

# Clippings

## Report Flags 'Flawed' US Airstrikes in West Asia

Newly obtained Pentagon documents show that the U.S. airstrikes in West Asia have been marked by "deeply flawed intelligence" and resulted in thousands of civilian deaths, including many children, the New York Times reported on Saturday.

It said the trove of confidential documents covering more than 1,300 reports of civilian casualties undercuts the government's portrayal of a war fought with precision bombs.

Pledges of transparency and accountability, it said, had regularly fallen short.

"Not a single record provided includes a finding of wrongdoing or disciplinary action," the paper reported.

The newspaper said its investigation showed that the number of civilian deaths had been "drastically undercounted."

- 'The Hindu', 20-12-2021

## Protests in Sudan Mark Uprising Anniversary

Tens of thousands of Sudanese protesters rallied on Sunday to mark three years since the start of mass demonstrations that led to the ouster of strongman Omar al-Bashir, as fears mount for the democratic transition.

Security forces fired tear gas at protesters in the capital Khartoum, chanting slogans against the current military chief, General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, who led a coup on October 25.

"The people want the downfall of Burhan", protesters shouted.

The generals had initially detained civilian leader Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok for weeks under effective house arrest, but reinstated him on November 21.

Mr. Hamdok, who has argued he wants to avoid bloodshed, warned late Saturday of "the country's slide toward the abyss," urging restraint from the protesters. Protest organisers have however vowed, in a key slogan, "No negotiation, no partnership and no legitimacy".

December 19 has a particular resonance in Sudanese history. Not only was it the day in 2018 when thousands launched mass protests that ended Bashir's three decades in power, it was also the day in 1955 when Sudanese lawmakers declared independence from British colonial rule.

- Agence France Presse

## **Ethiopia says Retook Towns from Rebels**

Ethiopian forces have recaptured several towns from Tigrayan rebels, including Kobo and Woldiya in the north, the government announced on Saturday, as fierce fighting raged in the 13-month war that has left thousands dead.

The conflict between forces loyal to Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) rebel group has triggered a severe humanitarian crisis.

Mr. Abiy announced last month that he would head to the front, following which the government has claimed to have retaken several key towns.

On Saturday, the government communication service said pro-Abiy forces "have managed to fully control Sanqa, Siringa, as well as the cities of Woldiya, Hara, Gobiye, Robit and Kobo."

- AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE, 19-12-2021

## **Uzra Zeya Appointed US Special Coordinator for Tibet**

Role involves promoting talks between China and the Dalai Lama

U.S. official Uzra Zeya has been appointed the country's new Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues. She will hold the position concurrently with her current role as Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said via a statement.

The coordinator's role involves promoting "substantive dialogue" between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama. The coordinator is also supposed to promote the unique identity of Tibet, safeguards human rights of Tibetans and coordinates U.S. policy on Tibet.

"Specifically, she [Ms. Zeya] will promote substantive dialogue, without preconditions, between the Government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Dalai Lama, his representatives, or democratically elected Tibetan leaders in support of a negotiated agreement on Tibet," Mr. Blinken said in a statement, as part of a list of activities Ms. Zeya would undertake in her new role.

In addition to her responsibilities around promoting human rights and preserving the distinct heritage of Tibetans, Ms. Zeya will "also promote activities to protect the environment and sustainably manage the water and other natural resources of the Tibetan plateau," Mr. Blinken said.

The position, which was established by US's Tibetan Policy Act (2002), had been lying vacant for much of the Trump administration, i.e., from January 2017 to October 2020, when State Department official Robert Destro was appointed to the role.

Ms. Zeya was born in North Carolina to parents who emigrated from India. She quit the State Department during the Trump administration (2018), speaking and writing, after her departure, of the decline in diversity at the top levels of the administration.

- **Sriram Lakshman**, 'The Hindu', 21-12-2021

## **NATO Seeks 'Meaningful' Talks with Russia Early Next year**

Putin hints at 'military-technical measures' against actions

NATO will seek meaningful discussions with Moscow early next year to address tensions amid a Russian military build-up on Ukraine's border, alliance Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said on 21-12-2021.

"We remain ready for meaningful dialogue with Russia and I intend to call a new meeting of the NATO-Russia Council as soon as possible in the new year," Mr. Stoltenberg told a news conference in Brussels.

Mr. Stoltenberg, however, made it clear that it was solely up to NATO and Ukraine to decide about a future membership of Kyiv.

Meanwhile, President Vladimir Putin warned on Tuesday that Russia was prepared to take "military-technical measures" in response to "unfriendly" Western actions over the Ukraine conflict.

Mr. Putin told defence ministry officials that if the West continued its "obviously aggressive stance", Russia would take "appropriate retaliatory military-technical measures".

"If this infrastructure moves further — if U.S. and NATO missile systems appear in Ukraine — then their approach time to Moscow will be reduced to seven or 10 minutes," he said. Despite hinting at conflict, Mr. Putin said that Russia wants to avoid "bloodshed".

- Reuters, 22-12-2021