

## Headlines:

- **India Reaches Out to the Taliban**
- **UK Sends Ships to Counter China**
- **US, Allies Condemn China for 'Malicious' Cyber Activity**

## Details:

### India Reaches Out to the Taliban

According to media reports the Indian government is preparing to establish direct lines of communication with the Taliban despite its long-standing support for the government led by President Ashraf Ghani. For years, New Delhi has supported the Afghan government with money, weapons and expertise, and paid very little attention to the Taliban movement and their supporters. Now India is clambering to open a dialogue with the Taliban, which is part of new drive by Modi to retain influence in the war torn country. The Taliban rebuffed Indian overtures, Suhail Shaheen, a spokesperson for the group said, *"We have reports from our commanders that India is providing weapons to the other side. How is it possible that they want to talk to the Taliban but practically they are providing weapons, drones, everything to Kabul? This is contradictory."* India's main objective behind these measures is to ensure Afghanistan remains secular and to prevent an Islamic takeover of the country.

### UK Sends Ships to Counter China

The United Kingdom has announced plans to permanently deploy a fleet of naval vessels to Japan, sailing through the South China Sea, as Western countries increase engagement in the Pacific region. The UK announced that it will be permanently deploying two naval vessels to waters surrounding Japan later this year ahead of the HMS 'Queen Elizabeth'-led aircraft carrier strike group's arrival in Japan. *"Following on from the strike group's inaugural deployment, the United Kingdom will permanently assign two ships in the region from later this year,"* UK Defense Minister Ben Wallace said in Tokyo at a joint press conference with his Japanese counterpart, Nobuo Kishi. Japan is a strategic partner of the UK and the US, participating in joint military drills and hosting the largest concentration of American troops outside of its own 50 states. The Royal Navy's largest warship, the 'Queen Elizabeth' aircraft carrier, alongside its UK strike group, is due to arrive in Japan in September to participate in joint exercises with Tokyo's Self-Defense Forces. The move, presented by Kishi and Wallace, is designed to counter China's territorial activities in the region.

### US, Allies Condemn China for 'Malicious' Cyber Activity

The US has led allies in a fierce condemnation of China over allegedly "malicious" cyber activity, accusing it of criminal extortion, issuing ransom demands to private firms and threatening national security. In comments likely to further strain worsening relations between Washington and Beijing, a senior US official said that China's "irresponsible behavior in cyberspace is inconsistent with its stated objective of being seen as a responsible leader in the world." The US, the European Union, Britain, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Japan and NATO were united against the threat, the US official said, and would expose how China targets international cyber networks. The US will also be formally accusing cyber actors affiliated to China's Ministry of State Security of conducting the massive Microsoft Exchange Server hack disclosed in March. The hack, which exploited flaws in the Microsoft Exchange service, affected at least 30,000 US organizations including local governments and was already attributed to an "unusually aggressive" Chinese cyber-espionage campaign. The battle for who will be the global leader is in full swing.