

Nuclear, Missile & Space Digest

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December 31, 2024

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A. India

Growing nuclear arsenal of people's republic of China: implications for India

SD Pradhan

The Times of India, December 24, 2024

While the Pentagon's recent report (18 December) reiterated its earlier assessment that the People's Republic of China (PRC) was expanding its nuclear weapons rapidly and was likely to have at least 1000 warheads by 2030, it stated its current holding was around 600 nuclear weapons. Earlier in January, the Federation of American Scientists (FAS) had assessed the PRC's holding at around 500. However, both point out that the PRC has accelerated its production of nuclear weapons.

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/ChanakyaCode/growing-nuclear-arsenal-of-peoples-republic-of-china-implications-for-india/>

Is it a tactic to deter US helping India? This is what Pakistan is doing with its missile technology so that it can strike America

The Economic Times, December 26, 2024

The foreign relations between the United States and India are the strongest ever as of now, and this is something both countries' government as well as opposition have stated. However, that has brought in several geopolitical complications to the forefront as well, one of which is Pakistan's efforts to keep the US under pressure. Pakistan is currently working on its latest missile technology project, which will be nuclear-powered, and will have the capability to strike long-range targets, including the US, as per reports.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/us/is-it-a-tactic-to-deter-us-helping-india-this-is-what-pakistan-is-doing->

[with-its-missile-technology-so-that-it-can-strike-america/articleshow/116662212.cms?from=mdr](https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/gk-current-affairs/story/india-vietnam-700m-brahmos-deal-defence-exports-2654648-2024-12-24)

India-Vietnam \$700M BrahMos deal boosts defence exports: All about it

India Today, December 24, 2024

With the supersonic cruise missile capable of speeds up to Mach 3, it boasts unparalleled accuracy, a 300-kilometre range (extendable in advanced versions), and the versatility to be launched from land, sea, or air. The BrahMos missile earned its credibility during a 2017 test in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The missile flawlessly hit a moving target at sea from a ground-based launcher, reinforcing its claim as one of the world's most precise cruise missiles.

<https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/gk-current-affairs/story/india-vietnam-700m-brahmos-deal-defence-exports-2654648-2024-12-24>

Why Asia wants India's BrahMos missile

Shashank Mattoo

India Today, December 24, 2024

India is poised to finalize a \$700 million deal with Vietnam for the sale of BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles, marking a significant milestone in its defence export strategy. This comes on the heels of a \$375 million agreement with the Philippines for the same missile system, highlighting the growing demand for this state-of-the-art weapon in Southeast Asia.

<https://www.indiatoday.in/world/story/why-asia-wants-indias-brahmos-missile-2654811-2024-12-24>

B. Pakistan

For a tech-driven Pakistan: Pakistan remains mired in what can only be described as a 'Baby Boomer Syndrome'

Sufghan Sarwar Khan

The News International, December 18, 2024

As the modern world accelerates towards a future purely dominated by technology, digitisation, and innovation, Pakistan finds itself at a major crossroads. The US recently elected JD Vance as its vice-president, marking the arrival of millennial leadership in the White House. D D Eisenhower took the same step in 1952, bringing young and energetic Richard Nixon to the White House as VP – which ultimately brought John F Kennedy into the limelight in 1960. The progressive, innovative era of the US started with the 'We will go to the moon' speech by JFK at Rice University.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1262680-for-a-tech-driven-pakistan>

C. China

Chinese Foreign Ministry on the United States-China Cooperation in Science and Technology (STA)

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the People's Republic of China, December 16, 2024

On December 13, the representatives of the Chinese and US governments signed in Beijing a protocol to amend the Agreement Between the United States and China on Cooperation in Science and Technology (STA) and extend it for an additional five years, effective from August 27, 2024. Scientific cooperation between China and the US benefits both sides. The STA is one of the first government-to-government agreements signed between the two countries after establishment of diplomatic ties, and has been a strong buttress for scientific exchange and cooperation between the two countries. The extension of the agreement is an important move to follow up on the common understandings

reached between the two presidents when they met.

https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xw/fyrbt/lxjzh/202412/t20241218_11501316.html

China launches internet satellite group

China Daily, December 16, 2024

China successfully sent the first group of low Earth orbit satellites for a satellite internet constellation from the Wenchang Space Launch Site in southern Hainan province. This group of satellites was launched by a Long March-5B carrier rocket with a Yuanzheng-2 (Expedition-2) upper stage atop the rocket. The satellites have entered the preset orbits. The launch marked the 552nd mission of the Long March series carrier rockets.

<https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202412/16/WS67602fbca310f1265a1d32db.html>

Chinese Foreign Ministry on the EU's sanctions against China

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the People's Republic of China, December 17, 2024

China firmly opposes unilateral sanctions that have no basis in international law or authorization by the UN Security Council. China deplores and firmly opposes the EU's unjustified sanctions against Chinese companies. On the Ukraine crisis, China is committed to promoting talks for peace. China never provides weapons to the parties to the conflict and strictly controls the export of dual-use articles, and China's scope and measures of export control over drones are the most stringent worldwide. The normal exchanges and cooperation between Chinese and Russian companies should not be disrupted or interfered with. Most countries, including European countries and the US, have continued to trade with Russia. We urge the EU to stop applying double standard, stop falsely accusing and shifting the blame to China, and stop undermining the lawful rights and interests of Chinese companies. China will do what is

necessary to firmly defend the legitimate and lawful rights and interests of Chinese companies.

https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xw/fyrbt/lxjzh/202412/t20241218_11501312.html

Shenzhou-19 crew completes first extravehicular activities

Xinhua, December 18, 2024

Shenzhou-19 crew members aboard China's orbiting space station completed the first extravehicular activities (EVAs) of their mission, according to the China Manned Space Agency (CMSA). Cai Xuzhe, Song Lingdong and Wang Haoze, worked for nine hours on completing multiple tasks, including the installation of space-debris protection devices. They were assisted by the space station's robotic arm and a team on Earth. The mission of the first extravehicular activities of the Shenzhou-19 crew was a complete success, setting a new record for the duration of extravehicular activities by Chinese astronauts, said the CMSA.

<https://english.news.cn/20241218/c7b6f2f3a13445b9a8da0084287dd047/c.html>

Quantum supremacy race heats up: China's new test blasts past Google

Gong Zhe

CGTN, December 18, 2024

The race to unlock the true potential of quantum computers just got a whole lot faster. Google's October breakthrough, hailed as a demonstration of quantum computers surpassing traditional supercomputers, has been eclipsed by a new Chinese test boasting a staggering improvement by six orders of magnitude. The Chinese experiment, conducted on the powerful 105-qubit "Zuchongzhi 3.0" machine, completed a complex task in mere hundreds of seconds. In stark contrast, the world's current supercomputing champion, Frontier, would require an estimated 6 billion years to tackle the same problem.

<https://news.cgtn.com/news/2024-12-18/Quantum-supremacy-race-heats-up-China-s-new-testblasts-past-Google-1zqZGatID0Q/p.html>

China's Jiangmen Underground Neutrino Observatory starts liquid injection, marks a final critical milestone

Chinese Academy of Sciences, December 19, 2024

The world's largest transparent spherical detector started filling with ultrapure water Wednesday, signifying that the construction of the neutrino research facility has reached its last critical stage. The ultrapure water, which has been filtered through multiple stages of the water purification system, is injected at a flow rate of 100 tonnes per hour into the detector pool of the Jiangmen Underground Neutrino Observatory (JUNO), according to the Institute of High Energy Physics under the Chinese Academy of Sciences, the project's leading institution.

https://english.cas.cn/newsroom/cas_media/202412/t20241219_895396.shtml

China Coast Guard expelled Philippine aircraft after airspace incursion

Jiang Chenglong

China Daily, December 20, 2024

China Coast Guard said it expelled a Philippine aircraft that breached the airspace over China's Huangyan Island in the South China Sea. The CCG spokesman Liu Dejun said in a statement that a Philippine C-208 aircraft illegally entered the airspace over Huangyan Island without permission from the Chinese government. The CCG closely monitored the situation, warned and drove the aircraft away in accordance with the law, he said. Liu said that Huangyan Island is an inherent part of China's territory, stressing that the Philippine action "has seriously infringed upon China's sovereignty, posing an extremely high risk of maritime and aerial incidents".

<https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202412/20/WS676549ada310f1265a1d41d5.html>

How the US can overcome China's gallium ban

Financial Times, December 22, 2024

China produces 98 per cent of the world's supply of gallium and 60 per cent of germanium, according to the US Geological Survey. It dominates a host of other so-called rare earth minerals they are not so much rare as a hassle to extract used in everything from F-35 fighter jets to night goggles to electric vehicles. Beijing's ban, reckon researchers at the USGS, could shave £3.4bn off economic output. That is hardly enough to set Americans quaking; the country generates that in an hour or so; even the modelled worst-case is \$9bn. But it may also understate the case. Unlike China, which has accelerated a self-sufficiency drive on chips, corporate America has done little to wean itself off China's critical minerals.

