

Dozens Killed After Bridge Collapses in Genoa



A section of a giant motorway bridge in Genoa collapsed on Tuesday, killing dozens of people.

ROME (Reuters) -- A motorway bridge collapsed on Tuesday over the northern Italian port city of Genoa, killing dozens of people according to the local ambulance service, in what the transport minister said was likely to be "an immense tragedy".

A section of the bridge crashed down from a height of about 50 meters over a river and some railroad tracks and buildings. It collapsed at about 11:30 a.m. (0930 GMT) during torrential rainfall, the local fire brigade said.

The head of the ambulance service said there were "dozens of dead", according to Italian news agency Adnkronos. At least 10 people were killed and 20 vehicles were involved, local police sources said.

Helicopter footage on social media showed trucks and cars stranded on either side of the roughly 80-metre long collapsed section of the bridge, which was built on the A10 toll motorway in the 1960s.

An ambulance official told Reuters

the service could only confirm two injured people so far, "but we suppose there are unfortunately a lot of dead."

Restructuring work on the bridge, which was 1.2 km long in total, was carried out in 2016. The highway operator said work to shore up the foundation of the bridge was being carried out at the time of the collapse, adding that the bridge was constantly monitored.

The highway is a major artery to the Italian Riviera and to France's southern coast. Train services around Genoa have been halted.

A witness told Sky Italia television he saw "eight or nine" vehicles on the bridge when it collapsed in what he said was an "apocalyptic scene".

Transport Minister Danilo Toninelli said in a tweet that he was "following with great apprehension what seems like an immense tragedy".

The office of Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte said he was heading to Genoa in the evening and would remain there on Wednesday. Defense Minister Elisabetta Trenta said the army was ready to offer manpower and vehicles to help with the rescue operations.

Shares in Atlantia, the toll road operator which runs the motorway, were suspended after falling 6.3 percent after news of the collapse.

U.S. Says Russia's Space Weapons 'Disturbing'



President Vladimir Putin presents new weaponry during his address at the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation in March 2018.

GENEVA (Reuters) -- The United States voiced deep suspicion on Tuesday over Russia's pursuit of new space weapons, including a mobile laser system to destroy satellites in space, and the launch of a new inspector satellite which was acting in an "abnormal" way.

Russia's pursuit of counterspace capabilities was "disturbing", Yleem D.S. Poblete, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Arms Control, Verification and Compliance, told the UN's Conference on Disarmament which is discussing a new treaty to prevent an arms race in outer space.

A Russian delegate at the conference dismissed Poblete's remarks as unfounded and slanderous.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, at the Geneva forum in February, said a priority was to

prevent an arms race in outer space, in line with Russia's joint draft treaty with China presented a decade ago.

But Russian President Vladimir Putin unveiled in March "six new major offensive weapons systems", including the Peresvet military mobile laser system, Poblete said.

"To the United States this is yet further proof that the Russian actions do not match their words," she said.

Referring to a "space apparatus inspector", whose deployment was announced by the Russian defense ministry last October, Poblete said: "The only certainty we have is that this system has been 'placed in orbit'."

She said its behavior on-orbit was inconsistent with anything seen before, including other Russian inspection satellite activities,

adding: "We are concerned with what appears to be very abnormal behavior by a declared 'space apparatus inspector'."

Russia's pursuit of counterspace capabilities "is disturbing given the recent pattern of Russian malign behavior," she said, and its proposed treaty would not prohibit such activity, nor the testing or stockpiling of anti-satellite weapons capabilities.

Alexander Deyneko, a senior Russian diplomat in Geneva, dismissed what he called "the same unfounded, slanderous accusations based on suspicions, on suppositions and so on".

The United States had not proposed amendments to the Sino-Russian draft treaty, he said.

"We are seeing that the American side are raising their serious concerns about Russia, so you would think they ought to be the first to support the Russian initiative. They should be active in working to develop a treaty that would 100 percent satisfy the security interests of the American people," he said.

"But they have not made this constructive contribution," he said.

China's disarmament ambassador Fu Cong called for substantive discussions on outer space, leading to negotiations.

"China has always stood for peaceful use of outer space and we are against weaponization of outer space, an arms race in outer space, or even more turning outer space into a battle field," he said.

China Blasts U.S. Antagonism in New Military Act

BEIJING (Dispatches) -- China on Tuesday condemned measures targeting it in a new U.S. military act, saying it exaggerated antagonism and that Beijing would take a close look at aspects that beef up the role of a U.S. panel that reviews foreign investment proposals.

China's complaints about the act come as the world's two biggest economies engage in an increasingly bitter fight over trade, levying tariffs on each others' products.

U.S. President Donald Trump signed a \$716-billion military policy act on Monday that authorizes military spending and waters down controls on U.S. government contracts with China's ZTE Corp and Huawei Technologies Co Ltd.

