

## BODIES OF US SAILORS FOUND

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There were 285 crew onboard, the spokesman said. Benson took command of the Fitzgerald on May 13. He had previously commanded a minesweeper based in Sasebo in western Japan.

Japanese authorities were looking into the possibility of "endangerment of traffic caused by professional negligence", Japanese media reported, but it was not clear whether that might apply to either or both of the vessels. The US Navy said the collision happened at about 2:30 a.m. local time, while the Japanese Coast Guard said it was 1:30 am local time. Japan's Nippon Yusen KK, which charters the container ship, ACX Crystal, said in a statement on Saturday it would "cooperate fully" with the Coast Guard's investigation of the incident.

At around 29,000 tons displacement, the ship dwarfs the 8,315-ton US warship. It was carrying 1,080 containers from the port of Nagoya to Tokyo. None of the 20 crew members aboard the container

ship, all Filipino, were injured, and the ship was not leaking oil, Nippon Yusen said. The ship arrived at Tokyo Bay later on Saturday. The waterways approaching Tokyo Bay are busy with commercial vessels sailing to and from Japan's two biggest container ports in Tokyo and Yokohama. But such collisions at sea are rare in an age of advanced navigational technology.

Naval historians recall possibly the last time a warship was hit by a larger vessel in peacetime was in 1964 off the coast of Australia's New South Wales. The HMAS Melbourne, an aircraft carrier, collided with the destroyer HMAS Voyager, shearing the much smaller vessel in half and killing 82 of the Voyager's crew. Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe sent a message to US President Donald Trump yesterday saying he was "in deep sorrow" over the Fitzgerald incident. He added that he "highly respects people involved in the US military who every day make a big contribution for protecting peace for our nation and the region under the strong US-Japan alliance." — Reuters



**PENELA:** A wildfire is reflected in a stream at Penela, Coimbra, central Portugal yesterday. A wildfire in central Portugal killed at least 62 people and injured 16 others, most of them burning to death in their cars. — AFP

## HUGE FOREST FIRES KILL 62 IN PORTUGAL

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Portugal was sweltering under a severe heatwave over the weekend, with temperatures topping 40 degrees Celsius in several regions.

About 60 forest fires broke out across the country during the night, with around 1,700 firefighters battling to put them out. "The fire is still raging on four fronts," Gomes said, two spreading "violently". Dry thunderstorms were thought to have been the cause, according to the prime minister. A number of villages were affected by the main fire and homes were evacuated. Some were sheltered in neighboring areas. Officials were not immediately able to comment on the extent of the damage. Spain dispatched two water-bombing planes yesterday to aid the Portuguese fire service, Costa said.

Dozens of people who fled their homes were taken in by

residents of the nearby municipality of Ansiao. "There are people who arrived saying they didn't want to die in their homes, which were surrounded by flames," Ansiao resident Ricardo Tristao told reporters. President Marcelo Rebelo went to the Leiria region to meet families of the victims, saying he was "sharing their pain in the name of all the Portuguese people". Firefighters did "all they could" when faced with the blaze, he said.

Pope Francis began his Angelus prayer by invoking the tragedy. "I express my closeness to the beloved people of Portugal following the devastating fire," Francis said. "Let's pray in silence". Portugal was hit by a series of fires last year which devastated more than 100,000 hectares of the mainland. Fires on the tourist island of Madeira in August killed three people, while over the course of 2016 around 40 homes were destroyed and 5,400 hectares of land burned. — AFP

## AMIR ADDRESSES THE NATION, PRAYS FOR PEACE...

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He also called for maintaining the national consonants and elevated values that Kuwaitis inherited from their ancestors. He referred to the critical conditions sweeping the region, and the growing threat of terrorism worldwide.

Unprecedentedly, the phenomenon has been spreading under various slogans and names, constituting a threat to countries and communities, and innocent people. His Highness the Amir reiterated Kuwait's solidarity with the international community against all forms of terrorism, to eliminate the menacing phenomenon, hoping for realizing security and stability around the globe. The fears and risks referred to, require further caution and unity to maintain the security and safety of "our nation," His Highness the Amir noted.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir welcomed Kuwait's non-permanent seat at the UN Security Council for two years. "Kuwaiti diplomacy has recently realized a distinct achievement, gaining Kuwait further confidence from the international community, as the country has been elected as a non-permanent member at the UNSC, 2018-2019," His Highness the Amir said.

The election for the UNSC seat came in recognition of Kuwait's prominent status and respect on the regional and international scenes, thanks to the country's balanced and moderate foreign policy based on abiding by the UN Charter and the international law. "This has also rewarded Kuwait's remarkable humanitarian role and participation in maintaining the international security and peace, besides lessening tension in areas of conflict," he added. His Highness highly appreciated the dis-

tinct role played by the Foreign Ministry to realize that success, and congratulated the Kuwaiti people on the historical achievement.

In the meantime, His Highness the Amir voiced hope for further fruitful and constructive cooperation between the Legislative and the Executive Powers for directing efforts and capabilities to promoting the nation and realize people's expectations. He expressed his pleasure for the inauguration of several vital development projects that contribute to improving the aspired public services.

His Highness the Amir reaffirmed the fact that "youth is the real wealth of the nation," saying they enjoy due attention from the state. He stressed the need to "protect the Kuwaiti youth against misleading ideas and deviant behavior," calling for capitalizing on their energy for serving the nation. His Highness the Amir stressed his belief in the powers of innovation of the Kuwaiti youth in all fields, scientific, sports, medical and sports.

He said it is a source of pride that Kuwait has been elected "Capital of Arab Youth 2017." His Highness urged the youth to benefit from the facilities and support the state offers to small and medium size enterprises (SMEs) through the National Fund for SMEs Development, for their own good and that of the nation.

Concluding, His Highness the Amir recalled the exploits of late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and late Father Amir Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, praying to Allah Almighty to bless their souls for the honorable and great services they rendered to the nation. He also prayed for everlasting security and prosperity for Kuwait, recalling the country's martyrs who sacrificed their souls to defend their dear land. — KUNA

## COURT REDUCES DEATH ON PRO-IRAN CELL...

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The cases of the remaining three members were not reviewed by the court because they remain absconding. Under Kuwaiti law, fugitives receiving verdicts in absentia cannot have their appeals reviewed until they appear before court. One of the three fugitives is the only Iranian member of the cell, Abdulredha Haider, who was handed the death penalty in January last year for arranging for the travel of most of the members to go to Lebanon and undergo military training with Shiite militia Hezbollah. Apart from the Iranian, all the remaining 25 members are Kuwaiti Shiites.

The cell was busted in August 2015 when security forces uncovered large quantities of arms and ammunition hidden in underground depots in Abdali and other

areas. The arms included 19 tons of ammunition, RBGs, machineguns, hand grenades and about 140 kilograms of high explosives which were smuggled by sea from Iran with the help of the Revolutionary Guards. The ringleader was convicted of meeting officials at the Iranian Embassy in Kuwait and traveling to Iran where he met with officials from the Revolutionary Guards and later smuggled the explosives.

The cell members could receive additional sentences as the Criminal Court is trying some of them for undergoing military training with Hezbollah. Initially, the Criminal Court did not try them for this crime because the training took place outside the country. But the Appeals Court last year ordered the court to try them after ruling that this constitutes an offense. The convicts denied the charges during trial and claimed their confessions were extracted from them through torture.

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