<https://www.ft.com/content/85c875f7-f7c7-41d6-b635-fd7a51074a34>

US launches probe into Chinese semiconductor industry

Tim Bradshaw, Jonathan Wheatley, Edward White and Nian Liu

Financial Times, December 24, 2024

The US has launched a probe into alleged anti-competitive measures by China to support its semiconductor industry, just weeks before the Biden administration hands over to president-elect Donald Trump. The US Trade Representative's office said it was investigating "China's acts, policies and practices related to targeting of the semiconductor industry for dominance". The probe will be conducted under Section 301 of the US Trade Act and initially target what the USTR called "foundational" semiconductors, including those used by the automotive, healthcare, infrastructure, aerospace and defence industries.

<https://www.ft.com/content/072d391c-93af-40c6-b020-a4a36d31d4c8>

China unveils new futuristic fighter jets in surprise flyby

Cate Cadell

The Washington Post, December 26, 2024

Images of advanced aircraft cruising at low altitudes in China have surprised analysts, who say they could mark the maiden flights of sixth-generation fighter jets, representing a major breakthrough for the country's military. Photos and videos originating on Chinese social media platforms and reposted to X show large triangular aircraft making sweeping slow turns at a very low altitude. The images appear to show two different aircraft, one smaller than the other both featuring a tailless, stealthy design suggesting they rely on advanced computational technology to be piloted.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2024/12/27/china-sixth-generation-fighterjet-flight/>

China pushes ahead with huge – and controversial – dam in Tibet

Christian Shepherd

The Washington Post, December 26, 2024

Chinese authorities are pressing ahead with plans to build a series of enormous hydropower dams across a gorge in the Himalayas that is three times as deep as the Grand Canyon, despite concerns raised by Tibetan human rights groups and New Delhi. Beijing has approved plans to dam the lower reaches of the Yarlung Tsangpo River, which flows from Tibet into India and Bangladesh, the state-run Xinhua News Agency reported. The building spree, if it goes ahead, threatens to rekindle a border dispute with India, which was only recently eased. In India, the Yarlung Tsangpo is known as the Brahmaputra and flows through the state of Arunachal Pradesh.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2024/12/26/china-tibet-hydropower-dam/>

Chinese Foreign Ministry on the countermeasures against seven US defence corporations and related senior executives

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the People's Republic of China, December 27, 2024

The US has, once again, provided China's Taiwan region with huge military aid and arms sales and its "National Defence Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025" contains negative articles on China. Such acts seriously violate the one-China principle and the three China-US joint communiqués, seriously interfere in China's internal affairs, and seriously undermine China's sovereignty and territorial integrity. In accordance with the provisions in the Law of the People's Republic of China on Countering Foreign Sanctions, China decided to take countermeasures against seven US defence corporations and related senior executives. Seeking "Taiwan independence" is bound to fail. What the US has done to assist the "Taiwan independence" attempt by arming Taiwan will only backfire. Its relevant act containing negative articles on China is filled with Cold War zero-sum mentality and ideological bias. Without factual basis, it plays up the "China threat" narrative, trumpets for military support to Taiwan and tries to find a pretext for increasing military expenditure and maintaining hegemony, which disrupts regional peace and stability.

https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xw/fyrbt/lxjzh/202412/t20241227_11521820.html

Space Station keeps dodging debris from China's 2007 satellite weapon test

Aaron Gregg

The Washington Post, December 27, 2024

The International Space Station had to fire thrusters from a docked spacecraft last month to avoid a piece of debris that has been circling the globe for the nearly 18 years since the Chinese government blasted apart one of its own satellites in a weapons test. The evasive maneuver was the second in just six days for the space station, which has four NASA

astronauts and three Russian cosmonauts aboard. That is the shortest interval ever between such actions, illustrating the slowly worsening problem of space junk in orbit.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2024/12/23/iss-space-junk-satellite-china-us/>

China's comprehensive scientific research ship commissioned, marking expansion of country's manned deep-diving capabilities to entire ocean

Global Times, December 29, 2024

China's first comprehensive scientific research ship designed for global deep-sea exploration, Tan Suo San Hao, or Exploration No. 3, was commissioned in Sanya, South China's Hainan Province, signaling an expansion of China's manned deep-diving capabilities to the entire ocean, with currently a total of 1,433 dives conducted by China's manned submersibles to date. The ship, measuring about 104 meters in length with a discharge volume of 10,000 tons, was delivered and launched from Nansha in Guangzhou, South China's Guangdong Province. It features dual-directional icebreaking capabilities at its bow and stern, with a range of 15,000 nautical miles and a capacity to accommodate 80 personnel, according to the Xinhua News Agency.

<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202412/1325953.shtml>

Seizing trends, shouldering responsibilities, and pursuing the greater good: President Xi Jinping leads major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics into a new stage of greater achievements

Guo Jiping

Global Times, December 30, 2024

Over the past year, the profound meaning behind "much more can be accomplished" has been clearly demonstrated to the

world. President Xi Jinping attended three major diplomatic events, made four important overseas visits, and held over 100 in-depth discussions with leaders from across the five continents. The agenda of major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics reflects visionary foresight, a pattern of win-win cooperation, and a global mind-set that seeks benefits for all.

<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202412/1325996.shtml>

Pakistan will build another Chinese-designed nuclear power unit

Aaron Larson

Power, December 30, 2024

The Pakistan Nuclear Regulatory Authority (PNRA) issued a construction license to Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) for Chashma Nuclear Power Plant Unit 5 (C-5), on December 26. C-5 will be an advanced third-generation pressurized water reactor (PWR) of Chinese Hualong One design (HPR1000). The unit will have active and passive safety features including a double shell containment and reactor filtered venting system. It will have a 60-year design life.

<https://www.powermag.com/pakistan-will-build-another-chinese-designed-nuclear-power-unit/>

Why China is building a thorium molten-salt reactor

Emily Waltz and Yu-Tzu Chiu

IEEE Spectrum, December 30, 2024

China's efforts put it at the forefront of both thorium-based fuel breeding and molten-salt reactors. Several companies elsewhere in the world are developing plans for this kind of fuel or reactor, but none has yet operated one. Prior to China's pilot project, the last operating molten-salt reactor was Oak Ridge National Laboratory's Molten Salt Reactor Experiment, which ran on uranium. It shut down in 1969. Thorium is a waste product of China's huge rare earth mining industry. Harnessing it would provide a practically

inexhaustible supply of fuel. Already, China's Gansu province has maritime and aerospace applications in mind for this future energy supply, according to the state-run Xinhua News Agency.

<https://spectrum.ieee.org/chinas-thorium-molten-salt-reactor>

US Treasury says Chinese state-backed actor hacked its computers

Colby Smith

Financial Times, December 31, 2024

A Chinese state-sponsored actor hacked the US Treasury department through a third-party service provider in a "major cyber security incident", the agency said. In a letter to the Senate banking committee seen by the Financial Times, the Treasury department said it had been informed on December 8 by software company Beyond Trust that a hacker had breached several remote government workstations by obtaining a security key and had in turn gained access to unclassified documents on them.

<https://www.ft.com/content/ecfae287-adfe-4f5c-9c7b-7ec1c8b601a7>

D. Russia

Ukraine claims blast in Moscow that killed Russian military's chemical weapons chief

The Hindu, December 17, 2024

The head of the Russian Army's chemical weapons division was killed on Tuesday (December 17, 2024) in a brazen attack in Moscow claimed by Kyiv the most senior military figure assassinated in Russia yet as the Kremlin's campaign in Ukraine drags on. Igor Kirillov was killed along with his assistant when an explosive device attached to a scooter went off outside an apartment building in southeastern Moscow, Russian and Ukrainian officials said.

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/top-russian-general-killed-in-bomb-attack-in-moscow/article68994768.ece>

Ukraine war latest: Russia's new Oreshnik missile relies on Western manufacturing technology, FT reports

The Kyiv Independent, December 27, 2024

Russia's new Oreshnik missile relies on Western manufacturing technology, FT reports 3 senior Russian officers killed in HIMARS, drone attack, Ukraine's military intelligence says Ukraine working to extend basic training to 2 months, Syrskyi says Russia ramps up production of Shahed drones, decoys at Tatarstan plant, CNN reports Ukraine repelling Russian attempt to gain foothold in Kherson Oblast, military says Russia's new intermediate-range ballistic missile, the Oreshnik, recently fired at Ukraine, was developed using advanced manufacturing equipment from Western companies, despite sanctions, The Financial Times reported on Dec. 27.

<https://kyivindependent.com/ukraine-war-latest-russias-new-oreshnik-missile-relies-on-western-manufacturing-technology-ft-reports/>

Putin says Google is a tool used by the United States

Vladimir Soldatkin and Alexander Marrow

Reuters, December 19, 2024

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday accused Alphabet's (GOOGL.O), opens new tab Google of being a tool used by the U.S. government to score political points and blamed YouTube for slowing speeds on the video hosting platform in Russia. Google, along with other foreign tech firms, has been under pressure in Russia for several years over the content it distributes, but while Moscow has blocked social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, it appears reluctant to ban YouTube, used by around 50 million Russians every day.

