was an ability to switch rocket launchers from conventional to nuclear weapons.

North Korea claims it tested new command-and-control system in simulated nuclear counterstrike | CNN

North Korea conducts test on new ‘super-large warhead’: State media

Al Jazeera, April 20, 2024

North Korea, has conducted a test on a “super-large warhead” designed for a strategic cruise missile, state media reports, adding that it also launched a new type of anti-aircraft missile.

“The DPRK Missile Administration has conducted a power test of a super-large warhead designed for ‘Hwasal-1 Ra-3’ strategic cruise missile”, KCNA news agency reported on Saturday, referring to North Korea by an abbreviation for its official name – Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

North Korea also carried out a test launch on Friday afternoon of a “Pyoljji-1-2”, which state media said was a “new-type anti-aircraft missile”

North Korea conducts test on new ‘super-large warhead’: State media | Weapons News | Al Jazeera

Japan’s ALPS Treated Water Release is Progressing as Planned, IAEA Task Force Says

IAEA, April 30, 2024

The discharge of treated water from Japan’s Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station (FDNPS) is progressing in accordance with

the Implementation Plan approved by Japan’s Nuclear Regulation Authority (NRA), the Task Force set up by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) confirmed.

The Task Force completed its second four-day mission to Japan since the start of the water releases in August 2023, to assess whether the approach taken by Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) and the Government of Japan to discharge ALPS (Advanced Liquid Processing System) treated water is consistent with international safety standards. The standards constitute the worldwide reference for protecting the public and the environment from harmful effects of ionizing radiation.

Japan began discharging the treated water on 24 August 2023, and IAEA expert analysis of the five batches released since then have confirmed the tritium concentration in each batch of ALPS treated water released to date is far below Japan’s operational limit.

Japan’s ALPS Treated Water Release is Progressing as Planned, IAEA Task Force Says | IAEA

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Prepared by :

**Ms. Anusua Ganguly
Ms. Julia Jose**



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses

No.1, Development Enclave,
Rao Tula Ram Marg, Near USI, Delhi-110010
Tel. No (91-11) 2671-7983
Fax No. (91-11)2615-4192