

Headlines:

- **Russia Bolsters its Submarine Fleet, and Tensions with US Rise**
- **In Saudi Visit, Obama Works to Calm Gulf Tensions with US**
- **Pakistan's Army Chief Sacks Six Corrupt Officers**

Details:

Russia Bolsters its Submarine Fleet, and Tensions with US Rise

Russian attack submarines, the most in two decades, are prowling the coastlines of Scandinavia and Scotland, the Mediterranean Sea and the North Atlantic in what Western military officials say is a significantly increased presence aimed at contesting American and NATO undersea dominance. Adm. Mark Ferguson, the United States Navy's top commander in Europe, said last fall that the intensity of Russian submarine patrols had risen by almost 50 percent over the past year, citing public remarks by the Russian Navy Chief, Adm. Viktor Chirkov. Analysts say that tempo has not changed since then. The patrols are the most visible sign of a renewed interest in submarine warfare by President Vladimir V. Putin, whose government has spent billions of dollars for new classes of diesel and nuclear-powered attack submarines that are quieter, better armed and operated by more proficient crews than in the past. The tensions are part of an expanding rivalry and military buildup, with echoes of the Cold War, between the United States and Russia. Moscow is projecting force not only in the North Atlantic but also in Syria and Ukraine and building up its nuclear arsenal and cyberwarfare capacities in what American military officials say is an attempt to prove its relevance after years of economic decline and retrenchment. Independent American military analysts see the increased Russian submarine patrols as a legitimate challenge to the United States and NATO. Even short of tensions, there is the possibility of accidents and miscalculations. But whatever the threat, the Pentagon is also using the stepped-up Russian patrols as another argument for bigger budgets for submarines and anti-submarine warfare. "We're back to the great powers competition," Adm. John M. Richardson, the chief of naval operations, said in an interview. But Moscow's recently revised national security and maritime strategies emphasize the need for Russian maritime forces to project power and to have access to the broader Atlantic Ocean as well as the Arctic. Russian submarines and spy ships now operate near the vital undersea cables that carry almost all global Internet communications, raising concerns among some American military and intelligence officials that the Russians could attack those lines in times of tension or conflict. Russia is also building an undersea unmanned drone capable of carrying a small, tactical nuclear weapon to use against harbors or coastal areas, American military and intelligence analysts said. And, like the United States, Russia operates larger nuclear-powered submarines that carry long-range nuclear missiles and spend months at a time hiding in the depths of the ocean. Those submarines, although lethal, do not patrol like the attack submarines do, and do not pose the same degree of concern to American Naval officials. "In the Russian naval structure, submarines are the crown jewels for naval combat power," said Magnus Nordenman, director of the Atlantic Council's trans-Atlantic security initiative in Washington. "The US and NATO haven't focused on anti-submarine operations lately, and they've let that skill deteriorate." That has allowed for a rapid Russian resurgence, Western and American officials say, partly in response to what they say is Russia's fear of being hemmed in. "I don't

think many people understand the visceral way Russia views NATO and the European Union as an existential threat,” Admiral Ferguson said in an interview.[Source: New York Times]

The age of America’s unipolarity is fast coming to end, and the world is witnessing a new period of multipolarity. Great powers like Russia, China and others are openly challenging America’s hegemony in various parts of the world. What remains to be seen is whether the Muslim world can take advantage of this great power rivalry, and emerge as a great power. For over a thousand years the Khilafah (Caliphate) was the world leading state and it will again emerge to take its rightful position.

Allah (swt) says:

﴿هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَىٰ الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُونَ﴾ **“It is He Who has sent His Messenger (Muhammad SAW) with guidance and the religion of truth (Islam), to make it superior over all religions even though the Mushrikun (polytheists, pagans, idolaters, disbelievers in the Oneness of Allah) hate (it).” [TMQ: 9:33]**

