Brief Notes

Regime Outlets Use Arrest of Former EU Official to Mock Engagement With West: State-run outlets in Iran used reports of former EU foreign representative Federica Mogherini's arrest in a European fraud probe to ridicule domestic figures who favor diplomatic engagement with the West. Some hardline dailies additionally revived ridicule of MPs who, during Mogherini's 2017 visit to Tehran, "flocked" to take photos with her.

SCO Military Exercise is a 'Message to Domineering Powers': Today, state media highlighted the IRGC Ground Force-hosted exercise, Sahand-2025, involving Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) members and guest participants from Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Azerbaijan. Ending on December 5, the five-day exercise in Iran's East Azerbaijan Province is the first SCO drill to be held in the country. Officials framed the exercise as a strategic "message to domineering powers," stressing both its timing after the regime's claimed "victory" in the 12-Day War and its location near the Azerbaijan–Armenia border's key transit corridors. IRGC officials said the drills are designed to prepare forces for multiple scenarios and showcase to high-level security and military delegations, including dozens of staff and operational commanders.

IRGC Navy to Hold Two-Day Exercise in Persian Gulf: The IRGC Navy announced that a two-day exercise would begin December 4, taking place in the Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz, and Sea of Oman. The drills will focus on the "Nazeat" area, which includes the Iranian islands of Abu Musa, Greater Tunb, and Lesser Tunb, also claimed by the UAE.

Supreme Leader Defends Hijab Policy in Speech to Women

Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei used a meeting with hundreds of women in Tehran to reject claims that mandatory hijab rules restrict women's progress, insisting that the country has "proven wrong" Western arguments by enabling veiled women to participate across public life.

He framed criticism of compulsory hijab rules and gender-based restrictions as a part of a broader Western ideological campaign, cautioning domestic media not to "parrot" such views.

Khamenei highlighted "unprecedented achievements" by Iranian women in science, sports, and politics under the Islamic Republic, while also praising women's "skillful" household management.

On the Radar

- Tehran criticized the U.S. embassy in Baku for emphasizing American equipment's role in the carrying out of a major heroin seizure at the Astara crossing, condemning its publication as a "propaganda operation" to mask the United States' alleged role in the Middle Eastern and Central Asian drug trade. Tehran's embassy in Baku accused Washington of fueling the drug trade during its "two decades of occupation" in Afghanistan and said neighboring states are still "dealing with the consequences." Tehran insisted it has been "at the forefront" of regional counter-narcotics efforts despite sanctions and highlighted its recent cooperation with Baku, including a late-November visit by its anti-narcotics police chief.

- Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Secretary-General Jasem al-Budaiwi said in an interview on December 1 that the bloc has begun finalizing its joint defense system ahead of the Bahrain summit, citing recent attacks on Qatar as a key driver. He emphasized unified Gulf security and noted new steps such as a planned intelligence center and enhanced air-defense coordination. Budaiwi highlighted deep strategic ties with Washington while urging Tehran to follow IAEA recommendations and curb its interference policies.

- Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Fuad Hussein met visiting U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Michael Rigas in Baghdad to review political, economic, and security cooperation. The discussion focused on regional stability efforts, including de-escalation in Syria and dealings with Tehran, with Baghdad stressing its role in mediating tensions. Hussein stressed the importance of forming a ruling coalition swiftly following recent elections and highlighted improved security conditions in Iraq, calling for updated U.S. State Department Travel Advisories. Hussein also welcomed the imminent opening of the new U.S. consulate in Irbil and pressed for the reopening of the Basra mission.

- Harakat Al Nujaba leader Akram al Kaabi threatened the U.S. Special Envoy to Iraq, saying he should have "a stone put in his mouth and be sent back to the United States," framing it as a warning against U.S. involvement in Iraqi security debates. Kaabi, a firebrand Islamic Republic-aligned militia commander, founded Al Nujaba in 2013. The group publicly aligns with the IRGC and is a U.S.-designated terrorist organization.

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