

# Crimea Shooting Spree Leaves 17 People Dead



Medical workers treat injured people outside a college building in Crimean city of Kerch, Russia, on Oct. 17, 2018.

MOSCOW (Dispatches) -- At least 17 people were killed and dozens injured at a college in the Black Sea region of Crimea on Wednesday when a student went through the building shooting at fellow pupils before killing himself, Russian law enforcement officials said.

Eighteen-year-old Vladislav Roslyakov turned up at the college in the city of Kerch on Wednesday afternoon carrying a firearm and then began shooting, investigators said. His body was later found in the college with what they said were self-inflicted gunshot wounds.

There were no immediate clues as to his motive in mounting such an attack, which recalled similar shooting sprees carried out by students in U.S.

schools. Crimea seceded from Ukraine in 2014 and joined Russia, prompting Western sanctions, but since then there have been no major outbreaks of violence there.

Many of the victims from Wednesday's attacks were teenage students who suffered shrapnel and bullet wounds.

Pupils and staff described scenes of mayhem as panicked pupils tried to flee the building. They said the attack had started with an explosion, followed by more blasts, and a hail of gunfire.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, at a meeting in the southern Russian resort of Sochi with his Egyptian counterpart, declared a moment's

silence for the victims.

"This is a clearly a crime," he said. "The motives will be carefully investigated."

The director of the school, Olga Grebennikova, described the scene that she encountered when she entered the college building after the attack.

"There are bodies everywhere, children's bodies everywhere. It was a real act of terrorism. They burst in five or 10 minutes after I'd left. They blew up everything in the hall, glass was flying," Grebennikova told Crimean media outlets.

"They then ran about throwing some kind of explosives around, and then ran around the second floor with guns, opened the office doors, and killed anyone they could find."

Soon after the attack, Russian officials said they were investigating the possibility that it was terrorism. Troops with armored personnel carriers were sent to the scene. Local parents were told to collect their children from the city's schools and kindergartens for their safety.

However, the Investigative Committee, the state body that investigates major crimes, said later that it was re-classifying the case from terrorism to mass murder.

Officials had previously given the death toll as 18, but the Committee revised that to 17 killed. An employee at Kerch's hospital said dozens of people were being treated for their injuries in the emergency room and in the operating theater.

# Mattis to Meet Chinese Counterpart Amid Tensions



Pentagon chief Jim Mattis (R) shakes hands with an official upon his arrival in Singapore on October 17, 2018.

SINGAPORE (Dispatches) -- U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis plans to meet on Thursday in Singapore with his Chinese counterpart amid escalating tensions over China's purchase of Russian fighter planes and missiles as well as ongoing friction in the South China Sea.

Shortly after Mattis arrived in Singapore on Wednesday after a visit to Vietnam, a senior Mattis aide told reporters that the meeting is set to happen on Thursday. It comes just weeks after their talks planned for Beijing fell apart.

Mattis and Chinese Defense Minister Wei Fenghe were in Singapore for a regional meeting of defense ministers. Mattis visited China in June, but since then a series of events have escalated tensions.

The assistant secretary of defense for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs, Randall Schriver, told reporters the Chinese had requested the Singapore meeting. In late September, China told the Pentagon that Wei would be unavailable to meet Mattis in Beijing, so that visit was canceled.

Schriver said the U.S. sees signs that the military-to-military relationship may be on the upswing.

"The fact that he's meeting with Minister Wei is some evidence that the Chinese are

interested in keeping things normal and stable, as are we," Schriver said. "Our impression is that the (Chinese) military wants to keep things stable."

Schriver said the trigger for recent tensions between the Pentagon and the Chinese military was the Trump administration's decision in September to sanction the Chinese military for buying Russian fighter planes and missiles. That action was taken under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act passed by Congress in 2017.

China responded with strong criticism, followed in the military arena by a decision to cancel a planned visit to the Pentagon by the head of the Chinese navy and a confrontation in the South China Sea between a Chinese warship and a U.S. Navy destroyer, the USS Decatur.

"That may turn out to be a relatively short bump in the road," Schriver said, adding that Mattis is expected to convey to Wei U.S. interest in normal relations with the Chinese military.

More broadly, relations between the U.S. and China have deteriorated in recent months as escalating trade disputes and tariff hikes have been exacerbated by a newly announced U.S. military equipment sale to Taiwan.

# Presidential Candidates Exchange Insults in Brazil



Presidential candidate Jair Bolsonaro at a rally in Brasilia.

BRASILIA (AP) -- The right-wing front-runner in Brazil's presidential race called his leftist rival a "puppet" while his opponent mocked him for avoiding debates, engaging in a heated Twitter exchange less than two weeks before their runoff election.

The candidates haven't met in any of a series of scheduled televised debates, with rightist Jair Bolsonaro declining to participate after being stabbed during a Sept. 6 campaign event. He was released from the hospital 23 days later but says his doctors recommended against him attending the debates.

