



Shutdown Feud Intensifies as Trump Grounds Speaker



Internal Revenue Service employees display placards during a rally on Jan. 17, 2019 in front of the Statehouse, in Boston, held to call for an end of the partial shutdown of the federal government.

WASHINGTON (AFP) - U.S. President Donald Trump forced the cancellation Thursday of a trip to Afghanistan by his Democratic opponent Nancy Pelosi, and scrapped administration officials' travel to the Davos forum as a government shutdown plunged Washington deeper into deadlock.

you that your trip to Brussels, Egypt, and Afghanistan has been postponed. We will reschedule this seven-day excursion when the Shutdown is over.

Sudan Police Use Live Fire Against Protesters in Capital



A man stands on top of a car flipped over and damaged by mourners outside the home of a demonstrator who died of a gunshot wound sustained during anti-government protests in Khartoum, Sudan January 18, 2019.

KHARTOUM (Reuters) - Sudanese police shot live ammunition on Friday as mourners gathered outside the home of a 60-year-old protester who died from a gunshot wound sustained during anti-government demonstrations, a Reuters witness said.

President Omar al-Bashir which are now into their fifth week. There were no immediate reports of casualties. Police could not immediately be reached for comment.

Takfiri Terrorists Kill Over 100 Soldiers in Nigeria

GENEVA (Reuters) - Armed groups have killed more than 100 soldiers and seized a huge stock of weapons in clashes in northeast Nigeria since Dec. 26, a report by a group of aid agencies said on Friday, weeks ahead of an election in which security is a campaign issue.

promising to defeat the Boko Haram insurgency, which aims to creating a takfiri state in the northeast. Daesh in West Africa (ISWA) split from Boko Haram in 2016 and has carried out most attacks in the last few weeks.

a non-publicized trip to Afghanistan -- an active war zone -- and were due to travel aboard a U.S. Air Force plane. Her office said Egypt was not on the itinerary. According to a congressional aide, several lawmakers were already loaded onto buses preparing to leave the U.S. Capitol Thursday when Trump pulled the plug. Rubbing it in, Trump said that Pelosi could still book her own non-government flights. "Obviously, if you would like to make your journey by flying commercial, that would certainly be your prerogative," he wrote. The cancellation followed Pelosi's suggestion that Trump postpone his January 29 State of the Union address to Congress, or do it from the White House instead. Although she cited the shutdown's effect on security, she appeared to want to deny the president one of his chief annual moments in the limelight. The White House denied that the travel blockage was payback, but few bought the argument. The government shutdown is due to Trump's refusal to sign off on funding for a host of departments, in retaliation for the Democratic-led House's refusal to approve his US-Mexico border wall project. The shutdown is leaving an increasingly deep impact across the country, where for almost a month FBI agents, museum workers, U.S. Coast Guard personnel and other officials have been either ordered to stay home or forced to work without pay. Regular employees will get back pay eventually, while contractors will not. The Democrats and the White House blame each other for the impasse, with neither side showing signs of backing down.

Car Bomb Kills At Least 21 People in Colombia



Police and security personnel work at the scene where a car bomb exploded, according to authorities, in Bogota, Colombia January 17, 2019.

BOGOTA (Reuters) - Colombian police on Friday said 21 people were killed and 68 injured after a car bomb exploded at a police academy in Bogota in an attack that prompted fears of a return to the country's violent past. In Thursday's attack, which the government described as an act of terrorism, the car broke through checkpoints into the grounds of the General Santander School before it detonated, shattering windows of apartments nearby. There has been no claim of responsibility for the blast, the deadliest since the government struck a peace deal with the Marxist FARC rebel group in 2016. President Ivan Duque called the explosion a "crazy terrorist act" against unarmed cadets and ordered police and the military to find the perpetrators and bring them to justice. "We will not rest until we capture and bring to justice the terrorists involved," Duque said late Thursday. "I tell the

criminals that social repudiation awaits them, the rejection of all Colombians and the international community." Local Caracol radio said that a suspect had been captured. Investigators identified the car's driver as Jose Aldemar Rojas Rodriguez, who was among the dead, Colombian Attorney General Nestor Humberto Martinez said on Thursday. The vehicle, a gray Nissan Patrol SUV, was carrying 80 kilograms (176 lb) of the high explosive pentolite, which has been used in the past by Colombian guerrillas, Martinez said. Car bombs were frequent in Colombia during decades of civil war between the government and various leftist rebel groups, as well as in violence involving the Medellin drug cartel led by the late drug lord Pablo Escobar. The worst of the war, which killed some 260,000 and left millions displaced, ended when the government reached a peace agreement with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) in 2016.

Trump Vows to Boost U.S. Missile Systems



President Trump says the U.S. will invest in technology to protect against the growing threat of hypersonic weapons and cruise missiles.