<https://www.reuters.com/technology/putin-blames-youtube-slowing-speeds-russia-2024-12-19/>

Russia warns the United States against possible nuclear testing under Trump

Guy Faulconbridge

Reuters, December 27, 2024

Russia's point man for arms control cautioned Donald Trump's incoming administration on Friday against resuming nuclear testing, saying Moscow would keep its own options open amid what he said was Washington's "extremely hostile" stance. The resumption of testing by the world's two biggest nuclear powers would usher in a new and precarious era nearly 80 years since the United States tested the first nuclear bomb at Alamogordo, New Mexico in July 1945.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/russia-warns-united-states-possible-nuclear-testing-under-trump-2024-12-27/>

Russia warns United States on possible nuclear testing under Donald Trump

The Hindu, December 27, 2024

Russia's arms control point man cautioned Donald Trump's incoming administration on Friday (December 27, 2024) that Moscow was considering a whole range of possible steps on nuclear testing owing to what it said was Donald Trump's radical position on the issue. The Kommersant newspaper quoted Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov, who oversees arms control, as saying that Mr. Trump took a radical position on the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) during his first term.

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/russia-warns-united-states-on-possible-nuclear-testing-under-donald-trump/article69032801.ece>

U.S. tech continues to power Russian weapons despite export controls, Senate Democrats find

Julie Tsirkin and Rob Wile

NBC News, December 19, 2024

U.S.-made technology continues to fall into Russian hands in Ukraine as a key national security office remains critically underfunded, according to a report from Senate Democrats released Wednesday. The report, spearheaded by Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., comes just as officials in the incoming Trump administration call for massive cuts to government spending. While their arguments have focused on cutting government waste, the new report highlights how existing capacity shortfalls in key government agencies are already undermining U.S. interests.

<https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/tech-news/us-tech-continues-power-russian-weapons-export-controls-senate-democrats-na184723>

E. Ukraine

How Ukraine's new drone-missile hybrids are changing long-range weapon technology

Kollen Post

Kyiv Independent, December 23, 2024

Ukraine has turbo-charged its long-distance unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), making "rocket-drones" to compete with cruise missiles or save the trouble of asking for more Western-made ranged weapons. President Volodymyr Zelensky's administration has been showing off the latest results, with videos of the Peklo and Palianytsia missile-drones, which Ukrainian soldiers have begun deploying. The "rocket-drone" project has become a key goal for Zelensky in 2025. In November, he told the Verkhovna Rada, Ukraine's parliamentary body, that he wanted to see Ukraine produce 30,000 long-distance drones, and 3,000 "cruise missiles or missile-drones" over the next year.

<https://kyivindependent.com/latest-ukrainian-rocket-drones-make-up-for-absence-of-locally-made-cruise-missiles/>

Ukraine unveils new laser weapon 'Tryzub', that can shoot down aircraft from a mile away

The Economic Times, December 20, 2024

As the war between Ukraine and Russia enters its 1,000th day, Ukraine has reportedly gained a technological edge with the development of a cutting-edge laser weapon named the Tryzub. The weapon, named after Ukraine's national trident symbol, is said to be capable of targeting and downing aircraft at distances exceeding two kilometres. Vadym Sukharevskyi, Commander of Ukraine's Armed Forces Unmanned Systems, confirmed the weapon's existence during a defence summit in Kyiv earlier this week. Sukharevskyi stated, "It really works; it really exists."

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/ukraine-unveils-new-laser-weapon-tryzub-that-can-shoot-down-aircraft-from-a-mile-away/articleshow/116499682.cms?from=mdr>

Ukraine collects vast war data trove to train AI models

Max Hunder

Reuters, December 20, 2024

KYIV, Dec 20 (Reuters) - As the future of warfare pivots towards artificial intelligence, Ukraine is sitting on a valuable resource: millions of hours of footage from drones which can be used to train AI models to make decisions on the battlefield. AI has been deployed by both sides on the battlefield during Russia's invasion of Ukraine to identify targets, scanning images far quicker than a human can.

<https://www.reuters.com/technology/ukraine-collects-vast-war-data-trove-train-ai-models-2024-12-20/>

Ukraine possesses laser weapons, advanced drone technologies, commander says

Tim Zadorozhnyy

The Kyiv Independent, December 16, 2024

Ukraine is now among the nations with laser weapon capabilities, Colonel Vadym

Sukharevskyi, commander of the Unmanned Systems Forces, announced on Dec. 16, as reported by Interfax-Ukraine. Speaking at the “European Defense Industry: Prospects for Cooperation with the Ukrainian Defense Industry” conference, Sukharevskyi said Ukraine’s laser system, called Tryzub, can down aircraft at altitudes exceeding 2 kilometers. “This laser is real and operational,” he emphasized, adding that efforts are underway to scale up its capabilities.

<https://kyivindependent.com/ukraine-unveils-laser-weapon-and-advanced-drone-technologies-commander-says/>

More than two-thirds of Ukrainians favor idea of restoring nuclear arms arsenal, poll shows

Boldizsar Gyori

The Kyiv Independent, December 23, 2024

About 73% of Ukrainians supported the idea of Ukraine restoring its nuclear weapons, while 20% spoke against it, according to a poll published by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology on Dec. 23. The poll was conducted around the 30th anniversary of the signing of the Budapest Memorandum, under which Ukraine gave up its Soviet-era nuclear arsenal in exchange for international security guarantees. Around half of the respondents said they would support the development of nuclear weapons even at the price of losing Western aid and coming under sanctions.

<https://kyivindependent.com/73-percent-of-ukrainians-favor-restoring-nuclear-arms-arsenal-poll-shows/>

Final German nuclear power plant enters dismantling phase

World Nuclear News, December 20, 2024

Dismantling work at the shut down Brokdorf nuclear power plant has officially begun, PreussenElektra announced. The plant was the last nuclear power plant in Germany that was not yet being dismantled. A subsidiary of EOn Group - applied for approval to

decommission and dismantle the 1410 MWe pressurised water reactor in December 2017. The plant was shut down on 31 December 2021. On 23 October this year, the Schleswig-Holstein Ministry for Energy Transition, Climate Protection, Environment and Nature issued the first decommissioning and dismantling permit to PreussenElektra for the Brokdorf plant.

<https://www.world-nuclear-news.org/articles/Final-German-nuclear-power-plant-enters-dismantling-phase>

F. United States Of America

US State Dept gives nod to \$5bn in potential arms sales for Egypt

Al-Jazeera, December 21, 2024

The United States State Department has approved the potential sale of more than \$5bn in arms for Egypt. The State Department informed Congress on Friday that it had approved the sale of \$4.69bn worth of equipment for 555 US-made M1A1 Abrams tanks operated by Egypt, along with \$630m in Hellfire air-to-surface missiles and \$30m in precision-guided munitions.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/12/21/us-state-dept-gives-nod-to-over-5bn-in-potential-arms-sales-for-egypt>

Exclusive: US to announce final package of new arms for Ukraine in coming days

Mike Stone

Reuters, December 20, 2024

The Biden administration will announce in the coming days its final Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative package, using up the remaining funds set aside to buy new weapons for Ukraine, according to two sources familiar with the matter.

The package includes air defense interceptors and artillery munitions, according to a third source, but the exact contents are expected when the package is announced in the coming days. The

package will be worth about \$1.2 billion, said the sources.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/us-announce-final-package-new-arms-ukraine-coming-days-sources-say-2024-12-20/>

US lawmakers urge Biden administration to halt offensive weapons to Israel

Al Jazeera Staff

Al-Jazeera, December 18, 2024

Twenty Democratic legislators in the United States have urged the administration of President Joe Biden to halt the transfer of offensive weapons to Israel, noting that the Israeli government has not complied with US demands for more aid to enter Gaza. In a letter addressed to Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Tuesday, the Congress members called on Washington to uphold its own laws that restrict military aid to countries that commit war crimes and block US-backed humanitarian assistance.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/12/18/us-lawmakers-urge-biden-administration-to-halt-offensive-weapons-to-israel>

How A.I. Could Reshape the Economic Geography of America

Steve Lohr

The New York Times, December 26, 2024

Chattanooga, Tenn., a midsize Southern city, is on no one's list of artificial intelligence hot spots. But as the technology's use moves beyond a few big city hubs and is more widely adopted across the economy, Chattanooga and other once-struggling cities in the Midwest, Mid-Atlantic and South are poised to be among the unlikely winners, a recent study found. The shared attributes of these metropolitan areas include an educated work force, affordable housing and workers who are mostly in occupations and industries less likely to be replaced or disrupted by A.I.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/12/26/technology/ai-economy-workers.html>

West Asia

G. Armenia

Armenia signs new defence cooperation deal with Greece, Cyprus

Alexander Pracht

CivilNet, December 20, 2024 Armenia, Greece, and Cyprus stepped up their defence collaboration following a series of consultations held in Athens. The meetings resulted in signing defence cooperation plans for 2025, covering a wide range of military projects, while the discussions addressed key areas like troop training, military education, joint exercises, and advisory support, emphasizing longterm cooperation between the countries. "Collaboration has made considerable progress, covering essential areas that demand consistent, long-term efforts," Armenia's Defence Ministry stated, praising Greece and Cyprus for their role in bolstering Armenian military capabilities.

