

UN Votes on Watered-Down Resolution:

North Korea Warns U.S. Will Pay 'Due Price'



The UN Security Council at UN headquarters, New York, during an emergency meeting over North Korea's nuclear test on Sept 4, 2017.

UNITED NATIONS/SEOUL (Dispatches) -- The UN Security Council was vote on Monday on a watered-down U.S.-drafted resolution to impose new sanctions on North Korea over its latest nuclear test, diplomats said, but it was unclear whether China and Russia would support it.

North Korea warned the United States that it would pay a "due price" for spearheading efforts for fresh sanctions for this month's nuclear test, which followed a series of test missile launches, all in defiance of UN sanctions.

A U.S.-drafted resolution originally calling for an oil embargo on the North, a halt to its key exports of textiles and subjecting leader Kim Jong Un to a

financial and travel ban have been weakened, apparently to placate Russia and China which both have veto powers, diplomats said.

It no longer proposes blacklisting Kim and relaxes sanctions earlier proposed on oil and gas, a draft reviewed by Reuters showed. It still proposed a ban on textile exports.

North Korea conducted its sixth nuclear test on Sept 3, which it said was of an advanced hydrogen bomb.

North Korea denounced efforts by Washington to impose new UN-backed sanctions against the country. The North's Foreign Ministry spokesman said the United States was "going frantic" to manipulate the Security Council over Pyongyang's nuclear test, which it said was part of "legitimate

self-defensive measures."

"In case the U.S. eventually does rig up the illegal and unlawful 'resolution' on harsher sanctions, the DPRK shall make absolutely sure that the U.S. pays due price," the spokesman said in a statement carried by the official KCNA news agency.

DPRK stands for the North's formal name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

"The world will witness how the DPRK tames the U.S. gangsters by taking a series of actions tougher than they have ever envisaged," the unnamed spokesman said.

"The DPRK has developed and perfected the super-powerful thermo-nuclear weapon as a means to deter the ever-increasing hostile moves and nuclear threat of the U.S. and defuse the danger of nuclear war looming over the Korean peninsula and the region."

South Korean President Moon Jae-in said last week during a visit to Russia that shutting off North Korea's supply of oil was inevitable this time to bring Pyongyang to talks and he called for Russian President Vladimir Putin's support.

Putin has remained firm however that such sanctions on oil would have negative humanitarian effects on North Koreans.

China, the North's lone major ally, may be most critical though in deciding if oil sanctions go ahead because it controls an oil pipeline that industry sources say provides about 520,000 tonnes of crude a year to the North.

A Security Council resolution needs nine votes in favor and no vetoes by permanent members the United States, Britain, France, Russia or China to pass.

6 Million Without Power as Irma Hits Florida



At least five deaths have been linked to the storm in Florida.

TAMPA, Fla. (Dispatches) -- Hurricane Irma, which toppled cranes, inundated streets and left more than 5.7 million customers without power, was weakening faster than expected early Monday while still pummeling parts of Florida as it slogged northward.

At least five deaths have been linked to the storm, according to reports, but officials warn that the number was preliminary and could climb.

Monroe County Sheriff Rick Ramsey has declared an indefinite dusk-to-dawn curfew in the Florida Keys, which remains off limits amid widespread destruction, the Miami Herald reported Monday.

"Anyone out after the designated times is subject to arrest," said a statement released by the sheriff's office. "This curfew is necessary due to the unsafe conditions throughout Monroe County and for security."

Monroe County emergency management chief Martin Senterfitt called the destruction a looming "humanitarian crisis" and said the Air Force and National Guard were planning an airborne relief mission — including what he called "disaster mortuary teams."

The Category 1 storm — previously a Category 5 monster — was expected to be further downgraded as a tropical storm later in the morning, but warnings of hazardous storm surges persisted.

In addition to the more than 5.7 million

homes and businesses left without power across Florida, about 58% of all customers in the state, more than 73,000 were without electricity in Georgia as of 6 a.m. Monday, officials said.

The massive storm's center was forecast to move near the northwestern coast of Florida before crossing into Georgia later into Monday.

The Hurricane Center warned that tornadoes remained possible in northeast Florida as well as southeast parts of Georgia and South Carolina into the evening.

Warnings of "life-threatening" storm surges remained in effect in several areas of south and central Florida, including the heavily populated Tampa Bay region.

Irma wreaked a trail of death and destruction through the Caribbean, where at least 28 people lost their lives, before the then-Category 4 storm slammed into Florida, where reports tied at least four deaths to it.

While Southwest Florida bore the brunt of Irma's wrath Sunday, the coastlines of Miami and the neighboring island of Miami Beach were heavily flooded as winds sent two giant construction cranes crashing down.