WASHINGTON (AFP) - President Donald Trump vowed Thursday to boost America's missile defense systems, including by investing in technology to protect against the growing threat of hypersonic weapons and cruise missiles. Speaking at the Pentagon, Trump unveiled the Missile Defense Review, a long-awaited analysis of the defensive network of U.S. interceptors that are designed to shoot down an incoming ballistic missile. Top among the concerns highlighted in the review is the speed at which rivals, particularly China and Russia, are pushing ahead with hypersonic missiles, which can thwart traditional defense systems. "The U.S. will now adjust its posture to defend against any missile strikes including cruise and hypersonic missiles," Trump told the military audience. "We will terminate any missile launches from hostile powers or even from powers that make a mistake. It won't happen, regardless of the missile type or geographic origins of the attack." Flying at low altitude and at many times the speed of sound, hypersonics are able to change direction and don't follow a ballistic arc, so are much harder to track and cannot currently be intercepted. As a result, the Pentagon is urgently

looking at ways to enhance its ability to track hypersonic missiles, primarily by using existing sensors that are deployed in space. "These new technologies produce new threats, and these threats are harder to see, harder to track and harder to defeat," Acting Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan said. "To our competitors: we see what you are doing and we are taking action." Russian President Vladimir Putin last month boasted of a new hypersonic missile that could fly at about 20,500 miles (33,000 kilometers) per hour and is unstoppable. While Trump blasted Iran for developing missile technology, he did not mention Russia or North Korea. Pyongyang has developed a ballistic missile arsenal now capable of hitting the United States. Trump ordered the missile defense review in 2017, amid heightened tensions with Pyongyang over its nuclear program -- the first such review of America's ballistic defenses since 2010. But Trump has since met North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in a bid to end the crisis, and he was expected to welcome a top North Korean official in Washington on Friday. Still, the review itself stresses that North Korea is "an extraordinary threat and the United States must remain vigilant."

WASHINGTON (AP) - The House intelligence committee chairman said he will "do what is necessary" to confirm a published report that President Donald Trump directed his personal attorney Michael Cohen to lie to Congress about negotiations over a real estate project in Moscow during the 2016 election. Democrat Rep. Adam Schiff of California says the allegation that Trump asked Cohen to lie "to curtail the investigation and cover up his business dealings with Russia is among the most serious to date." The report by BuzzFeed News, citing two unnamed law enforcement officials, says that Trump directed Cohen to lie to Congress and that Cohen regularly briefed Trump on the Moscow project. The Associated Press has not independently confirmed the report. An adviser to Cohen, Lanny Davis, declined to comment. *** MOSCOW (Reuters) - Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Friday that President Vladimir Putin had agreed to a proposal by German Chancellor Angela Merkel for German experts to monitor the Kerch Strait near Crimea. Lavrov said Putin had agreed to the request a month ago, but that the Germans had still not arrived. In November, Russia detained three Ukrainian navy vessels and their crews in the Black Sea near the Kerch Strait, fuelling tensions between the two countries. Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine in 2014. *** WASHINGTON (AFP) - U.S. investigators were on Friday to begin to question diplomatic staff who were stationed at the Ecuadorian embassy in London during WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange's years-long stay about his visitors, according to the whistleblower group. It follows international subpoenas from the U.S. Department of Justice, which is probing a report that President Donald Trump's disgraced former 2016 campaign chairman Paul Manafort held secret talks there with Assange, WikiLeaks said. The Justice Department, which declined to comment on the matter, wanted to talk to six staff members from the embassy and would start to interview them in the Ecuadorian capital Quito on Friday, it added. Britain's The Guardian newspaper claimed in November that Manafort -- who was convicted of multiple charges including bank fraud and money laundering in two separate cases last year -- met Assange on several occasions from 2013 to 2016. The period coincided with Manafort becoming a key figure in Trump's bid for the White House and preceded WikiLeaks publishing thousands of emails allegedly stolen by Russian hackers from the rival Democratic campaign of Hillary Clinton. *** LONDON (Reuters) - German Chancellor Angela Merkel's protegee appealed to the British on Friday to stay in the European Union, saying her compatriots had not forgotten how Britain welcomed Germany back as a sovereign nation after World War Two. Conservative leader Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, who succeeded Merkel as leader of the Christian Democrats, joined German politicians, industrialists and artists in a last-minute plea to Britons as the clock ticks down to Brexit in 70 days. "Without your great nation, this continent would not be what it is today," they said in the letter, which was published in The Times newspaper. "After the horrors of the Second World War, Britain did not give up on us. It has welcomed Germany back as a sovereign nation and a European power." *** LONDON (AFP) - Queen Elizabeth II's 97-year-old husband Prince Philip emerged "shocked and shaken" but unhurt from a car crash that flipped his Land Rover on its side and stirred up a UK debate on Friday about old age and driving. A nine-month-old baby who was in the back seat of the Kia hatchback involved was uninjured, while one of the two women inside hurt her wrist, local police said. "We are aware of the public interest in this case, however, as with any other investigation it would be inappropriate to speculate on the causes of the collision until an investigation is carried out," the police said in a statement. Images published by UK media showed a dark Land Rover standing on its side by the curb, driver's side down, its windscreen smashed, glass and metal debris scattered across a road running by a leafy park. "I was driving home and I saw a car, a black (Land) Rover come out from a side road and it rolled," witness Roy Warne told BBC Radio on Friday. "There was a huge collision with another car. I went to the other car and there was a baby in the back" in a harness. *** TOKYO (AFP) - Hitachi said Friday it would freeze construction of its stalled nuclear power station in Wales due to problems financing the project, a blow to Britain's nuclear strategy and a costly decision for the Japanese firm. The company said in a statement the decision was made "from the viewpoint of Hitachi's economic rationality as a private enterprise." Shelving the project at the Wylfa Newydd plant on Anglesey, a small island off the Welsh coast, will cost the Japanese firm 300 billion yen (\$2.8 billion), it said. Hitachi launched the planned construction after acquiring Britain-based Horizon Nuclear Power in 2012. The British government had reportedly agreed to finance two thirds of the three trillion yen construction cost, with Hitachi as well as Japanese and British investors scheduled to cover the balance. But Hitachi's fund-raising efforts have been deadlocked at home while its request for additional investment from the British government has been shelved with London consumed by Brexit.