<https://www.civilnet.am/en/news/810237/armenia-signs-new-defense-cooperation-deal-with-greece-cyprus/>

What's behind Armenia's military reform?

Alexander Pracht

CivilNet, December 23, 2024

Recent statements made by Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev in an interview with Russian state media regarding French supplies of "offensive lethal weapons" to Armenia and Yerevan's alleged inability to keep up in an arms race, even with Western support, reflect Baku's growing unease. Behind the Azerbaijani leader's public reaction lie lesser-known developments within the Armenian Armed Forces. Yerevan has disclosed very few details about its military modernisation, intensifying interest in the actual needs of Armenia's military and the structural reforms required.

<https://www.civilnet.am/en/news/810410/whats-behind-armenias-military-reform/>

H. Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan Airlines flight was downed by Russian air defence system, four sources say

The Economic Times, December 27, 2024

An Azerbaijan Airlines flight that crashed in Kazakhstan was downed by a Russian air defence system, four sources in Azerbaijan with knowledge of the investigation told Reuters. An Embraer passenger jet crashed near the city of Aktau in Kazakhstan, killing 38 people, after diverting from an area of Russia in which Moscow has used air defence systems against Ukrainian drone strikes in recent months. Azerbaijan Airlines flight J2-8243 had flown hundreds of miles off its scheduled route from Azerbaijan's Baku to Grozny, in Russia's Chechnya, to crash on the opposite shore of the Caspian Sea, after what Russia's aviation watchdog said was an emergency that may have been caused by a bird strike.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/global-trends/azerbaijan-airlines-flight-was-downed-by-russian-air-defence-system-four-sources-say/articleshow/116687812.cms?from=mdr>

I. Iran

Iran's Nuclear timetable: The weapon potential

Valerie Lincy

Iran Watch, December 18, 2024

This timetable estimates how soon Iran could enrich enough uranium to fuel a small nuclear arsenal. It assumes Iran would try to build an arsenal of five warheads of the implosion type – the goal Iran set for itself when it began to work on nuclear weapons decades ago. With its thousands of gas centrifuges, some operating and some in storage, Iran can enrich uranium to a grade suitable for nuclear reactor fuel or to a higher grade suitable for nuclear weapons. On January 5, 2020, Iran announced that it would no longer observe any limit (such as that set by the nuclear accord of 2015) on

the use of its centrifuges, or on the possession of uranium they enrich.

<https://www.iranwatch.org/ourpublications/articles-reports/irans-nucleartimetable-weapon-potential>

Iran on cusp of going nuclear-armed: Warns IAEA in the latest report

The Economic Times, December 18, 2024

IAEA's December report warns that Tehran likely had enough material to build four bombs. Director General Grossi says 'Iran set to produce 60%-enriched uranium at eight or more times the current rate'. UN's atomic regulator says 'there is little point in trying to revive the 2015 nuclear deal between Tehran and world powers'. Iran is already practically a nuclear threshold state, the IAEA feels. Under the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, Iran was only permitted to enrich uranium to 3.68 per cent purity. This is a level consistent with civilian uses of nuclear technology. Iran had claimed that as its only pursuit, capping its stockpile at 300 kilograms. But IAEA reports Tehran is dramatically expanding its production of uranium enriched to near-weapons grade levels.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/iran-on-cusp-of-going-nuclear-armed-warns-iaea-in-latest-report/videoshow/116428230.cms?from=mdr>

Preserving space for a nuclear deal with Iran in 2025

Arms Control Association, December 18, 2024

In the wake of the November 2024 U.S. elections, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian continues to express support for nuclear talks with the United States to address international concerns about Iran's advancing nuclear activities. However, his administration's recent efforts to ramp up its uranium enrichment capacity, ostensibly to build leverage ahead of President-elect Donald Trump's return

to the White House, threatens to derail the prospects for reaching a diplomatic arrangement.

<https://www.armscontrol.org/issue-briefs/2024-12/preserving-space-nuclear-deal-iran-2025>

15th Khordad air defence systems: Iran's response to growing US-Israel strike threats

Army Recognition, December 18, 2024

According to information published by Russian sources on December 15, 2024, Iran has begun deploying its 15th Khordad air defence missile systems near critical nuclear facilities, a move aimed at countering escalating threats from the United States and Israel. The latest reports confirm the presence of these systems around the Shahid Ahmadi Roshan nuclear site in Natanz, a key location in Iran's uranium enrichment efforts situated in Isfahan Province. Iran fortifies its nuclear facilities with advanced 15th Khordad air defence systems, signalling preparedness against potential U.S. and Israeli strikes.

<https://armyrecognition.com/news/armynews/army-news-2024/15th-khordad-airdefense-systems-irans-response-togrowing-us-israel-strike-threats>

Iran displays defence achievements at Vietnam Defence Expo

Mehr News Agency, December 19, 2024 Iran is showcasing its defence achievements at Vietnam International Defence Expo 2024, an international defence exhibition held in Hanoi from December 19 to 22. The Vietnam Defense Expo 2024 brings together approximately 200 companies from 27 countries, including the Islamic Republic of Iran, Vietnam, China, Russia, Turkey, the UK, and the US, to showcase their military equipment. The Iranian delegation, led by Brigadier General Seyyed Mehdi Farahi, Deputy Defense Minister for Industrial and Research Affairs, participated in the exhibition's opening ceremony on Thursday.

<https://en.mehrnews.com/news/225711/Iran-displays-defense-achievements-at-Vietnam-Defense-Expo>

J. Iraq

Iraq to acquire Korean utility helicopters for \$93.7M

Defense Mirror, December 24, 2024

Korea Aerospace Industries (KAI) announced that it has signed a 136 billion won (\$93.7 million) contract to export Korean Utility Helicopters (KUH) to Iraq. According to the company's regulatory filing, the helicopters will be supplied to the Iraqi government by March 2029, South Korean media report. The KUH, also known as Surion, is a medium-sized utility helicopter that has been part of the South Korean Army's fleet since 2012. Over 200 Surion helicopters are currently in service in South Korea, supporting air assault, cargo airlift, and other operations.

<https://www.defensemirror.com/news/38471>

K. Israel

With Donald Trump's backing will Benjamin Netanyahu strike Iran's nuclear facilities?

The Economic Times, December 17, 2024

Benjamin Netanyahu may be counting on Donald Trump's support when it comes to attacking Iran's nuclear facilities and establishments, according to reports. This may be the next agenda on Netanyahu's list after the Israeli air force and navy reportedly destroyed 80% of the military establishments of the Syrian military after Bashar Al-Assad's regime collapsed, and insurgents took over Damascus. Israel has been voicing their opinions strongly about Iran's nuclear projects, which are reportedly backed by Russia. Trump, although, is quite a diplomatic leader, and does not believe much into long-drawn conflicts, and has even been advocating for the resolution of the Ukraine and Russia conflict through diplomatic talks.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/us/unique-window-of-opportunity-has-opened-up-for-israel-with-donald-trumps-backing-will-benjamin-netanyahu-strike-irans-nuclear-facilities/articleshow/116382018.cms?from=mdr>

Evidence shows US knew about Israeli nuclear program in 1960s

Yana Suryadnaya

I24 News, December 18, 2024

The National Security Archive of the United States declassified a series of documents from the 1960s and 1970s on Tuesday, which pertained to the Israeli nuclear program and US conduct on the matter. The release of documents is the first time written proof has shown that the US knew Israel was producing nuclear weapons in Dimona, which Israel has never publicly admitted. An intelligence report dated to December 1960 clearly determines that Israel's nuclear project in Dimona is linked to weapon development.

<https://www.i24news.tv/en/news/international/americas/artc-evidence-shows-us-knew-about-israeli-nuclear-program-in-1960s>

Israel strikes Yemen ports, power stations in retaliation against Houthis

Rina Bassist

Al-Monitor, December 19, 2024

The Israeli Air Force carried out a series of airstrikes on the western coast of Yemen and deeper in the country, targeting military positions and infrastructure belonging to the Houthis. The Israeli attacks coincided with the Houthis, an Iranian-backed militant group, firing a ballistic missile at central Israel. The Israeli military said the long-range Arrow air defence system intercepted the missile outside Israeli airspace. Still, falling shrapnel damaged a school in the city of Ramat Gan. The Houthi attack was the second ballistic missile fired from Yemen this week toward central Israel.