The sea swallowed the coastal walkway of glitzy Brickell Avenue in the center of Miami, flooding the streets and leaving cars half-submerged.

The hurricane also led to major closures at the state's airports.

EU Setting 'Brexit Trap' for UK: Ex-Greek Minister



Former finance minister of Greece Yanis Varoufakis, center, has warned British PM Theresa May, left, to beware the EU's Brexit trap.

ATHENS (Dispatches) -- The European Union is attempting to set a "Brexit trap" for Theresa May, Greece's former finance minister Yanis Varoufakis has warned.

He urged the UK not to fold under European Union demands for a Brexit payment, explaining they were attempting to "ruin" negotiations in advance.

And he said, like Greece during the financial crisis, the EU may succeed in "damaging" the British people.

Varoufakis blasted Brexit as a process but said he respected the democratic wish

of the people and it was time for Brussels to do the same.

"The message to London is clear: you give us everything we are asking for, unconditionally. Then and only then will we hear what you want."

Writing in the Sunday Times, he said this showed Brussels was going out of its way to hurt Britain and scupper negotiations for a mutually beneficial deal.

He said: "This is what one demands if one seeks to ruin a negotiation in advance."

"Under the guise of negotiations it is forcing May and her team to expend all

their energies negotiating for the right to negotiate."

He drew parallels with the way the bloc treated Greece during the financial crisis and said Britain would suffer the same devastating treatment if it wasn't careful.

Varoufakis said: "I worry that Brussels and Berlin may succeed in damaging Britain as they previously succeeded in damaging my own people."

He said he had learned several things during his analysis of Brexit negotiations so far. The first, he said, was "the EU will not budge."

He explained: "Brussels' worst nightmare is a mutually advantageous economic agreement that other Europeans may interpret as a sign that a mutiny against Europe's establishment may be worthwhile."

He expressed his fear for Britain as negotiations continue, despite his general opposition to Brexit. Varoufakis said: "As a democrat I respect their verdict but fear that May will fall into the EU trap."

In a scathing speech, at an event called 'The Real State of the Union' in Brussels, Varoufakis condemned the EU bureaucrats as ignorant of the "crumbling bloc" around them.

He told the crowd in Belgium: "Just like in Greece, the EU will continue to unleash coups all over Europe. Banks, not tanks, to overturn democracy and take power."

Details of Mexico Quake Disaster Emerge



This is what the southern region of Mexico woke up to after an 8.2 magnitude quake.

MEXICO CITY (Reuters) -- A massive earthquake off southern Mexico Thursday night that killed at least 91 people damaged tens of thousands of homes and afflicted upwards of two million people in the poorer south, state officials said, as more details of the disaster emerged.

The 8.1 magnitude quake off the coast of Chiapas state was stronger than a 1985 temblor that flattened swaths of Mexico City and killed thousands. However, its greater depth and distance helped save the capital from more serious damage.

Saturday, authorities in the southern state of Oaxaca said there were 71 confirmed fatalities there, many of them in the town of Juchitan, where the rush to bury victims crowded a local cemetery at the weekend.

Another death was confirmed in neighboring Chiapas late Sunday, bringing the total there to 16, a spokesman for local emergency services said. A further four deaths have also been registered in Tabasco state to the north.

Television footage from parts of Oaxaca showed small homes and buildings completely leveled by the quake, which struck the narrowest portion of Mexico on the isthmus of Tehuantepec.

Aftershocks continued into Sunday, and scores of people were wary about returning to fragile buildings hammered by the initial

tremor, sleeping in gardens, patios and in the open air.

Piles of rubble lay strewn around damaged streets, where the shock was still visible on the faces of residents.

Oaxaca Governor Alejandro Murat told Mexican television the quake hit 41 municipalities and had likely affected around one in five of the state's 4 million-strong population.

"We're talking about more than 800,000 people who potentially lost everything, and some their loved ones," he said Sunday.

In Juchitan alone, more than 5,000 homes were destroyed. Hundreds of thousands of Mexicans were temporarily left without electricity or water, and many in the south were evacuated from coastal dwellings when the quake sparked tsunami warnings.

In Chiapas, some 41,000 houses were damaged, governor Manuel Velasco said, estimating nearly 1.5 million people were affected.

President Enrique Pena Nieto declared three days of national mourning and pledged to rebuild shattered towns and villages.

However, some residents interviewed expressed frustration that the poor southern regions were still not getting the help they needed from the richer north and center of Mexico.



EL-ARISH, Egypt (AP) -- Militants ambushed a police convoy in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula Monday, killing 18 police and wounding seven others, according to security and military officials, in the deadliest attack in the turbulent region in months.

The police and military officials said the attack began with the detonation of roadside bombs that destroyed and set ablaze four armored vehicles and a fifth one carrying signal jamming equipment. The gunmen later opened fire with machine guns and commandeered a police pickup truck.

