

Headlines:

- **Russia Warns US of Pending Attack in Syrian Area with US Troops**
- **Will Saudi Arabia Cease to Be the Center of Islam?**
- **US Foresees a 'Respectful' Relationship with Pakistan**

Details:

Russia Warns US of Pending Attack in Syrian Area with US Troops

Russia has warned the US military twice in the last week that its forces, along with Syrian regime units, are prepared to attack in an area where dozens of US troops are located, according to several US defense officials. Russia claims that there are militants in the area protected by US troops. Moscow's declaration has sharply raised US commanders' concerns that American forces would be at risk if a Russian attack goes forward, CNN has learned. And it has sparked US warnings to Moscow not to challenge the US military presence. Several US defense officials have told CNN that concerns center on a US-led anti-ISIS coalition base at At Tanf. US troops help monitor a 55-kilometer (34-mile) exclusion zone around At Tanf. Given its location near the borders of Syria, Jordan and Iraq, the At Tanf garrison is seen as a key strategic location as the US, Iran and Russia compete for influence in the region. There is concern the Russians could use aircraft or their naval warships in the eastern Mediterranean to launch a missile attack against what they say are militants, sparking a confrontation that could inadvertently draw in US forces if Russian targeting is not precise. So far, no buildup of Russian ground forces has been observed in recent days, officials said. US officials would not say how Moscow conveyed its warning to Washington. Defense Secretary James Mattis and Gen. Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, are aware of the latest intelligence, officials said. US troops in the area, as always, have the right of self-defense if they are attacked and would not need to ask permission from higher levels of the government before acting. While the situation is described by one US official as "concerning," there clearly is US interest in discussing Moscow's warning to ensure the Russians have a clear view of any potential US military response. [Source: CNN]

It is very clear that both the US and Russia have worked together to place all of the Islamic fighters in Idlib. Now both powers would like to see the Islamic fighters eliminated but it needs to be done in a manner that leaves Syria's post war settlement favorable for both US and Russia.

Will Saudi Arabia Cease to Be the Center of Islam?

Saudi Arabia, or the Arabian Peninsula before the formation of the modern kingdom, has been and remains a place both central and marginal to Muslims around the world. Even as Mecca and Medina represent the most important sites of Muslim pilgrimage, the vision of the holy cities as remote and perilous is still reinforced by the occasional stampede of pilgrims during the Hajj. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman of Saudi Arabia has been moving fast to make his country a political and military power for the first time since its founding. He has engaged in a pitiless war with Yemen, imposed a blockade on Qatar and embraced increasingly aggressive positions toward Iran and other rivals. Whether or not Prince Mohammed's strategy succeeds, it will transform Saudi Arabia's religious status in the Muslim world. In the late 19th century, for the first time since the Prophet Muhammad's day, the Arabian Peninsula was placed at the center of Islam's modern geography as Ottoman power waned over the Middle East and British influence extended outward from its economic and military base in India. The "Muslim world" emerged as a category that provided a novel way in which to imagine a religion in cartographic terms. In 1882, a British diplomat and Arabist, Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, published a book titled "The Future of Islam." He foresaw the Muslim world's colonization by European powers and sought to bring Islam under the protection of the British Empire, which possessed more Muslim subjects in India than the Ottomans did in their empire. Mr. Blunt was among the first to make an argument that

eventually redefined the geography of Islam by placing Arabia at its center. He argued that Istanbul and its Turkish emperor could never be true Muslim leaders, a role he saw as reserved for Arabs and their homeland. Istanbul, the capital of the only remaining Muslim power, had to be divested of its claim to the caliphate, and Islamic authority had to return to an Arabian Peninsula defended by the Royal Navy. During this period Arabia was witnessing a consolidation of power through an alliance between the Wahhabi movement and the family of Ibn Saud, which led to the establishment of modern Saudi Arabia in 1932. By the 20th century, the British themselves had got into the habit of admiring the Wahhabis and those who appeared to be their Indian followers, whom they saw as the Protestants of Islam out to destroy the decadence and superstition of their corrupt and Catholic coreligionists. The movement's Muslim admirers included both extreme conservatives and liberal modernizers who, like the English, saw Wahhabis as rationalists willing to break with the "popish" authority of traditional religious authorities as well as of Muslim kings and return to the pure Islam of its Arab origins. Today, Saudi Arabia is ostensibly countering Iran, but its claims to dominance are also made possible by the decline of Egypt and the decimation of Iraq and Syria. Turkey remains its only and as yet ambiguous rival apart from Iran. And Prince Mohammed's kingdom is looking more like a "secular" than a "theocratic" state in which sovereignty has finally been wrested from clan and cleric to be claimed directly by the monarchy. But Saudi Arabia can assume greater geopolitical power only by putting its religious status at risk, defined as this has been by its marginal role in geopolitics. [Source: New York Times]

After the fall of Khilafah Rashidah (rightly guided Caliphate), Arabia has always been at the periphery of the Islamic world until its discovery of oil and newfound security alliance with America. But as America declines, so will Arabia's influence and it is only a matter of time.

US Foresees a 'Respectful' Relationship with Pakistan

The United States has high hopes for a respectful and better relationship with Pakistan, especially after the visit of US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and US Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman General Joseph Dunford, a Pentagon official said Thursday. Speaking at an event organised to commemorate the Defense and Martyrs Day here at the Pakistani Embassy, Assistant Defence Secretary for Department of Defence's Asian and Pacific Security Affairs Randall G Schriver said the military linkages between the two countries have always remained a strong foundation for the two-way relationship." This is a day to celebrate your armed forces ... It's also a day to remember those who have sacrificed. And that very much includes the sacrifices made in the war on terror," he said. The Pentagon official then spoke of the bumpy but somewhat healthy relationship that the US and Pakistan have maintained ever since the 9/11 attacks, saying the ally nation "was a friend, a supporter, and a key partner in our building to do that and has remained a key partner since." "We know about the sacrifices that Pakistan has made in this long war on terror and we don't take those sacrifices lightly. We value this relationship, we value this partnership," he added. Noting that Pakistan is an important partner and an ally of the US, the Pentagon official noted that Islamabad has offered multiple sacrifices in the war against terrorism and that Washington respects these losses." We were important partners in a number of key areas, including our efforts to degrade Al Qaeda, the efforts to defeat Daesh, the efforts made to the United Nations in peacekeeping, these are all areas where we cooperated and are achieving results and success," he commented. The United States is making active efforts to improve its relationship with the Pakistan Army, Schriver said, adding that the talks held between Pompeo, Dunford and Islamabad's top brass were in a favourable environment. Pompeo, he said, emerged from that visit with very hopeful words. "In every conversation ... every interaction, he had a sense of hope that we are on a better path." [Source: Daily Times]

There can never be a respectful relationship between America and Pakistan. Under Trump America wants Pakistan to carry on killing Muslims but this time for free. During the era of Musharraf, Kiyani and Sharif they use to get a wage from the coalition support fund for spilling Muslim blood. Now Bajwa will get nothing. Even so, both Khan and Bajwa want good relations with the US. Have they lost their minds?