<https://www.almonitor.com/originals/2024/12/israelstrikes-yemen-ports-power-stationsretaliation-against-houthis>

Israel vows to target Houthi leaders, ratcheting up threat after missile fire

Lazar Berman

Times of Israel, December 24, 2024

Israel will begin targeting leaders of Yemen's Houthi rebel group, Defence Minister Israel Katz said Tuesday, vowing that Israel will not allow missile and drone fire on Israel to continue unchecked. Firing at Houthi leaders would seem to mark an escalation by Israel, which has so far targeted port infrastructure and military sites in a handful of sorties in response to repeated launches of drones and ballistic missiles from Yemen. A missile fired early Tuesday was shot down, but sirens in the Tel Aviv area caused widespread panic and a rush to shelter left one woman seriously injured. It was the fourth drone or missile attack within a week from Yemen.

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/israelvows-to-target-houthi-leaders-ratchetingup-threat-after-missile-fire/>

Israel's MoD signs deal with IAI for additional Arrow-3 missile interceptors

Airforce Technology, December 26, 2024

The Israel Ministry of Defense (MoD) has finalised a contract with Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) to increase the production of Arrow-3 interceptors. The agreement, led by the Israel Missile Defence Organisation (IMDO) and the Directorate of Defence Research & Development (DDR&D), entails the provision of Arrow3 interceptors to the Israel Defence Forces (IDF). The multi-billion-dollar contract was formalised at the Ministry's headquarters in Tel Aviv, with defence and industry figures in attendance. The Arrow system, a collaborative effort between the Israeli and US governments, is used to neutralise long-range ballistic missile threats.

<https://www.airforcetechnology.com/news/israels-mod-arrow3-missile-interceptors/>

Israel and Slovakia sign •560m defence contract for BARAK MX system

Army Technology, December 27, 2024

The International Defense Cooperation Directorate of the Israel Ministry of Defence (IMOD), SIBAT, has concluded a defence deal with Slovakia, marking the largest such agreement between the two nations. Valued at around •560m (\$582.96m), the contract is expected to bolster Slovakia's defence capabilities through the acquisition of IAI's BARAK MX Integrated Air Defense System. The agreement was formalised in Tel Aviv by IMOD director general Eyal Zamir, alongside key figures. The BARAK MX is developed through close collaboration with IAI's in-house strike systems and loitering munitions teams, drawing on the company's expertise in the Offensive Domain to "effectively" counter enemy threats.

<https://www.armytechnology.com/news/israel-sloviabarak-mx-system/>

In a first, Israel uses America's 'THAAD' system to intercept a missile fired by the Houthis in Yemen

The Economic Times, December 30, 2024

The U.S. Terminal High Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) system was used for the first time in Israel to intercept a missile, a source familiar with the matter confirmed on Friday. This marks a key moment since President Joe Biden deployed the advanced anti-missile system in Israel in October. The THAAD system, built by Lockheed Martin, was activated to intercept a projectile from Yemen within the last 24 hours. The source, who requested anonymity, stated that an analysis would determine whether the interception was successful. The Pentagon has yet to comment on the incident. The deployment of THAAD is part of an effort to bolster Israel's air defence systems, adding to the country's already advanced missile defence capabilities.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/in-a-first-israel-uses-americas-thaad->

[system-to-intercept-a-missile-fired-by-the-houthis-in-yemen/articleshow/116739222.cms?from=mdr](https://www.houthis-in-yemen/articleshow/116739222.cms?from=mdr)

Ex-UK defence chief: 'We've all gained from Israel's experience'- interview

Shmuel Elmas

The Jerusalem Post, December 30, 2024

The British government's decision last September to suspend 30 of 350 arms export licenses to Israel raised a troubling question: had we lost British support? Did Israel, in the current climate, let relations with a vital ally slip through its fingers? But feelings are one thing. Numbers are another: according to a report by the Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT) organisation, defence exports to Israel approved by the UK government in 2023 totalled £17 million (\$23 million). The basis of cooperation between the two countries is not the arms trade but the coordination between their militaries in training exercises and in moments of truth. Such a moment came when the Iranians carried out their threat and attacked Israel directly in April and October.

<https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article835352>

L. Jordan

Arab conference advocates expanding peaceful uses of nuclear energy

Jordan News Agency, December 18, 2024

The 16th Arab Conference on the Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy, hosted at the Dead Sea and organised by the Arab Atomic Energy Agency (AAEA) in cooperation with the Jordan Atomic Energy Commission (JAEC), concluded on Wednesday with a call to bolster Arab collaboration in nuclear sciences. The conference emphasised creating partnerships and knowledge networks among research, technical, and educational institutions while advancing scientific research linked to development.

The conference recommended broadening nuclear energy applications in medicine, agriculture, industry, water resources, and food security to enhance Arab citizens' lives and promote sustainable development.

https://www.petra.gov.jo/Include/InnerPage.jsp?ID=66671&lang=en&name=en_news

M. Kuwait

Kuwait's foreign minister visits Damascus calls for lifting Syria sanctions

Mohammad Sio

Anadolu Agency, December 30, 2024

Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Abdullah AlYahya confirmed on Monday that his visit to Damascus is a "message of Gulf solidarity" with Syria, calling for the removal of international sanctions on the country. Speaking at a press conference in Damascus with Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad Al-Shaibani and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Secretary-General Jassim Al-Budaiwi, Al-Yahya emphasized that his visit is part of the GCC's efforts to strengthen ties with Syria. He said the visit follows a mandate from the GCC, which is currently chaired by Kuwait and stems from the outcomes of the Gulf ministerial meeting held in Kuwait City on December 26 to discuss the developments in Syria.

<https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middleeast/kuwait-foreign-minister-visits-damascus-calls-for-lifting-syria-sanctions/3438256>

GCC Emergency head calls for stronger ties with IAEA to tackle regional crises

Times Kuwait, December 31, 2024

The GCC Emergency Management Center, alongside the IAEA, met with Gulf emergency representatives to coordinate joint exercises over the next three years, completing the Gulf emergency project in collaboration with Atomic Energy. The Emergency Center coordinates GCC efforts, develops studies, and provides solutions for regional emergencies, aiming to anticipate

issues, create solutions, and activate early warning systems for timely responses. Brigadier General Dr. Rashed Mohammed Al Marri, Director of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Emergency Management Center in Kuwait, emphasised the need to strengthen cooperation between Gulf emergency organisations and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to effectively address regional emergencies, including radiological and nuclear incidents, as reported by Al Jarida newspaper.

<https://timeskuwait.com/gcc-emergency-head-calls-for-stronger-ties-with-iaea-to-tackle-regional-crises/>

N. Oman

Omani-Saudi joint military exercise "Solidarity 1" concludes

Oman News Agency, December 25, 2024

The Omani-Saudi Joint Military Exercise "Solidarity 1" concluded in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). The drill saw the participation of a force from the Oman Coast Regiment of the 23rd Infantry Brigade, Royal Army of Oman (RAO), and a force from the 2nd regiment of the 20th Brigade of the Royal Land Forces of the KSA. Implementation of the drill was part of a training plan adopted by the RAO to maintain a high level of performance and the combat ability of its units. It was also in pursuance of an annual training programme implemented in cooperation with GCC, Arab and friendly countries to serve the overall national objectives.

<https://omannews.gov.om/topics/en/79/show/120285>

O. Lebanon

Turkey ready to supply power to Syria and Lebanon, energy minister says

Nevzat Devranoglu

Reuters, December 30, 2024

Turkey is ready to supply electricity to Syria and Lebanon and a team of

government officials is already in Syria working on how to resolve its energy issues, Turkish Energy Minister Alparslan Bayraktar said. Turkey, which backed rebels in neighbouring Syria who toppled Bashar al-Assad this month after a 13-year civil war, has reopened its embassy in Damascus and already conducted high-level contacts with new de-facto leader Ahmed al-Sharaa. "Maybe the electricity that Syria and Lebanon need will initially be met by exporting it from Turkey, and of course, we can see the picture a little more after seeing the situation in the transmission network," Bayraktar told reporters in Turkey's southeastern city of Sanliurfa.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/middleeast/turkey-ready-supply-power-syrialebanon-energy-minister-says-2024-12-30/>

Palestine What will Palestine's future be in 2025?

Michael Lynk

Anadolu Agency, December 25, 2024

In 2024, there were a host of startling developments occurring in the Middle East and the wider world that impacted Palestine, most of them unforeseen 12 months ago: the continuation of the unrelenting Israeli genocide in Gaza, the battlefield defeat of Hezbollah and the devastation in Lebanon, the overthrow of Bashar Assad in Syria, the isolation of Iran, the election of Donald Trump, and a series of seminal rulings by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the International Criminal Court (ICC). All of these seismic events make the assignment of imagining what Palestine's future will be in 2025 a precarious task. Yet, with caution thrown to the wind, we can make some educated guesses on six leading features. Donald Trump's return to the US presidency will certainly encourage Israel's accelerating subjugation of the Palestinians.

