

# U.S. Rejects Myanmar Sanctions Despite Atrocities



Rohingya refugees wait for food aid at Thankhali refugee camp in Bangladesh's Ukhia district on Nov. 14, 2017.

**NAPPYITAW (Dispatches)** – The U.S. doesn't believe broad-based economic sanctions against Myanmar would help resolve a crisis that has seen more than 600,000 minority Muslim Rohingya refugees flee to neighboring Bangladesh since August. Speaking after a meeting with Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi in the capital Naypyidaw on Wednesday, U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said the U.S. remained committed to Myanmar's democratic transition. "Broad-based economic sanctions against the entire country are

not something that I think would be advisable at this time," Tillerson said. "We want to see Myanmar succeed." His made the remarks as U.S. senators are pressing for economic sanctions and travel restrictions targeting the Myanmar military and its business interests. A UN official has described a military operation in Buddhist-majority Myanmar's Rakhine State a textbook case of "ethnic cleansing". Another senior UN official leveled accusations of mass rape, killings and torture against the

Myanmar military, known as the Tatmadaw, after a tour of refugee camps in the Cox's Bazar region of neighboring Bangladesh. Human rights groups have branded as a "whitewash" an internal military investigation, after its findings were posted on the army chief's Facebook page this week. In a posting on his Facebook page, Myanmar's military supreme said he had explained to Tillerson the "true situation in Rakhine" and the reasons why Muslims fled. Tillerson called for a credible investigation into reports of human rights abuses against Rohingya Muslims committed by Myanmar's security forces. "We're deeply concerned by credible reports of wide-spread atrocities committed by Myanmar's security forces and by vigilantes who were unrestrained by the security forces during the recent violence in Rakhine State," Tillerson said. "We're also distressed by the fact that hundreds of thousands, many women and children have been forced to flee to Bangladesh." Tillerson called for a credible and impartial investigation and said those who committed abuses should be held responsible.

## Trump Lies 5.5 Times a Day on Average: Study



Donald Trump during the Republican Presidential Debate sponsored by Fox Business and the Wall Street Journal at the Milwaukee Theatre, Nov. 10, 2015.

**WASHINGTON (Dispatches)** -- President Donald Trump is quick to use the term "fake news," but in reality a lot of what he himself says is as fake, misleading, and inaccurate as it comes. He even tried to claim he came up with the term "fake news." Add that to growing list of falsehoods.

The Washington Post has been tracking Trump's lies since he was sworn into office earlier this year. That's 298 days of falsehoods — some small, others way bigger. The paper's total is at 1,628 lies, which breaks down to an average of 5.5 lies a day. Assuming that he continues to lie at the same pace, by the end of the year he should hit about 2,000 false

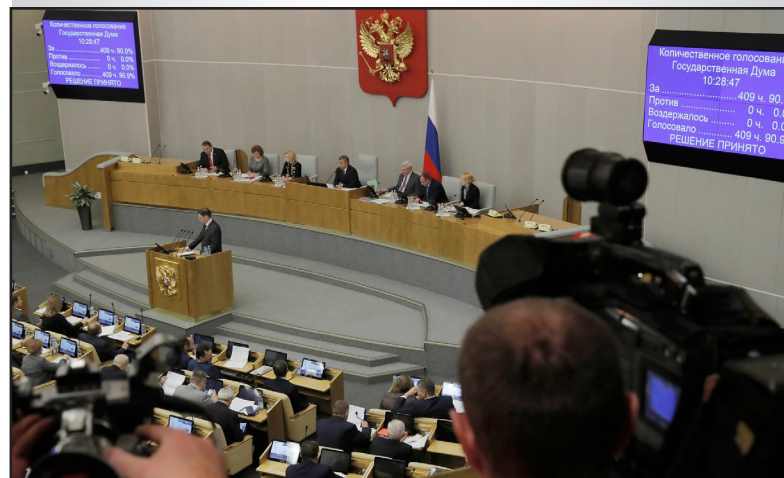
statements. By the end of his first four-year term as president he can be forecast to lie about 8,000 times. That's so much misinformation and confusion coming straight from the president's mouth. Breaking down his average even further, he's been spewing .22 mis-truths every hour of his presidency. Trump's habit of fibbing, exaggerating, misleading, and making things up got going well before his term started. Shortly after the election he falsely said millions of people voted illegally. The Washington Post found his most repeated falsehoods and misleading statements include that America has hit the highest stock market level ever; that the biggest tax cut ever will be here by the end of the year; that Obamacare is a disaster; and how we've seen the lowest unemployment in 17 years. It's relentless. He even lied about giving the "greatest speech" at a Boy Scouts event over the summer. This has been quite the year for fact-checking. If things continue at this pace, fact-checkers will come out of this presidency bleary-eyed and in need of a very long vacation.