The National Defense Authorization Act, or NDAA, strengthens the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS), which reviews proposals to determine if they threaten national security. That

measure was seen as targeting China. China's Commerce Ministry said it had noted the inclusion of CFIUS in the act and would "comprehensively assess the contents", paying close attention to the impact on Chinese firms.

"The U.S. side should objectively and fairly treat Chinese investors, and avoid CFIUS becoming an obstacle to investment cooperation between Chinese and U.S. firms," the ministry said in a statement.

Chinese and U.S. companies seek greater cooperation on investment, it added, urging the two countries' governments to heed the voices of their companies, and provide a good environment and stable expectations.

Monday's legislation also calls "long-term strategic competition with China" a top priority for the United States, which should improve the military capabilities of self-ruled Taiwan, claimed by China as a wayward province.

In a separate statement, China's foreign ministry said the United States passed the act despite China's strong objections and it was dissatisfied with the "negative content related to China".

China urges the United States to abandon Cold War thinking and correctly and objectively view relations, and not implement the act's negative clauses about China, so as to avoid harming cooperation, the ministry added.

China's Defense Ministry also weighed in, saying the act "exaggerated Sino-U.S. antagonism", damaged trust between the two militaries and involved the most important and sensitive issue in bilateral ties, namely Taiwan.

"We will never let any person, at any time or in any form split Taiwan off from China," it added. In Taipei, Taiwan's Foreign Ministry thanked the United States for its consistent support.

Trump Calls Longtime Colleague 'That Dog'



U.S. President Donald Trump speaks during a meeting on African American History Month on Feb. 1, 2017 beside former White House staffer Omarosa Manigault Newman.

WASHINGTON (AP) -- President Donald Trump escalated his messy clash with former aide Omarosa Manigault Newman on Tuesday, referring to the longtime colleague, who had been the top African-American in his White House, as "that dog!"

Trump tweeted a barrage of insults Tuesday morning as Manigault Newman continued promoting her White House tell-all. It paints a damning picture of Trump, including her claim that he used racial slurs on the set of his reality show "The Apprentice."

"When you give a crazed, crying lowlife a break, and give her a job at the White House, I guess it just didn't work out," Trump said. "Good work by General Kelly for quickly firing that dog!" John Kelly is White House chief of staff.

While Trump trades in insults on a near daily basis, deeming Manigault Newman a "dog" was a stunning move. He has also pushed back against Manigault Newman's claim that she had heard an audiotape of him using the N-word.

He tweeted that he had received a call from the producer of "The Apprentice" assuring him "there are NO TAPES of the Apprentice where I used such a terrible and disgusting word as attributed by Wacky and Deranged Omarosa."

Trump insisted, "I don't have that word in my vocabulary, and never have." He said Manigault Newman had called him "a true Champion of Civil Rights" until she was fired.

Manigault Newman, the former White House liaison to black voters, writes in her new memoir that she'd heard such tapes existed. She said Sunday that she had listened to one after the book closed.

Earlier, Trump accused Manigault Newman as "wacky" and "not smart" after his former co-star revealed her recording of a phone conversation with the president.

Beyond their war of words, the row touched on several sensitive issues in Trump's White House, including a lack of racial diversity among senior officials, security in the executive mansion, a culture that some there feel borders on paranoia and the extraordinary measures used to keep ex-employees quiet.

In an unusual admission, Trump acknowledged that the public sparring was perhaps beneath a person in his position, tweeting that he knew it was "not presidential" to take on "a lowlife like Omarosa." But he added: "This is a modern day form of communication and I know the Fake News Media will be working overtime to make even Wacky Omarosa look legitimate as possible. Sorry!"

Youths Torch Scores of Cars in Swedish City



Burned cars are pictured at Frolunda Square in Gothenburg, Sweden, August 14, 2018.

STOCKHOLM (Reuters) -- Youths torched and vandalized scores of cars in the Swedish city of Gothenburg and surrounding towns and Prime Minister Stefan Lofven said on Tuesday the disturbances looked organized "almost like a military operation".

It was unclear what triggered Monday night's unrest but Sweden has seen a rise in violence in areas with high unemployment and other social problems and the incident echoed rioting in the capital Stockholm in 2013.

Mounting public concern about gang-related and other violence has become a central issue in campaigning ahead of a national election on Sept. 9.

Police said that up to 100 cars were either set fire to or vandalized in Gothenburg, Sweden's second-biggest city located in the western part of the country, and in nearby towns such as Falkenberg and Trollhattan, an industrial area with high unemployment. There were no reports of injuries.

Two men, 16 and 21 years old, were arrested on Tuesday and police said it expected to make more arrests during

the day. Police said gangs were involved but gave no details.

Swedish towns have seen sporadic violence on a smaller scale in mid-August in recent years at the end of the school summer break.

"We believe that up to 100 cars have been burned or damaged," police spokeswoman Ulla Brehm said. "They were organized and prepared."