<https://www.aa.com.tr/en/opinion/opinionwhat-will-palestines-future-be-in2025/3433824>

P. Qatar

New unit to help detect nuclear radiation, issue early warnings

Qatar Tribune, December 27, 2024

Assistant Undersecretary for Environmental Affairs Abdulhadi Al Marri explained that this unit is a crucial tool for detecting nuclear radiation and issuing early warnings of any cross-border radioactive contamination, enabling the ministry and relevant authorities to take preventive measures before radioactive clouds reach populated areas. He also mentioned that the team overseeing the unit had undergone advanced technical training, including office-based exercises and participation in "Watan 2024" field drill in collaboration with relevant agencies, demonstrating its capability to handle any radiation emergency. Director of Radiation Protection Department Engineer Abdulrahman Al Abduljabar stated that the new system for monitoring ionising radiation includes advanced marine stations, which are floating buoys with robust aluminium towers.

<https://www.qatartribune.com/article/156019/nation/newunit-to-help-detect-nuclear-radiation-issueearly-warnings>

Q. Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia seeks to buy 100 Turkish fighter jets

Middle East Monitor, December 31, 2024

Saudi Arabia is seeking to buy 100 Kaan fighter jets from Turkiye as part of its Vision 2030 plan, Turkish newspaper Milliyet has reported. The fifth-generation Kaan fighter jet was developed by Turkish Aerospace Industries (TUSAS), and can perform air-to-air combat missions, as well as conduct precision air to ground strikes at supersonic speeds. The head of the Turkish Defence Industries Directorate, Haluk Gorgun, met with Saudi Assistant

Defence Minister Khalid Bin Hussein Al-Bayari last week, along with the Commander of the Royal Saudi Air Force, Turki Bin Bandar Al-Saud. The meeting was in Istanbul. Israel's Maariv newspaper quoted senior officials as saying that "the move could change the regional balance of power and strengthen the Sunni alliance."

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20241231-saudi-arabia-seeks-to-buy-100-turkish-fighter-jets/>

R. Syria

Israel strikes missile depots, air defences in Syria's Tartous region

Al-Jazeera, December 16, 2024

Israel launched overnight attacks on Syrian air defence systems and ammunition depots in its ongoing bid to disable the country's military capability following the recent removal of President Bashar al-Assad. War monitor, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), said on Monday that Israel targeted military sites in Syria's coastal Tartous region, including air defence units and "surface-to-surface missile depots", saying the attack featured "the heaviest strikes" in the area in more than a decade. "The explosions in Tartous were extremely loud," said Al Jazeera's Resul Serdar, reporting from the Syrian capital, Damascus. "Some experts are saying that might probably mean it was a chemical weapons production house."

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/12/16/israel-strikes-missile-depots-airdefences-in-syrias-tartus-region>

Russia pulling back but not out of Syria, sources say

The Economic Times, December 16, 2024

Russia is pulling back its military from the front lines in northern Syria and from posts in the Alawite Mountains but is not leaving its two main bases in the country after the fall of President Bashar al-Assad, four Syrian officials told Reuters. The ousting of Assad, who along with his late father, former President Hafez al-Assad, had forged a close alliance with Moscow, has

thrown the future of Russia's bases - the Hmeimim airbase in Latakia and the Tartous naval facility - into question. Satellite footage from Friday shows what appeared to be at least two Antonov AN124s, among the world's largest cargo planes, at the Hmeimim base with their nose cones open, apparently preparing to load up.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/russia-pulling-back-but-not-outof-syria-sourcessay/articleshow/116322308.cms?from=mdr>

S. Turkiye

A global brand: Turkish defence industry

Deniz Istikbal

Daily Sabah, December 23, 2024

The Turkish defence industry has become one of the most prominent brands of recent times. It has made significant contributions to the battlefield victories of the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK), attracting the attention of various countries. Developments in regions like Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Libya, Iraq and Syria have brought more visibility to this process, globalising the Turkish defence industry. According to international institutions, the Turkish defence industry is the 11th largest in the world, offering substantial opportunities to friendly and allied countries through its diverse production model. Unlike its Western counterparts, Türkiye focuses on technology sharing and self-reliance.

<https://www.dailysabah.com/opinion/oped/a-global-brand-turkish-defenseindustry>

Turkiye prioritizes defence cooperation with new Syrian administration

Merve Berker

Anadolu Agency, December 26, 2024

Turkiye sees defence cooperation with the new Syrian administration as an "important" step in the interest of both countries as well as regional stability, the

Turkish National Defence Ministry said. In the ministry's last weekly press briefing this year, spokesperson Zeki Akturk said bilateral cooperation with Syria is a priority for Turkiye in terms of both national and regional stability. Akturk, stressing that a new chapter has been opened in post-Assad Syria after a dark era, stated: "We support steps toward peace, tranquillity, and stability, and we affirm the necessity of preserving the territorial integrity and unitary structure of our southern neighbour. He added: "We reiterate our support for the new Syrian administration's call and efforts for a unified army, as well as our desire to work jointly with the Syrian administration on combating terrorism."

<https://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkiye/turkiyeprioritizes-defense-cooperation-with-newsyrian-administration/3434795>

Turkish defence industry reaches 70% domestic production capacity

Middle East Monitor, December 28, 2024

Turkiye's defence industry has reached 70% domestic production capacity in 2024, according to the Independent Industrialists and Businessmen's Association (MUSIAD)'s Turkiye Defence Industry 2024 report released Friday, Anadolu reports. It discusses the current situation and future projections of the domestic defence industry and states that significant successes have been achieved in strategic products, with an increase in domestic production capacity to 70%. The report includes an evaluation by the MUSIAD Defense Industry Board, which suggests that foreign dependency in engines and power transmission systems should be reduced.

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/2024-12-28-turkish-defense-industry-reaches-70-domestic-production-capacity/>

Turkey's Baykar to buy piaggio aerospace: Italy

The Defence Post, December 28, 2024

Italy's government gave the green light Friday for Turkish drone producer Baykar to buy Piaggio Aerospace, which was placed under state administration in 2018.

Commissioners managing the Italian firm, which builds and supports aircraft and engines for the private sector and the military, chose Baykar out of three international bidders, Italy's ministry of Enterprise said. Baykar's offer was considered "the most suitable to guarantee the interests of the employees and creditors of Piaggio Aero and Piaggio Aviation and to relaunch the group's industrial prospects," it said in a statement. No figure for the sale was given.

<https://thedefensepost.com/2024/12/28/tur-keys-baykar-piaggio-aerospace-italy/>

Turkiye plans to build three nuclear power plants by 2035

Alimat Aliyeva

Azer News, December 29, 2024

Turkish authorities plan to build three nuclear power plants in the country by 2035, Azernews reports. "We need two more large nuclear power plants: one in Sinop and the other in Thrace. The year 2025 will be a turning point for us, as we will determine the technology and models for these stations," said Alparslan Bayraktar, Turkiye's Deputy Minister of Energy and Natural Resources. Turkiye's first nuclear power plant, Akkuyu, is set to begin generating electricity in 2025. The first reactor is expected to produce 1,200 MW of electricity, which will meet approximately 2.5 per cent of Turkiye's energy needs. Once all four reactors are operational, Akkuyu will have a total capacity of 4,800 MW, providing around 10 per cent of the country's total energy consumption.

<https://www.azernews.az/region/235816.html>

T. Yemen

Israel struggles to counter Houthi attacks

Zein Khalil

Anadolu Agency, December 21, 2024

Israeli military forces have faced significant challenges in countering Houthi missile and drone attacks since the beginning of

the war on Gaza in October 2023, according to Israeli newspaper Maariv. The latest incident occurred earlier Saturday when a ballistic missile launched by the Houthis struck the Israeli capital Tel Aviv, injuring 20 people, according to local sources. The Houthi group claimed responsibility for the strike. Maariv's report said that the Houthis have launched over 200 ballistic missiles and 170 drones at Israeli targets, severely testing Israel's defence capabilities. It added that Israel's defence mechanisms, particularly the Iron Dome and other air defence systems, have struggled to cope with the evolving threat posed by the Houthis.

<https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middleeast/israel-struggles-to-counter-houthiattacks-report/3430801>

Southeast Asia

U. Philippines

Workshop on Nuclear Law Held in the Asia Pacific Region

Alix Troubat

IAEA Office of Legal Affairs, December 18, 2024

The IAEA held a workshop on nuclear law for the Asia and the Pacific this month in Manila, Philippines. The event was hosted by the government at the Philippine Nuclear Research Institute (PNRI). The workshop, which was attended by 40 participants representing 15 countries, aimed to strengthen the national nuclear legal frameworks of participating countries in Asia and the Pacific and to support them as they consider joining the relevant international legal instruments on nuclear safety, security, safeguards and liability. It was attended by participants from Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Viet Nam and Vanuatu.