## China to Send Special Envoy to North Korea

**BEIJING (Dispatches)** -- China will send a special envoy to North Korea this week, state media said Wednesday, after U.S. President Donald Trump concluded an Asian tour to rally support against Pyongyang. Friday's trip by diplomatic Xi Jinping's special envoy, Song Tao, is likely a prelude to pushing by China to resolve the nuclear standoff, though the official Xinhua news agency merely said he will discuss last month's Chinese Communist Party congress. As Beijing prepared for the mission, Pyongyang maintained its war of words with Trump, with a ruling party newspaper saying the U.S. president deserved the death penalty for insulting North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. China's announcement came a day after the end of Trump's five-nation tour of Asia, during which the U.S. leader held meetings with Xi and warned that "time is quickly running out." As tensions have surged China has backed a series of United Nations sanctions on Pyongyang and imposed banking restrictions on North Koreans, putting the Cold War-era allies at odds. Song will be the first Chinese official to make an official trip to North Korea since October 2016, when vice foreign minister Liu Zhenmin visited. Xi has never met Kim.

Washington has pressed China to intensify use of its economic leverage over North Korea to strongarm Pyongyang into halting its nuclear weapons and missile programs. Song, who is head of the Communist Party Central Committee's international affairs department, will present to Pyongyang the "consensus" for a peaceful solution that Trump and Xi reached during their meetings, said Wang Dong, foreign policy specialist at Peking University. "China is now actively making diplomatic efforts," Wang told AFP. "The envoy's visit is to persuade Aung Mye Thaw, hoping that North Korea will return to the track of peaceful resolution of the nuclear issue," he said. On Sunday, Trump said Xi stated that "he is upping the sanctions against" North Korea, but he did not provide details and China has not announced any new punitive measures. Beijing fears pressuring North Korea's government into collapse, triggering a flood of refugees across its border and eliminating a strategic buffer separating China from the U.S. military in South Korea. China and Russia have campaigned for a "dual track" approach in which the United States would halt its military drills in the region in return for North Korea suspending its weapons program, but the proposal has not gained traction.

## Russian MPs Back 'Foreign Agents' Retaliation



The Russian Duma debates changes to a bill allowing the government to register international media outlets as "foreign agents".

**MOSCOW (AFP)** -- Russian MPs on Wednesday backed new legislation allowing foreign media outlets to be listed as "foreign agents" in a reciprocal response to U.S. pressure on Kremlin-backed TV channel RT. They backed amendments that would allow international media that receive financing from abroad to be classified as "foreign agents," RIA Novosti news agency reported, a measure previously used only against NGOs. Outlets such as Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, which receive funding from the U.S. Congress, would be forced to register as foreign agents. Members of parliament have given contradictory statements on whether the law could apply to commercial TV network CNN. A total of 409 lawmakers out of 450 voted to back the amendments, while no one voted against or abstained, TASS state news agency reported. The lower house of parliament's deputy speaker Pyotr Tolstoy said in parliament the reciprocal measures were "forced" by the actions of the

United States. "This decision that we are taking is a forced one, none of us wanted to take such a decision, and it will not influence freedom of speech in our country at all," Tolstoy said, quoted by RIA Novosti. The amendments were rushed in, with MPs skipping the first reading of the law on a technicality. The third reading is seen as a formality, after which the amendments will have to be passed by the Senate and then be signed into law by President Vladimir Putin. A Russian law adopted in 2012 forces NGOs that have international funding and whose activities are deemed "political" to undergo intensive checks and label themselves as "foreign agents" on paper and statements. Many NGOs have closed in response to the legislation. RT television, which is funded by the Kremlin to give a Russian point of view on international affairs, confirmed Monday it has registered as a foreign agent in the United States, meeting a deadline from the U.S. Department of Justice.

## India Rounds Up Beggars for Ivanka Trump Visit



Police in India are rounding up beggars ahead of Ivanka Trump's visit for a conference in late November.

**HYDERABAD, India (Dispatches)** -- Authorities in the southern Indian city of Hyderabad are rounding up beggars ahead of a visit by Ivanka Trump for an international conference. Over the past week, more than 200 beggars have been transported to separate male and female shelter homes located on the grounds of two city prisons. Authorities have been strictly enforcing a begging ban on the city's streets and in other public places. The crackdown seems to be having the desired effect, with most of Hyderabad's thousands of beggars vanishing from sight. Trump is a senior adviser to her father, President Donald Trump. Later this month, she is scheduled to be a featured speaker at the Global Entrepreneurship Summit in Hyderabad, which will also be attended by Indian premier Narendra Modi. Thousands of Indian entrepreneurs want to attend the three-day-long summit from Nov. 28, though organizers say they can accommodate only 400 from India and 800 from

the United States and the rest of the world. Officials say the drive against begging was launched because two upcoming international events are taking place in the city — the entrepreneurship summit and the World Telugu Conference in December. Begging is a criminal offense in India and can be punished by as much as 10 years in prison, although the law is rarely enforced. "We will complete the clearing of beggars from the city roads by the end of the month," V.K. Singh said, a top police officer. The beggars have been rounded up from traffic junctions, bus stations and railway stations and transported by van to the shelters, where they often find themselves separated from their family members. They're also being fingerprinted before they're allowed to leave and told they could face jail time if they are found begging again. Over 20% of India's 1.3 billion people live on less than \$2 a day. For many, begging offers a last resort to stay alive.