A handful of cars were also burned overnight in Stockholm.

"It seems very organized, almost like a military operation," Lofven said in an interview on Swedish radio. "Society is always going to react strongly to this kind of thing." Lofven visited the region on Tuesday and met police.

The violence echoed rioting by hundreds of youths in Stockholm and some of its poorer suburbs in 2013, sparked by the police killing of a 69-year-old man wielding a machete in a suburb that prompted accusations of police brutality.

Law and order is a key issue ahead of the election after a spike in gang violence saw more than 40 people shot dead last year.



ISLAMABAD (AP) -- Pakistan has kicked off a day of celebrations marking the country's 71 years of statehood and independence. This year, the anniversary comes amid political change with a new government taking over following the July 25 general elections. Pakistan's former cricket-star-turned-politician Imran Khan is to become the next prime minister. President Mamnoon Hussain hoisted the national flag at a ceremony in Islamabad on Tuesday while Pakistanis across the country raised the banner at their homes and on their cars. Fireworks erupted over the capital, Islamabad, at midnight on Monday, ushering in the festivities. During the day, gun salutes were held in Islamabad and the four provincial capitals. Festive rallies and school functions were also taking place. Pakistan gained independence when British left India and split the subcontinent in 1947.

BERLIN (AP) -- Berlin police say threatening letters containing a white powder have been sent to both the American and Israeli embassies in the German capital. Police spokeswoman Kerstin Ismer told The Associated Press on Tuesday that the Israeli embassy received a letter July 24 and the U.S. Embassy on July 26. Ismer says police have opened two investigations on suspicion of disturbing the peace by threatening a crime. She says both contained a powder but would not comment on whether it had been determined to be dangerous or other details due to the ongoing investigation. She would also not say whether the two letters were thought to be connected or whether there were any suspects yet. Neither embassy had any immediate comment, saying in general they do not comment on security issues.

NAIROBI (AFP) -- Burundi's president, Pierre Nkurunziza, has issued a decree banning the use of plastic bags in the small central African country within the next 18 months. "The manufacture, import, storage, sale and use of all plastic bags and other plastic packaging is prohibited," said the presidential order signed by Nkurunziza on Monday and seen by AFP Tuesday. "A grace period of 18 months is granted, before the entry into force of this decree, to allow for the disposal of current stocks and orders already placed," the decree read. The decree includes some exemptions that may be authorized for "biodegradable plastic bags, bags and plastic materials used in medical services, and in industrial and pharmaceutical packaging". When the law comes into force Burundi will join a growing list of African countries that have introduced total plastic bag bans to fight pollution, including Morocco, Rwanda and Kenya.

LOS ANGELES (AFP) -- Taiwan's president has given a speech in the United States -- the first time in 15 years that a leader of the island has spoken publicly on American soil -- in a move likely to anger Beijing. During a stopover en route to Paraguay, Tsai Ing-wen, whose government refuses to endorse Beijing's view that Taiwan is part of China, pledged to jointly promote regional stability and peace. China views Taiwan as part of its own territory -- to be reunified by force if necessary -- even though the two sides split in 1949 after a civil war. Beijing is always swift to condemn any move that could be interpreted as de facto diplomatic recognition of the government in Taipei and has stepped up pressure on Taiwan since Tsai, of the independence-leaning Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), came to power in 2016.

SEOUL/TAIPEI (Reuters) -- South Korea marked its first "memorial day" on Tuesday for girls and women forced to work in Japan's wartime brothels, with both of the U.S. allies expressing concern that the emotionally charged issue could undermine their relations. Under a 2015 deal, Japan apologized to the "comfort women", its euphemism for women -- many of them Korean -- forced to work in its wartime brothels, and provided a 1 billion yen (now \$9.4 million) fund to help them. But South Korea has recently sought to revisit the issue. "I hope that this issue will not lead to a diplomatic dispute between Korea and Japan. Nor do I see this as an issue that can be solved through diplomatic solutions between the two countries," South Korean President Moon Jae-in said in comments marking the first "Memorial Day for Japanese Forces' Comfort Women Victims". Japan insists the issue was resolved by the 2015 deal, struck with a previous, conservative South Korean administration.

LONDON (Guardian) -- Jeremy Hunt has called on the EU to change its approach on Brexit, and said the risk of failing to reach a deal has risen in recent weeks. The British foreign secretary was speaking at the start of three-day tour of continental Europe aimed at persuading member states to back Theresa May's Brexit plan. "I think the risk of a no Brexit deal has been increasing recently," Hunt told journalists in Helsinki. "But it's not what anyone wants and I hope very much that we'll find a way to avoid that." He added: "We do need to see a change in approach by the European commission." Hunt, who became foreign secretary last month after Boris Johnson resigned in protest at May's plan, is also due to meet counterparts in Latvia, Denmark and the Netherlands. While the countries have been strong UK allies, none has budged from the EU's common position on Brexit.