<https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/news/workshop-on-nuclear-law-held-in-the-asia-pacific-region>

Nuclear energy seen as one of 'key solutions to climate challenges'

Paola Navarette

Manila Standard, December 20, 2024

Nuclear energy will not only provide a stable foundation for the power grid, but also a vital solution for the country's growing climate challenges, according to a nuclear advocacy group. Alpas Pinas, a non-stock, non-profit organization dedicated to promoting nuclear energy as a clean and reliable source of power, said nuclear energy could help "stave off climate change."

<https://manilastandard.net/tech/314538183/nuclear-energy-seen-as-one-of-key-solutions-to-climate-challenges.html>

V. Indonesia

Indonesian arm of Malaysia's Mr DIY climbs on market debut

Stefanno Sulaiman and Yantoultra Ngui

Reuters, December 19, 2024

The Indonesian arm of Malaysia-based home improvement retailer Mr DIY Group (MRDI.KL), opens new tab shook off a wobbly start to rise on its stock market debut on Thursday. The listing came against the backdrop of broad weakness in Asian stocks after the U.S. Federal Reserve cautioned it would ease the pace of rate cuts in the coming year. Bond yields rose and the dollar was perched near a two-year high on Thursday.

<https://www.reuters.com/markets/asia/indonesian-arm-malaysias-mr-diy-slumps-market-debut-2024-12-19/>

W. Malaysia

Imitation guns resembling real firearms sold online from RM150 spark safety concerns

Malay Mail, December 23, 2024

Criminals can purchase imitation guns for just RM150 through the Internet, raising

concerns over their use in crimes. Last year, nearly 150 crimes involved the use of gel-blasters guns. "These products resemble real firearms and can be easily acquired online," a seller told the New Straits Times. The report found that over the past two months, gel-blasters guns have been openly sold on e-commerce platforms and TikTok live sessions.

<https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2024/12/23/imitation-guns-resembling-real-firearms-sold-online-from-rm150-spark-safety-concerns/160774>

Police seize hundreds of imitation firearms in double operation success in Kota Baru and KL

Malay Mail, December 21, 2024

The Royal Malaysia Police (PDRM) have successfully executed two high-profile operations that led to the seizure of imitation firearms, endangered wildlife, and unregistered pharmaceutical products in Kelantan and Kuala Lumpur. In a statement, Bukit Aman Internal Security and Public Order Department (JKDNKA) director Datuk Seri Azmi Abu Kassim confirmed that the operations, carried out by the Wildlife Crime Bureau/Special Investigation Intelligence (WCB/PSK) of the Department of Internal Security and Public Order (JKDNKA), resulted in the seizure of items valued at an estimated RM436,971.00. The first operation took place on December 17 in Kota Baru, Kelantan, where a local man was arrested following the discovery of 32 imitation firearms.

<https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2024/12/21/police-seize-hundreds-of-imitation-firearms-in-double-operation-success-in-kota-baru-and-kl/160626>

X.Singapore

Singapore Scores a Kazakh Arms Deal

Andy Wong Ming Jun

Asia Sentinel, December 18, 2024

Singapore's low-profile military industrial complex recently returned to winning form

with the securing of an agreement with Kazakhstan for a joint venture deal in designing and building a new 8x8 amphibious infantry carrier vehicle based off Singapore's indigenous Terrex design. This marks a small but significant step change in Kazakh defense procurement, away from its traditional reliance on Russia, further eroding its political and military influence in the largest of the former Soviet "Stan" Central Asian states.

<https://www.asiasentinel.com/p/singapore-scores-kazakh-arms-deal>

East Asia

Y. Japan

Japan, U.S. to communicate on possible use of N-weapons; Deterrence guidelines stipulate framework for 1st time

The Yomiuri Shimbun

The Japan News, December 29, 2024

Japan and the United States will communicate regarding Washington's possible use of nuclear weapons in the event of a contingency, the two governments have stipulated in their first-ever guidelines for so-called extended deterrence, The Yomiuri Shimbun has learned. According to Japanese government sources, Japan will convey its requests to the United States via the Alliance Coordination Mechanism (ACM), through which the Self-Defense Forces and U.S. forces maintain contact with each other.

<https://japannews.yomiuri.co.jp/politics/defense-security/20241229-230410/>

Japan's security assistance does not match its ambitions

The Japan Times, December 17, 2024

Two years ago, on Dec. 16, Tokyo declared its intention to provide official security assistance (OSA) as an important part of its National Security Strategy, and the new plan was formalized in April last year. Compared with Japan's existing social and

economic development measures, official development assistance (ODA), OSA aims to strengthen the security and deterrence capacities of “like-minded countries.

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/commentary/2024/12/17/world/japan-security-assistance/>

Japan’s Space One Kairos rocket fails minutes after liftoff

Kantaro Komiya

Reuters, December 18, 2024

Japan’s Space One terminated the flight of its Kairos small rocket shortly after liftoff on Wednesday, marking the end of its second attempt in nine months to become the country’s first company to deliver a satellite to space with a privately-developed rocket. It is the latest in a series of recent setbacks for Japanese rocket development, even as the government pushes for 30 rocket launches annually and an 8 trillion yen (\$52 billion) space industry by the early 2030s to make Japan Asia’s space hub.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/japans-space-one-says-kairos-rocket-flight-terminated-after-liftoff-2024-12-18/>

Z. South Korea

South Korea develops novel nuclide separation technology

World Nuclear News, December 18, 2024

The Korea Atomic Energy Research Institute says it has developed a new concept for the world’s first nuclide separation device that employs robots and sensors. In order to safely manage radioactive waste, radionuclide analysis must be conducted to determine what radionuclides are present within it. This analysis is generally divided into three processes: preprocessing, separation, and measurement. Nuclide separation is the process of adding a reagent that reacts with a specific nuclide to a sample of melted radioactive waste to separate each nuclide.

<https://world-nuclear-news.org/articles/south-korea-develops-novel-nuclide-separation-technology#:~:text=The%20Korea%20Atomic%20>

Energy%20Research,that%20employs%20robots%20and%20sensors.

South Korea proposes creation of KSMC, modeled after TSMC

Amy Fan, Taipei Sherri Wang,

Digitimes Asia, December 26, 2024

South Korea’s semiconductor industry is considering the creation of KSMC amid claims of facing its biggest crisis ever, prompting calls for KRW300 trillion (US\$207 billion) in government financial support. The severity of this crisis is exemplified by Samsung’s current challenges. The tech giant’s advanced semiconductor technology development has shown signs of stagnation. The company’s recent relaxation of its traditionally strict union prohibition has introduced new operational uncertainties. Additionally, mounting criticism over Samsung’s organizational culture has contributed to an accelerating talent exodus.

<https://www.digitimes.com/news/a20241225VL207/tsmc-taiwan-semiconductor-industry-technology-government.html>

AA. North Korea

North Korea unveils advanced frigate design likely equipped with guided missiles

Dimitris Mitsopoulos

Naval News, December 30, 2024

In the summer of 2023, North Korea unveiled a cruise missile-armed corvette, marking a significant development in its naval capabilities. Now, just days before the start of 2025, the country has revealed a new frigate design with more than double the displacement of the +1,500-ton Amnok-class corvette and boasting advanced features. Footage aired by state media Korean Central Television (KCTV) on Sunday (watch the video starting at 03:11.40) included four photographs showing the Supreme Leader of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) Kim Jong Un inspecting an

unidentified large warship under construction at the Nampo Shipyard for the Korean People's Army Navy.

<https://www.navalnews.com/naval-news/2024/12/north-korea-unveils-advanced-frigate-design-likely-equipped-with-guided-missiles/>

Kim Jong Un opens scallop farm to bring 'riches' to nuclear submarine town

Colin Zwirko

Nk News, December 30, 2024

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un inaugurated a pet project to build a seafood farm designed to serve as a "new model base" for the nation in Sinpho over the weekend, just up the road from the factory producing his top-priority nuclear missile submarines. The Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported Monday that Kim oversaw a ceremony to open the Sinpho City Offshore Farm two days prior, a factory producing consumer products from "kelp, scallops, sea cucumbers, sea urchins and other things."

<https://www.nknews.org/2024/12/kim-jong-un-opens-scallop-farm-to-bring-riches-to-nuclear-submarine-town/>

Central Asia

AB. Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan named most peaceful country in Eurasia in 2024 Global Peace Index

Dana Omirgazy

The Astana Times, December 26, 2024

The 2024 Global Peace Index (GPI), produced by the Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP), ranked Kazakhstan as the most peaceful country in Eurasia. The 18th edition of the GPI evaluates 163 independent states and territories on their levels of peacefulness, encompassing 99.7% of the global population. Among the region's 12 countries, Kazakhstan achieved the most significant improvement in peacefulness. Its overall score increased by 10.8%, propelling

the country up the rankings from 78th to 59th out of 163 countries.

