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IRAN LAUDS PAK FOR NOT JOINING YEMEN WAR

Iran's Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Ali Shamkhani lauded Pakistan for refusing to participate in Saudi-led airstrikes against Houthi fighters in Yemen. Saudi Arabia has been engaging in daily airstrikes since March in support of former President, Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi and his forces. Iran and Pakistan, which is a longtime ally of Saudi Arabia, have traditionally had frosty relations, including skirmishes at their border. (*Iran Daily*, October 30, 2015)

AFGHANISTAN SEEKING ARMS FROM RUSSIA

Afghanistan has requested military assistance from Russia to help counter growing internal threats and instability in the country. While Moscow has said Russia will not put boots on the ground in Afghanistan, it is considering the provision of artillery, small arms, and helicopters. Russia has an interest in maintaining stability in Afghanistan as Taliban-affected areas are located near former Soviet Central Asian Republics. To highlight this point, the Taliban recently seized Darqad District in Takhar province on the border with Tajikistan. In the struggle to retake control of the district, six Afghan soldiers and two militants were killed. The attack comes weeks after the Taliban's temporary seizure of the district capital of Kunduz, the first district capital the Taliban has taken since the war began. (*International Business Times*, October 26, 2015)

PAKISTAN GETS FREE JETS FROM TURKEY

Pakistan and Turkey have signed a new defense deal that will see the transfer of 37 trainer-cum-fighter-jets from Turkey to Pakistan free of charge. Turkey's Defense Secretary, Lieutenant General (Retired) Muhammed Alam Khattak, stated that Pakistan and Turkey share a brotherly relationship which could hopefully lead to greater strategic cooperation. This deal comes as Turkey seeks to increase cooperation between the two countries, primarily to win support within the Muslim world for its fight against ISIS and Kurdish separatists. (*The Economic Times*, October 29, 2015)

INDIA, SRI LANKA BEGIN DRILLS

India and Sri Lanka have begun joint naval exercises at the Port of Trincomalee on the east coast of Sri Lanka. The port has assumed strategic significance as both China and India have in recent years sought to invest in facilities there. The drills will mark the fourth edition of the SLINEX exercises that began in 2005. India has also offered to sell Sri Lanka its indigenous Tejas Light Combat Aircraft to counter a Pakistani bid to sell Sri Lanka its JF-17 fighter jet. Sri Lanka says it will determine which fighter to choose based on a variety of factors including alliance building and financial and technical considerations. (*The Tribune*, October 28, 2015; *New India Express*, October 26, 2015)