Among those killed were two police lieutenants. The wounded included a police brigadier general. The attack took place about 30 kilometers west of el-Arish in northern Sinai, the epicenter of a long-running insurgency now led by the extremist Daesh.

SRINAGAR, India (AFP) -- Indian government forces killed two suspected rebels and captured one in Kashmir Monday during a brief gun battle, sparking protests by local civilians, police said.

Soldiers and special counterinsurgency police forces surrounded a neighborhood in Khudwani, a village in the south of Indian-administered Kashmir, after a tip-off about the presence of militants.

Police fired tear gas to disperse hundreds of local residents who took to the streets in support of the slain militants and threw stones at government forces. Both belonged to the region's largest rebel group, Hizbul Mujahideen, police said.

More than 140 suspected militants have been killed so far this year in the restive Kashmir valley, where India has deployed thousands of additional troops to hunt for anti-India rebels in an offensive dubbed "Operation Allout."

PRZEMYSL, Poland (AFP) -- Ukrainian authorities blocked a train in Poland carrying stateless former Georgian president Mikheil Saakashvili as the firebrand politician attempted to return to Ukraine to reclaim his citizenship there, stripped by President Petro Poroshenko in a bitter row.

A statement by Ukrainian police read to an AFP journalist aboard the Kiev-bound train in Przemysl, southern Poland, said it would "not leave the station so long as people without the right to return to Ukraine will be on board."

Saakashvili refused to get off, telling journalists that "taking a whole train hostage is ridiculous" and accusing Poroshenko of making Ukraine "a laughing stock to the whole world."

ROME (AP) -- Torrential rain in Italy triggered flooding that killed at least six people in the Tuscan port of Leghorn, including a family of four who were trapped by rising water in a basement. Two persons were reported missing.

The Italian news agency ANSA said the bodies of a 4-year-old boy, his parents and his grandfather were found in the flooded basement of their two-family home. Before dying, the grandfather managed to save the boy's sister, state TV RaiNews24 reported.

"The city is literally devastated," said Leghorn Mayor Filippo Nogarini, adding that "a crazy amount of rain" pummeled the area in just a few hours.

MARAWI CITY, Philippines (Reuters) -- Some Daesh-affiliated militants besieging the southern Philippines city of Marawi have sent "feelers" who are prepared to surrender after three and a half months of fighting, the military said Monday.

Philippine forces have used loudspeakers urging militants to give themselves up, telling the estimated 50 to 60 fighters left in the city their lives would be spared if they disarm, change out of their black clothes and walk to a designated location.

"Hopefully, we will have surrenders within the next days," spokesman Col. Romeo Brawner told a news conference. "There are feelers. Definitely, there are feelers," he added, declining to elaborate.

BEIJING (Reuters) -- A Taiwanese activist on trial in China confessed Monday to attempting to subvert the Beijing government, according to videos of his hearing released by Chinese authorities, although his wife refused to recognize the court's authority.

Lee Ming-che, a community college teacher known for his pro-democracy and rights activism, went missing on a trip to mainland China in March. China's authorities later confirmed that he was being investigated on suspicion of damaging national security.

Lee said that he accepted the charge of subversion and expressed regret in videos of his comments released on social media by the Yueyang City Intermediate People's Court in central Hunan province.

Thousands in LA Protest Trump's Migration Policies

LOS ANGELES (AFP) -- Thousands of people took to the streets of Los Angeles Sunday to protest U.S. President Donald Trump's decision to rescind a program that deferred deportations of immigrants who had arrived illegally as children.

"No ICE, no KKK, no racist USA!" demonstrators chanted as they gathered in a park before marching through a Latino neighborhood in the California metropolis.

Trump, in a decision hostile to undocumented immigrants, recently abrogated an order issued by his predecessor Barack Obama that protected some 800,000 young people

by granting them temporary legal status as part of The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival program (DACA).

"I came when I was just a baby," said one protester, Sophia Begar, who arrived with her parents from Mexico.

"It's just really uneasy, really scary," the 19-year-old told AFP. "I've been here my whole life and now I'm gonna be kicked out to my home country -- that I don't know anything about."

Trump's move fulfilling a campaign promise of zero tolerance toward illegal immigrants.

But at the same time the president insisted he is showing compassion for the Dreamers, many of whom

have known only the United States and speak only English, by giving Congress six months to craft a lasting legal solution.

Congress must now reopen debate over immigration reform, which ignited controversy in 2001, 2006 and 2013.

Paula Hernandez, 24, isn't confident that this time will be different. "Congress has a very bad track record, they don't get anything done," she said.

But "I existed before DACA, I continue to exist," said the young woman who arrived in the U.S. from Mexico at seven years old. "It's just 10 times harder."