<https://astanatimes.com/2024/12/kazakhstan-named-most-peaceful-country-in-eurasia-in-2024-global-peace-index/>

Russian air defense missile caused plane crash over Kazakhstan, Azerbaijani government sources claim

Tim Zadorozhnyy

The Kyiv Independent, December 27, 2024

A Russian surface-to-air missile caused the crash of the Azerbaijan Airlines flight near Aktau, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijani government sources reportedly confirmed to Euronews on December 26. The plane, en route from Baku to Grozny, carried 67 passengers, including 42 Azerbaijani citizens, 16 Russians, six Kazakhs, and three Kyrgyz citizens. Thirty-eight people have been confirmed dead. The missile was fired from a Russian Pantsir-S air defense system, the Baku-based outlet AnewZ reported, citing official Azerbaijani government sources. The missile allegedly targeted Flight 8432 during drone activity over Grozny on December 25.

<https://kyivindependent.com/azerbaijan-airlines-crash-in-kazakhstan-allegedly-linked-to-russian-missile-strike-euronews-reports/>

AC. Kyrgyzstan

UNDP and the secretariat of the security council of the Kyrgyz Republic hold seminar for media representatives on small arms control

UNDP, December 20, 2024

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in the Kyrgyz Republic, in partnership with the Secretariat of the Security Council of the Kyrgyz Republic, is hosting a two-day workshop for media representatives focused on small arms and light weapons control. This seminar is part of the SALIENT project, "Strengthening Small

Arms and Light Weapons Control in the Kyrgyz Republic."The event brings together key stakeholders, including UNDP Resident Representative in the Kyrgyz Republic Alexandra Solovieva, Secretary of the Security Council of the Kyrgyz Republic Marat Imankulov, as well as representatives from government agencies, civil society, and the media.

<https://www.undp.org/kyrgyzstan/press-releases/undp-and-secretariat-security-council-kyrgyz-republic-hold-seminar-media-representatives-small-arms-control>

AD. Tajikistan

Russia to build ground receiving station in Tajikistan

Central Asia News, December 19, 2024

The State Duma of Russia adopted the Law on ratification of the Russia-Tajikistan agreement on space cooperation at the plenary session. The document, signed in the summer of 2023, envisages implementing joint projects in the peaceful uses of outer space, Sputnik reports.

The key project will be the construction of a station that will receive and process Earth remotely-sensed data in Tajikistan According to Deputy Director General of Roscosmos Sergey Saveliev, the contract is expected to be signed in the near future.

<http://en.centralasia.news/31651-russia-to-build-ground-receiving-station-in-tajikistan.html>

Central Asia's nuclear future: Opportunities, Challenges and Geopolitics

Nagima Abuova

The Astana Times, December 17, 2024

The National Bureau of Asian Research hosted a panel discussion titled A New Start: Central Asia's Nuclear Potential & Peril in Washington, D.C, on December 12 to explore the critical economic, environmental, energy, and geopolitical dimensions of nuclear politics in Central Asia. Kazakhstan made history on Oct.6 by holding a referendum on its nuclear energy

program, an unprecedented step for a nation that once dismantled the world's fourth-largest nuclear arsenal and bore the scars of Soviet nuclear tests. This shift signifies a renewed focus on its status as the world's largest uranium producer and the possibilities of clean nuclear energy.

<https://astanatimes.com/2024/12/central-asias-nuclear-future-opportunities-challenges-and-geopolitics/>

Kazakhstan's return to nuclear power: TCA in association with American foreign Policy council hosts inaugural burgut expert talk

Jonathan Campion

The Times Of Central Asia, December 19, 2024

On October 6 of this year, the people of Kazakhstan participated in a referendum to decide whether nuclear power should become a part of their daily lives, or whether the haunting legacy of atomic testing would continue to limit the country's progress in this area. The official preliminary results, released on October 7, showed that 71.12% of participants agreed to the construction of a nuclear power plant in Kazakhstan with a voter turnout of 63.66%.

<https://timesca.com/kazakhstans-return-to-nuclear-power-tca-in-association-with-american-foreign-policy-council-hosts-inaugural-burgut-expert-talk/>

Rosatom exits key uranium ventures in Kazakhstan amid strategic shifts

Aliya Haidar

The Times Of Central Asia, December 21, 2024

Uranium One Group, a subsidiary of State Atomic Energy Corporation Rosatom. has announced its withdrawal from uranium projects in Kazakhstan. This decision coincides with Kazakhstan's ongoing selection of operators for a consortium tasked with constructing the country's first nuclear power plant. According to

Kazatomprom (KAP), Uranium One Group has sold its 49.979% stake in the Zarechnoye joint venture to SNURDC Astana Mining Company Limited. The ultimate beneficiary of the acquiring party is China's State Nuclear Uranium Resources Development Co., Ltd. Kazatomprom retains its 49.979% stake in the venture.

<https://timesca.com/rosatom-exits-key-uranium-ventures-in-kazakhstan-amid-strategic-shifts/>

AE. Uzbekistan

IAEA reviews the safety of Uzbekistan's 65-Year-Old research reactor

Selma Ali

IAEA Department of Safety and Security, December 21, 2024

Uzbekistan's sole operating research reactor hosted an IAEA peer review mission on the safety aspects of long-term operation for research reactors last month. The mission's team of experts recognized Uzbekistan's commitment to managing the ageing reactor to ensure its safe and effective operation and highlighted the successful implementation of several refurbishment and modernization projects. The WWR-SM research reactor, located in the Ulugbek settlement near Tashkent, is owned and operated by the Institute of Nuclear Physics of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan and is primarily used for medical radioisotope production.

<https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/news/iaea-reviews-the-safety-of-uzbekistans-65-year-old-research-reactor>

AF. Libya

Russia transfers advanced air defence missiles to Libya

Abdulkader Assad

The Libya Observer, December 24, 2024

ýView USGlobal website reported that Russia was transferring S-400 and S-300 missiles from Syria to eastern Libya. The website said that there were reports that Russia had been transferring advanced air defense systems and military equipment

from its military base in Syria to Libya. Russia has reportedly been discussing long-term leasing options for ports in eastern Libya, such as Benghazi and Tobruk, since last year after meeting with Haftar.

<https://libyaobserver.ly/news/russia-transfers-advanced-air-defense-missiles-libya>

Reports claim S-400, S-300 missiles moved to Libya

Libyan Express, December 24, 2024

Media outlets are reporting alleged Russian military equipment transfers from Syria to eastern Libya, with ViewUS Global claiming movements of S-400 and S-300 missile systems. According to the investigation, Russia has explored port access in eastern Libya, specifically in Benghazi and Tobruk, following reported discussions with regional forces. Al Jazeera English has suggested Libya could serve as an alternative location for Russian forces currently stationed in Syria, noting potential implications for regional security and NATO interests. Russia deployed the S-400 system to Syria in 2015, following the downing of a Russian Su-24 aircraft by Turkish forces.

<https://www.libyanexpress.com/reports-claim-s-400-s-300-missiles-moved-to-libya/>

The Grand Mufti: Libyans must fight the Russians and drive them out

The Libya Observer, December 20, 2024

Libya's Grand Mufti Sheikh Al-Sadiq Al-Gharyani has urged all Libyans to unite and fight the Russians who arrived in the eastern part of the country after fleeing Syria, saying they are not civilians but combatants. In his weekly program on Tanasuh TV, the Mufti said the Russians have expanded their presence in Libya and started arriving in the country with their military equipment from Syria. They are hosted by the eastern warlord Khalifa Haftar and his sons.

<https://libyaobserver.ly/news/grand-mufti-libyans-must-fight-russians-and-drive-them-out>

AG. Nigeria

'Nigeria needs a law on technology transfer to achieve growth'

Adamu Abuh, Abuja

The Guardian, December 28, 2024

Penultimate week, the House of Representatives deliberated on the National Commission for Technology Transfer, Promotion, and Acquisition (Establishment) Bill, which seeks to leverage Nigeria's huge and active population to create jobs for youths, process the country's vast raw materials into finished goods/products, increase its Gross Domestic product (GDP) and ensure the transfer of technology to the country. The sponsor of the bill, Clement Jimbo, representing Abak/Etim Ekpo/Ika Federal Constituency of Akwa Ibom State, explained that the move is coming against the backdrop of the disclosure by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) that over 200 million cell phones, over 500,000 solar systems, over 12 million cars, millions of cameras, microphones, laptops and remote controls are currently in use in Nigeria. The lawmaker, while explaining the general principles of the bill, which has scaled the second reading on the floor of the House of Representatives, wondered why Nigeria has not been able to leverage the production of batteries, which is required in the aforementioned products imported into the country in large quantities. He argued that since it has been established that the major ingredient in the production of battery is lithium, which is in large and high grade quantities in Abuja, Nasarawa, Kogi, Ekiti, Kwara, and Cross River states, there is an urgent need to compel manufacturers of the listed products to rely on Nigerian made batteries.

<https://guardian.ng/politics/nigeria-needs-a-law-on-technology-transfer-to-achieve-growth/>

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