

# DT NEWS

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Oil world cautious on Trump's next move



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## 11th Hour

### Trump promises to expand military

Washington

President Donald Trump yesterday promised a historic buildup of America's already vast military, but said he hoped he would never need to use it. We are "putting in a massive budget request for our beloved military and we will be substantially upgrading all of our military," Trump told the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) just outside Washington.

### US commander makes secret Mideast trip

Qamishli

The top US military commander for the Middle East made a secret trip to northern Syria yesterday to meet a US-backed alliance fighting the Islamic State group, the alliance's spokesman said.

### Iraq air force strikes IS targets in Syria

Baghdad

The Iraqi air force struck members of the Islamic State group inside neighbouring Syria on yesterday, officials said, adding that the targeted militants were responsible for recent bombings in Baghdad.

# Nerve agent used to kill

Kuala Lumpur

North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un's half brother was assassinated with a lethal nerve agent manufactured for chemical warfare and listed by the UN as a weapon of mass destruction, Malaysian police said yesterday.

Releasing a preliminary toxicology report on Kim Jong-Nam's murder at Kuala Lumpur airport, police revealed the poison used by the assassins was the odourless, tasteless and highly toxic VX.

The news brought condemnation from South Korea, which slammed the use of the nerve agent as a "blatant violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and other international norms".

Kim died on February 13 after being attacked at Kuala Lumpur International Airport by two women, who are seen on CCTV footage shoving something in his face. He suffered a seizure and was dead before he reached hospital. An autopsy revealed traces of VX -- a



Kim Jong-Nam

fast-acting toxin that sparks respiratory collapse and heart failure -- on the dead man's face and in his eyes.

Tiny amounts of the poison are enough to kill an adult, whether it is inhaled or absorbed through the skin.

"I am outraged that the criminals used such a dangerous chemical in a public area," said Environment Minister Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar.

It "could have caused mass injuries or even death

to other people". One of the two women arrested after the attack fell ill in custody, police said, adding she had been vomiting.

National police chief Khalid Abu Bakar has previously said the woman who attacked Kim from behind clearly knew she was carrying out a poison attack, dismissing claims that she thought she was taking part in a TV prank. "The lady was moving away with her hands towards the bathroom,"

## VX: the deadly chemical

Code-named by US scientists who mass produced it, VX is an organophosphate compound and one of the deadliest chemical agents ever manufactured. Stockpiled by the US in huge quantities during the Cold War, VX is perhaps 10 times as powerful as the Sarin toxin.

Odorless and clear when pure, it has the appearance of motor oil and is stable enough to be transported. It is also hard to detect, an advantage for a would-be assassin. Downsides are that it lingers, potentially

contaminating areas for long periods of time. "It can kill an adult weighing 70 kilogrammes with just five milligrammes on the skin," said Yosuke Yamasato, former principal of the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force Chemical School.

### What does it do?

It strikes the nervous system fast. A high dose can kill in minutes when inhaled, as the blood vessels in the lungs rapidly spread the compound into the bloodstream and vital organs.

entered the country," he told reporters. He added that "if the amount of the chemical brought in was small, it would be difficult for us to detect". A leading security expert said it would not have been difficult to get VX into Malaysia in a diplomatic pouch, which are not subject to regular customs checks. (AFP)

# Kim Jong-Nam