

# ► Seen as 'a punch back' after Biden's Mideast trip Putin visits Iran for trilateral summit with Raisi, Erdogan

By Zhang Han and  
Zhang Changyue

Russian President Vladimir Putin visited Iran on Tuesday to hold talks with his Turkish and Iranian counterparts. Yet the visit received notable international attention for its timing, coming on the heels of US President Joe Biden's Middle East trip, making Putin's visit look like "a punch back" after US attempts to assert influence in the region.

Putin on Tuesday met with Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and was scheduled to meet Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan separately before a tripartite summit, his second foreign trip since the country's special military operations in Ukraine.

Kremlin aide Yuri Ushakov called Iran an important partner of Russia because relations between the countries are friendly, have a long history, and are developing very effectively in a wide range of areas. Moscow and Tehran have plans to take bilateral cooperation to a new level of a strategic

partnership, so a new bilateral agreement is being prepared.

Russia-Iran economic cooperation in the light of tightening Western sanctions against Russia and the nuclear deal is also on the agenda. Putin's bilateral meeting with Erdogan is expected to touch on the issue of Ukrainian grain exports from the Black Sea ports, TASS reported.

Zhu Weilie, director of the Middle East Studies Institute at Shanghai International Studies University, said on Tuesday that Putin's visit was already scheduled, but considering Biden's ambitious "vacuum remarks" which yielded very limited results in the Middle East, Putin's visit indeed looks like "a punch in the US' face."

Biden said earlier in front of six Gulf states, Egypt, Jordan and Iraq that the US will remain an active, engaged partner in the Middle East, and Washington will not walk away and leave a vacuum to be filled by Russia, China or Iran.

Observers said that although the US-led West has been tightening

sanctions on Russia, the Kremlin is not cornered diplomatically.

It is hard to edge Russia out of this region, because Russia has a strong presence there, but also because it shares strong energy ties with regional countries, Zhu said.

The US' influence in Middle East has been declining in face of the major changes in the international situation, and major regional countries including Turkey, Iran and Saudi Arabia have stronger autonomy and make foreign policy more independently, said the expert.

Yin Gang, a research fellow at the Institute of West-Asian and African Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said the settlement of the Syrian issue is in line with all parties' will. Russia wants to save its strength that has long been involved in the war in Syria, Yin said.

Yin believes Russia may facilitate the resumption of grain exports from Ukraine, given that military conflicts have dealt a blow to buyers including many in the Middle East.

## US ICE becomes surveillance agency to abuse own citizens' private data

By Zhao Siwei

An invisible "dragnet" that has shrouded the Americans for years has been uncovered in a recent research report which shows that US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has become a domestic surveillance agency by establishing an efficient monitoring network to collect its residents' private data, far beyond the scope of authorized immigration law enforcement.

"The report shows the US government is truly a 'hacker empire'."

The research report, entitled "American Dragnet: Data-driven deportation in the 21st Century," was released by US Georgetown University's Center on Privacy and Technology Law in May. The center found that in the name of counterterrorism, ICE has pushed ethical and legal boundaries to build a surveillance dragnet that covers most Americans by bypassing Congressional oversight and privacy laws.

The center found that by reaching into the digital records of state and local governments and buying databases with billions of data points from private companies, ICE has created a surveillance infrastructure that enables it to pull detailed dossiers on nearly anyone, seemingly at any time. In its efforts to arrest and deport, ICE has – without any judicial, legislative or public oversight – reached into datasets containing personal information about the vast majority of people living in the US.

ICE used facial recognition technology to search through the driver's license photographs of around one in three (32 percent) of all adults in the US. The agency has access to the driver's license data of three in four (74 percent) adults and tracks the movements of cars in cities home to nearly three in four (70 percent) adults.

A cybersecurity expert said that the report shows the US government is truly a "hacker empire" which not only carries out cyberattacks around the world to obtain information, but also applies comprehensive monitoring measures on its own people.

Driven by commercial interests and so-called national security, it is unclear when the huge surveillance network that ICE has built will be effectively controlled and it is concerning how many more "invisible" government agencies that overreach their authority and abuse citizens' private data exist, the expert said.

### ► Ready for Navy Day



**Missile boat Chuvashia takes part in a rehearsal of the Russian Navy Day parade in Kronstadt, St. Petersburg on July 19, 2022. Russian Navy Day will be marked on July 31.**

Photo: VCG

## PLA Navy report reveals what seems to be China's new submarine

By GT staff reporters

The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy recently revealed in an official report what seems to be a new type of conventionally powered submarine that foreign media speculated could offer enhanced stealth capabilities thanks to its new sail design.

Posted by the official WeChat account of the PLA Navy on Monday, the report introduced new upgrades in sailors' can-

teen services. One of the photos attached to the report particularly attracted military observers – in the background of the photo was a large screen showing a docked submarine, with sailors lining up on the submarine's back in what seems to be a ceremony of some sort.

This is the first time the PLA Navy has revealed this type of conventionally powered submarine in commission, Shanghai-based news website eastday.com reported on Monday.

In 2021, foreign media including navalnews.com and thedrive.com reported on a new submarine when it underwent tests after launch. These reports speculated that the angled sail design could reduce the radar cross-section and make the submarine stealthier above water, provide hydrodynamic advantages and house new systems.

With the new submarine, China became the second country in the world to develop

a submarine with an angled sail design after Sweden's A26-class submarine. Foreign reports drew comparisons between the Chinese and Swedish submarines with some analysts claiming China copied the Swedish design.

But the first A26 just had its keel laying ceremony a few weeks ago, meaning it still has a long way to go before commissioning, while the Chinese submarine has seemingly already entered service, the east-

day.com report said.

Although the two submarines both use angled sail designs, the details are very different. China's shipbuilding industry has made fast strides and is fully capable of making independent, innovative designs, an expert who requested anonymity told the Global Times on Tuesday.