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IRAN: APPOINTMENT OF SAUDI CROWN PRINCE A 'SOFT COUP'

June 22, 2017 Arutz Sheva 7 reported: "Iranian state media on Wednesday blasted the appointment of Mohammed Bin Salman to the position of crown prince and successor to Saudi Arabia's King Salman, calling it a 'soft coup'.

'Soft coup in Saudi Arabia/Son becomes the successor of the father,' read the headline on the Iranian state TV website, as quoted by Reuters.

Iran's leadership was critical of comments by Prince Mohammed last month that the 'battle' should be taken into Iran.

Iran, which is predominantly Shiite Muslim, and Saudi Arabia, which is mostly Sunni, are rivals which compete for power and influence across the region.

Iran recently blamed Saudi Arabia for attacks on the Iranian parliament and the shrine of the founder of the Islamic Republic, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, which were claimed by the Islamic State (ISIS)..."

VENEZUELA'S SHORTAGES SPUR PERILOUS SEA JOURNEYS

June 22, 2017 wsj.com reported: "Struggling to find basic staples in her own country, Mariana Revilla and five neighbors here took to crossing a treacherous 60-mile gulf under the cover of night to the island of Trinidad.

On her last trip, they made a good haul, securing seven tons of flour, sugar and cooking oil from the former British colony in exchange for fresh shrimp from home. But on the way back their rickety 46-foot boat capsized, leaving Ms. Revilla and her companions clinging to the wreckage for nearly two days before she and two others ran out of strength and drowned, according to survivors. Her stepfather says her 3-year-old daughter, Isabel, keeps asking, "Where is my mama?"

As Venezuela's economy crumbles, an increasingly desperate people are doing all they can to get food and medicine. Here that can involve great peril. Venezuelans make trips as long as 10 hours to hawk shellfish, plastic chairs, house doors, ceramic pots and even exotic animals like iguanas and brightly feathered macaws. They are exchanged for basic goods—rice, detergent, diapers—that Caracas is increasingly unable to provide.

"It's thanks to Trinidad that we have any food here," said 49-year-old Angela Caballero, a resident of this town on a peninsula that extends toward the island. "If that didn't come, we'd be dead."

A decade ago, Venezuela's late strongman, Hugo Chávez, promoted bartering to boost food production and create "a socialist market, a market of equals." But today, many of his compatriots in far-flung towns like Irapa have a different take on that direct approach to the marketplace.

"This is savage capitalism," town councilman Guillermo Mendoza said. "The role of the government in this is to just keep quiet."

Venezuelan and Trinidadian officials didn't respond to requests for comment on the cross-border barter trade. Such evidence of economic desperation is an embarrassment for Mr. Chávez's heir, President Nicolás Maduro, who denies the country is in a crisis."..."



NATO JET APPROACHES RUSSIAN DEFENCE MINISTER'S PLANE

June 21, 2017 spacedaily.com reported: "A NATO military plane on Wednesday approached the plane of Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu above the Baltic Sea, Russian news agencies reported, the third such encounter in three days. A NATO fighter jet tried to approach Shoigu's plane but a Russian escort plane intervened to defend it, Interfax news agency reported, citing journalists accompanying the minister.

The escort plane, a Sukhoi SU-27, demonstrated it was armed by rocking its wings, after which the NATO plane flew off, Interfax reported. Russian state television aired defence ministry footage of the incident, reporting that it took place over neutral waters.

NATO and national air forces decided to monitor flights after last week tracking "an unusually large number of Russian military aircraft flying over the Baltic Sea," a NATO spokesman said in a statement sent to AFP.

NATO insisted the crew's actions were "routine" to identify the plane while "maintaining a safe distance at all times" and then break away.

Shoigu on Wednesday was flying to Kaliningrad, a highly militarised Russian exclave on the Baltic Sea, to take part in a meeting with defence officials there. At the meeting, he warned that "the situation near Russia's western borders is tending to get worse," the ministry said on its website."..."

GERMAN DEFENCE COMMISSIONER VOWS: 'IN THE END THERE WILL BE A EUROPEAN ARMY'

June 21, 2017 Breitbart.com reported: "As negotiations between Britain and the EU over Brexit get underway, a senior German politician has declared that a 'European Army' is inevitable. Hans-Peter Bartels, the parliamentary commissioner for the Armed Forces, insisted: 'In the end, there will be a European Army.'

Bartel alleged the age-old system of national armies accountable to national governments was 'disorganised, technically fragmented and duplicate structures unnecessarily'. He claimed Europe's peoples 'do not want to go down the solitary national path anymore. Not in Germany, not in the Netherlands, not in the Czech Republic and not in Italy.'

He added: 'Every step in the right direction [towards an EU army] is important.'..."

REPORT: TURKEY STIRRING UP TENSIONS ON TEMPLE MOUNT

June 21, 2017 Arutz Sheva 7 reported: "Turkey is spending tens of millions of dollars to gain a foothold inside Israel's capital city and to stir up tensions between Arab residents and Israelis, a new investigative report claims.