## News in Brief

**LONDON (Dispatches)** -- Former UK service chiefs have launched a devastating critique of the state of British forces, saying they were no longer fit for purpose and that the army was 20 years out of date. Gen Sir Richard Barrons, who retired last year as commander of joint forces command, said the armed forces were close to breaking point, with the navy underfunded and the air force at the edge of its engineering capacity. Barrons, speaking alongside counterparts from the navy and air force, was giving evidence to a House of Commons defense committee investigation into the latest defense review, which is scheduled to announce its findings next month and which will almost certainly mean more cuts. Although the defense budget is 38 billion pounds a year and the Treasury has promised above-inflation rises, the Ministry of Defense has been hit hard by a sharp rise in the cost of U.S. planes and other equipment. The army has already fallen in size and the navy has many fewer surface ships.

**SYDNEY (Dispatches)** -- Human rights organizations and aid groups say they are concerned by news that the Royal Australian Navy recently conducted training with its Saudi counterpart on the Red Sea. The training exercise occurred on August 14, not far from the location where the Saudi military is enforcing a naval blockade of Yemen. The blockade has led to widespread food shortages, with 7 million people in the impoverished country now on the brink of an unprecedented famine. "I think it is disturbing to hear that the ADF is training a navy that is involved in this blockade," Elaine Pearson, Director of Human Rights Watch in Australia, said. "We know that the Saudi-led coalition has been arbitrarily delaying and diverting ships carrying lifesaving goods to Yemen, and humanitarian assistance is clearly desperately needed right now." Pearson said Human Rights Watch would be asking the ADF for an explanation.

**LONDON (Dispatches)** -- Scottish Labor interim leader Alex Rowley has resigned from the role amid claims about his conduct, the party has said. Rowley said he would stand aside over allegations published in The Scottish Sun from a former partner, who accused him of subjecting her to years of "emotional blackmail and abuse". The 49-year-old woman, who has chosen to remain anonymous, said the Scots Labor chief "destroyed my life" and vowed to speak out in the wake of the torrent of allegations of sexual harassment and abuse against politicians in Westminster and Holyrood. The Mid Scotland and Fife MSP, who took over as acting leader in August following the shock resignation of Kezia Dugdale, has categorically denied the allegations. It comes amid ongoing challenges for the party north of the border, where Dugdale became the third Scottish Labor leader to resign in the last three years. All of the major Westminster parties have been plunged into controversy by the sexual harassment scandal, which prompted the resignation of Defense Secretary Michael Fallon as well as investigations into several Tory and Labor MPs. Meanwhile at Holyrood, childcare minister Mark McDonald apologized and stood down after being accused of inappropriate behavior.

**ATHENS, Greece (AP)** -- Flash floods on the Greek capital's western outskirts Wednesday converted roads into raging torrents of mud and debris, killing at least three people and inundating homes and businesses. One woman died in her flooded home in the Megara area, while a man's body was also recovered from another flooded home in the area, the fire department said. The body of another man was later found in the yard outside a local business. The flooding came after severe weather overnight, with a storm hitting the area with driving rain. Firefighters received at least 340 calls for help to pump water from flooded buildings and rescue people trapped by the rising waters following a severe overnight storm. Crews also rescued passengers from a bus stranded by the floodwaters on a highway.

**CHICAGO (AP)** -- An increase in suicide rates among U.S. teens occurred at the same time social media use surged and a new analysis suggests there may be a link. Suicide rates for teens rose 2010-2015 after they had declined for nearly two decades, according to data from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Why the rates went up isn't known. The study doesn't answer the question, but it suggests that one factor could be rising social media use. Recent teen suicides have been blamed on cyberbullying, and social media posts depicting "perfect" lives may be taking a toll on teens' mental health, researchers say. The study's authors looked at CDC suicide reports from 2009-15 and results of two surveys given to U.S. high school students to measure attitudes, behaviors and interests. About half a million teens ages 13 to 18 were involved. They were asked about use of electronic devices, social media, print media, television and time spent with friends. Questions about mood included frequency of feeling hopeless and considering or attempting suicide.

**GENEVA (Dispatches)** -- The EU policy of helping Libyan authorities intercept people trying to cross the Mediterranean and return them to prisons is "inhuman", the UN has said. "The suffering of migrants detained in Libya is an outrage to the conscience of humanity," said the UN human rights chief, Zeid Ra'ad al-Husseini, in a statement. "The European Union's policy of assisting the Libyan coastguard to intercept and return migrants in the Mediterranean (is) inhuman." Hussein said "the detention system for migrants in Libya is broken beyond repair." "The international community cannot continue to turn a blind eye to the unimaginable horrors endured by migrants in Libya, and pretend that the situation can be remedied only by improving conditions in detention," he said. According to Libya's department of combating illegal migration (DCIM), 19,900 people were being held in facilities under its control in early November, up from about 7,000 in mid-September.