Kayhan

WORLD NEWS

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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.

The mess in the U.S. capital already verged on the surreal as Congress feuds with the White House over how to end an impasse now in its fourth week, with thousands of federal workers left unpaid.

But now it is also getting increasingly personal between the two main antagonists. In a letter laced with sarcasm, Trump told House Speaker Pelosi: "I am sorry to inform

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

"I am sure you would agree that postponing this public relations event is appropriate," he wrote

And in a move that appeared aimed at heading off Democratic criticism about nonessential administration travel during the shutdown, the White House announced the cancellation of a trip to the World Economic Forum by Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and others "out of consideration for the 800,000 great American workers not receiving pay.'

Pelosi and her delegation had planned

a non-publicized trip to Afghanistan 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 stav 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

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.

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

President Omar al-Bashir which are now into their fifth week

There were no immediate reports of casualties. Police could not immediately

were wailing and crying and some were carrying Sudanese flags.

After Othman had been buried and the weekly Muslim Friday prayers began at noon, the mourners dwindled to hundreds who began chanting "Down, that's it", which has become the slogan of protesters signaling their main demand for Bashir to step down.

They also chanted "Freedom! Freedom!" and "A million martyrs for a new era!" Some stood on the overturned police car.

As the atmosphere in the area grew more tense, police and other security forces pulled out of Burri completely, leaving no security presence on its streets.

Across the River Nile in the neighboring city of Omdurman, police fired tear gas at dozens of demonstrators as they left a mosque in the Wad Nubawi district, witnesses said

Security forces have at times used live ammunition to disperse protesters. The official death toll in five weeks of protests stands at 24, including two security forces personnel. Rights groups say the figure may be nearly twice as high.

The protests were triggered by price rises, but soon developed into demonstrations against Bashir. The president has responded defiantly, blaming the protests on foreign "agents". He has said the unrest

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.

Donald Trump vowed Thursday to track hypersonic missiles, primarily to boost America's missile defense by using existing sensors that are

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

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

"The U.S. will now adjust its posture

to defend against any missile strikes

including cruise and hypersonic missiles," Trump told the military

"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

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

As a result, the Pentagon is urgently

ballistic missile.

defense systems.

audience.

attack."

intercepted.

WASHINGTON (AFP) - President looking at ways to enhance its ability

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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 nonth 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 natter, 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 nultiple charges including bank fraud and money laundering in two separate cases last year -- me 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 protege 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 t would be inappropriate to speculate on the causes of the collision until an investigation is carried out," the police said in a statement. Images nublished 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 Rov 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.



a gunshot wound sustained during antigovernment demonstrations, a Reuters witness said.

Around 5,000 mourners turned out for the funeral and burial of Moawia Othman, who was shot late on Thursday during demonstrations against the 30-year rule of

be reached for comment. Police opened fire after some mourners

pelted them with rocks and overturned a police car, the Reuters witness said. Mourners also blocked a main street in the Burri district of the capital Khartoum with stones and chanted "There is no God but God!" and "Martyr! Martyr!". Several

will not lead to a change in government, challenging his opponents to seek power through the ballot box.

But the near-daily protests pose one of the most serious and sustained challenges to Bashir's rule as his party prepares to change the constitution to allow him to seek another term.

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.

Attacks had intensified over the past few weeks and forced thousands of people to flee to safer areas in Nigeria and over the border to neighboring Chad, the report said. They have mostly been carried out by a Daesh-allied faction of militant group Boko Haram.

The surge has occurred in the run-up to an election on Feb. 16 in which President Muhammadu Buhari is seeking a second term, and his critics have seized upon security as an issue

Buhari, a retired general and former military ruler, came to power in 2015

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.

The report by the Global Protection Cluster in Chad, a group of aid agencies led by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, said: "Raids against the Nigerian army have killed more than 100 Nigerian soldiers. According to the information available, the armed groups captured a huge stock of weapons."

Nigerian defense ministry and military spokesmen did not immediately respond to requests by Reuters for comment.

The report said attacks in the Baga-Kawa area of northeast Nigeria on Dec. 26 caused more than 6,357 people to flee east into Chad and some 20,000 others to flee to safety within Nigeria.

Last month, ISWA seized the town of Baga, where a multi-national force formed by Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon and Niger to fight the militants is based. The Nigerian army later regained Baga and said it had given ISWA a "bloody nose".

Boko Haram has killed about 30,000 people and forced about two million people to flee their homes since the insurgency began in 2009.

ISWA has been responsible for attacks on military bases of recent weeks. In contrast, Boko Haram typically carries out suicide bombings and gun raids, though it said it carried out Monday's attack on the northeast Nigerian town of Rann.

United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator in Nigeria, Edward Kallon, said on Friday that repeated attacks were "severely affecting" aid delivery to the 76,000 internally displaced people living in Rann.

systems, including by investing deployed in space. in technology to protect against

"These new technologies produce the growing threat of hypersonic new threats, and these threats are weapons and cruise missiles. harder to see, harder to track and harder to defeat," Acting Defense Secretary Speaking at the Pentagon, Trump

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."

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 Britainbased 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.