According to the report, set to be published in full by journalist Nadav Shragi this coming Friday in Yisrael Hashavua, since 2004 some \$63 million from Turkish NGOs and the Turkish government have gone to organizations in eastern Jerusalem dedicated to 'defending and strengthening the Muslim heritage and character of Jerusalem.

Some of the funds have been transferred by the Turkish government through the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA), a government agency led by Dr. Serdar Cam. Cam is a close ally of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

The Turkish government has forged ties with radical Islamist elements inside Israel, including the northern branch of the Islamic Movement in Israel, led by Hamas-supporter Raed Salah, and former Mufti of Jerusalem, Ekrima Said Sabri, a Holocaust denier who threatened a religious war if the US Embassy in Israel was moved to Jerusalem..."

U.S. DETECTS ACTIVITY AT NORTH KOREA NUCLEAR SITE

June 21, 2017 Arutz Sheva 7 reported: "U.S. spy satellites have detected new activity at North Korea's underground nuclear test site for the first time in several weeks, two American officials told CNN on Tuesday.

The activity appears to involve some modifications around one of the tunnel entrances to an underground test area, according to the officials.

They said it is not yet clear if the activity indicates a sixth nuclear test is imminent, but noted there is concern that North Korea could set off a test during Wednesday's visit to Washington by top Chinese diplomats and military officials.

U.S. officials have known that the site is ready to conduct an underground test for some time, according to CNN.

Two senior officials with direct knowledge also told the network that military options for North Korea have recently been updated, and will be presented to President Donald Trump for a decision to act if there is a nuclear test..."

St. LOUIS CARDINALS REFUSE TO BOW TO LGBT DEMANDS TO PUNISH CHRISTIANS

June 20, 2017 Breitbart.com reported: "The St. Louis Cardinals have sponsored 'Christian Day' for 30 years, but recently gay activists have begun to pressure the Major League Baseball team to cancel the special day, or at the very least to remove former Cardinals star Lance Berkman as the event's spokesman. To its credit the team has rejected the demands.

Gay activists are upset that the Cardinals have allowed Berkman to be the spokesman of 'Christian Day' because he recently spoke out against transgender boys posing as girls in school locker rooms. As Paul Mirengoff reported, Berkman said:

The issue is, what to do about a 15 or 16-year-old boy who thinks he's a girl and wants to shower with the girls. Maybe he is [transgender], maybe he's confused. But I wouldn't want him in the shower with my daughters. We shouldn't have the rights of 2 percent of the population trump the rights of the other 98 percent..."

REPORT: ONLY 1 OUT OF 7 IRANIAN MISSILES REACHED ITS TARGET

June 20, 2017 Arutz Sheva 7 reported: "Only one out of the seven missiles which Iran fired at ISIS targets in Syria yesterday reached its target, Channel 2 reported.

'Iran is trying to play at being a great power,' explained Channel 2 Middle East analyst Ehud Ya'ari. 'There was no operational need' to attack ISIS from within Iranian territory.'

The Iranian military launched a barrage of medium-range missiles on ISIS strongholds across eastern Syria Sunday night, in response to a double terror attack in Tehran earlier this month which left 17 dead and dozens more wounded... According to Ya'ari, three of the seven missiles did not even reach Syrian territory, and instead landed in neighboring Iraq. One missile managed to strike within a few hundred meters of its target, but still missed. A fifth missile landed in the Deir Ezzor region, which was far from the ISIS position it had been intended for..."

NATO HOLDS FIRST WAR GAMES ON VULNERABLE BALTIC CORRIDOR

June 19, 2017 spacedaily.com reported: NATO has held its first war games focused on defending the Suwalki Gap, a land corridor critical to the security of its Baltic allies, officials said Monday, amid tensions with Russia.

The narrow stretch of the Polish-Lithuanian border is sandwiched between Russia's highly militarised Kaliningrad exclave and Belarus, a close Kremlin ally.

Military strategists warn it is the Achilles' heel of NATO's eastern flank: its capture would cut off the alliance's three Baltic members -- Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania -- and so shatter its credibility.

The gap, depending on the military analysis, varies from 60 to 100 kilometres (32 to 65 miles).

Moscow has repeatedly denied any territorial ambitions and said a recent NATO build-up in the Baltic region on Russia's border has upset the balance of power.

Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė said Monday the drills -- focused on bringing allied forces across the Suwalki Gap from Poland into her country -- sent a "strong message of NATO readiness and commitment to ensure security of the region."

"Facing threats, we are confident in ourselves, our allies and collective defence capabilities," she said in a statement to AFP.

Fears that Russia could attempt an attack on the Suwalki Gap surged after Moscow's 2014 annexation of Crimea from Ukraine, a move which sent East-West relations to their lowest point since the Cold War..."