In Saudi Visit, Obama Works to Calm Gulf Tensions with US

President Barack Obama strained to ease tensions with Persian Gulf allies Thursday, pledging US help in confronting Iran and other security threats. Yet he failed to win the commitments he sought to boost economic aid to Iraq. Obama's trip to Saudi Arabia — the fourth and probably last of his presidency — did not result in any major breakthroughs. Obama said Gulf leaders attending the regional summit had agreed to step up the campaign against the Islamic State group, but did not lay out specifics. He described the talks as a chance to clear up misperceptions among allies, insisting the US and Gulf partners had "tactical differences" but similar goals. "A lot of the strain was always overblown," Obama said as he closed a two-day trip here. Saudi Arabia, like other Sunni-led countries in the region, has been wary of Obama's nuclear deal with Iran and skeptical of his approach in Syria. Obama came to the Gulf Cooperation Council meeting not only to urge its members to do more to tackle thorny security challenges but also to offer his own reassurance. His brief visit, though, illustrated the limits of what can be achieved when Gulf budgets are stretched by a slump in oil prices and the region is eagerly looking beyond Obama to his successor. Obama leaves office in January after eight years that Saudi leaders saw as heralding a shift in traditional US loyalties away from Saudi Arabia and toward Iran. Obama, in meetings with Saudi King Salman, the ruling emirs of Qatar and Kuwait and others, appealed for more financial and political support to help Iraq. Yet the leaders appeared reluctant to invest until Iraq's government overcomes a political crisis and better integrates Sunnis into the process. In a shift in tone from just a day earlier, Obama said the US and its Gulf partners should wait to see whether Iraq can resolve the crisis before committing more aid. He warned that the paralysis is impeding US-led efforts to defeat the Islamic State group and reconstruct war-damaged Iraq. "Right now in Baghdad, there's some big challenges," Obama said. "Until that's settled, I think it's important for us to make sure that any additional stabilization dollars that we put in are going to be effectively spent." Obama praised Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi as a "good partner" for the US but said he was concerned about his grip on power. Increasing pressure on Iraqi leaders, Obama said it was vital for the country to finalize a Cabinet so the nation can focus on profound long-term problems. "They've got a lot on their plate," Obama said. "Now is not the time for government gridlock or bickering." Ben Rhodes, Obama's deputy national security adviser, said there was no discussion of calls in the US for the release of 28 pages of a report on the Sept. 11 attacks believed to shed light on possible Saudi connections. The controversy has led some in Congress to push legislation allowing

families of 9/11 victims to sue the Saudi government for compensation. The Gulf States remain concerned about Obama's willingness to negotiate with Shiite powerhouse Iran, amid fears that the deal to curb Iranian moves toward nuclear weapons will lead to a rebalancing of regional stances at their expense. Obama said the US would live up to its commitments under the deal to grant sanctions relief to Tehran while remaining vigilant about destabilizing activities including arms shipments to Houthi rebels in Yemen that the US has helped intercept. "None of our nations have an interest in conflict with Iran," Obama said. [Source: ABC News]

When will the rulers of the GCC learn that their safety is in severing all forms of relations with America? Allah (swt) says: ﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا عَدُوِّي وَعَدُوَّكُمْ أَوْلِيَاءَ تُلْفُونَ إِلَيْهِمْ﴾
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“Oh you who have Iman, do not take My enemies and your enemies as allies, extending to them affection while they have disbelieved in what came to you of the truth, having driven out the Prophet and yourselves [only] because you believe in Allah , your Lord.” [TMQ: 60:1]

Pakistan's Army Chief Sacks Six Corrupt Officers

In an extraordinary development, Army Chief General Raheel Sharif has reportedly dismissed at least six senior officers of Pakistan Army on corruption charges. All the officers – one lieutenant general, one major general, three brigadiers and one colonel – had their postings in Frontier Corps Balochistan. Military sources said that the decision was a result of a long process of inquiry, but the fate of these officers was sealed by the army chief yesterday. Although, there has been no official confirmation from the military media wing Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) until filing of this report, it was learnt through credible sources in the military establishment that they were involved in large scale smuggling and corruption. According to the sources, the senior most in the list of dismissed officers is Lt-Gen Obaidullah Khattak who has served as Commandant FC Balochistan and was last posted as Inspector General Arms and Weapons at General Headquarters. The second senior-most dismissed officer is Major-Gen Ejaz Shahid, who was last posted as Commandant FC Balochistan. The list also included three brigadiers – Brig Asad Shahzada, Brig Saifullah and Brig Amir – and a colonel. Sources said that Army Chief General Raheel Sharif took the decision in the light of finding of a thorough investigation conducted by then Adjutant Gen Zubair Mahmood Hayat. The charged officers were asked to return all earnings accumulated through corruption and except pensions, all their perks and privileges have been withdrawn from them. The move comes two days after the powerful Army Chief called for across the board accountability at a ceremony in Kohat at a time when Panama Papers leaks had hit country's political horizon, and hours before the arrival of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif from London after medical checkup. General Raheel had said that elimination of corruption is essential for country's solidarity, integrity, prosperity and the future generations, and offered all out cooperation of the armed forces to purge the country of scourge of corruption. Importantly, he said corruption had to be uprooted to fight terrorism effectively and meaningfully. [Source: *The Nation*]

These officers were dismissed from areas where Pakistan is struggling with insurgencies. Unless the findings of the inquiry are made public, doubts will linger about the real motives behind the removal of the officers.