Candidates in the most polarized election Brazil has seen in decades entered their last day of campaigning on Saturday.

In the exchange, Bolsonaro called leftist candidate Fernando Haddad a "puppet guided by a drunkard" - a reference to jailed former President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who hand-picked Haddad to succeed him as the Workers' Party presidential candidate after being barred from the race.

"It is easy to use Twitter and live online videos, congressman," responded Haddad, the former mayor of Sao Paulo. "Let's debate face to face, with politeness, in a hospital if needed. People need to see you coming to the job interview."

Bolsonaro won the first round of the presidential election Oct. 7 with 46 percent

of the vote, against Haddad's 29 percent. But since he failed to top 50 percent, Bolsonaro is in a second-round ballot against Haddad on Oct. 28.

The exchange began after Haddad criticized his own Workers' Party for recent corruption scandals, which include the huge "Car Wash" investigation that has ensnared Brazil's top political and business leaders.

Bolsonaro called his rival's acknowledgement of his party's mistakes "deceit" by "the puppet."

Haddad retorted by criticizing Bolsonaro for staying away from the debates while still giving interviews and online speeches. Haddad ended the Twitter exchange with a picture of a TV debate podium and the words: "I am waiting for you here, congressman."

Also on Tuesday, Haddad accused Bolsonaro of being endorsed by the Ku Klux Klan. A report by Britain's BBC said former KKK leader David Duke praised the far-right candidate and said he "sounds like one of us."

"My adversary is also meeting allies and gathering forces. Today he was endorsed by Ku Klux Klan," Haddad said.

Bolsonaro tweeted that he refuses any support coming from supremacist groups. Brazilian supremacist groups have applauded his candidacy.



BERLIN (Reuters) -- German Chancellor Angela Merkel said there was still a chance of concluding an agreement for an orderly exit for Britain from the European Union, but Berlin was preparing for all options, including the possibility of a no-deal departure. Addressing the German parliament ahead of a Wednesday evening European summit on issues including Brexit, Merkel said agreement had yet to be reached on arrangements for the border between the north and south of Ireland. Germany's preparations for the possibility of Britain leaving the EU without a withdrawal agreement included looking at the status of the roughly 100,000 British citizens who lived in Germany and the status of those of them who were German state employees. "I want Britain to be a close and trusting partner for Europe after leaving," she said. "Now, as before, there is a chance of reaching a good and solid withdrawal agreement. "But it must be clear that in the end there will always be a difference between membership of the EU and being a partner," she added.

TOKYO (AFP) -- Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on Wednesday sent a ritual offering to a controversial shrine honoring World War II criminals that infuriates its Asian neighbors China and South Korea. Abe has not visited Yasukuni Shrine in person since December 2013 - a trip that triggered a downturn in relations with Beijing - and the Premier is currently in Europe. However, he sent a sacred "masakaki" tree bearing his name at the start of a four-day festival, a shrine spokesman told AFP. There were no reports of members of Abe's Cabinet visiting the shrine, although some senior politicians also sent offerings. The shrine honors 2.5 million war dead, including top World War II criminals, and has frequently been a source of sour relations with countries that suffered from Japan's military atrocities. Yasukuni recently hit the headlines in Japan and internationally after its chief priest said he would resign after "highly inappropriate language" criticizing the emperor was leaked to a magazine.

DUBLIN (CNBC) -- Approximately 3 million Europeans were affected by a September Facebook security breach in which users' personal information was stolen, the Irish Data Protection Commission told CNBC. This security breach is expected to be the first major test of Europe's new General Data Protection Regulation, and the number of European users affected could help determine the severity of any penalties against the company. Under GDPR, companies handling the personal data of Europeans must adhere to strict requirements for holding and securing that information, and must report breaches to authorities within 72 hours. Under the regulation, companies can face fines of up to 4 percent of their annual global revenue. For Facebook, which made more than \$40.65 billion in revenue in 2017, that fine could be as much as \$1.63 billion. Facebook first disclosed the security breach on Sept. 28, saying 50 million accounts had their login access tokens stolen. That figure was reduced to 30 million on Friday, and Facebook confirmed that 29 million of the impacted users had their names and contact information exposed. Among those users, 14 million of also had other personal information, such as their gender, relationship status and their recent place check-ins, stolen by the attackers.

NEW DELHI (Reuters) -- An Indian government minister resigned on Wednesday, saying he was doing so in order to fight accusations of sexual harassment levied by several women, the most high-profile casualty of a growing #MeToo movement. More than a dozen women have accused M.J. Akbar, a junior foreign minister, of a range of inappropriate behavior during his career as a journalist before entering politics. He has denied the accusations and filed a lawsuit against one of the women for defaming him. The #MeToo movement, which began in the United States more than a year ago in response to accusations of sexual harassment and abuse by powerful men in the entertainment industry, gained traction in India in late September after the actress Tanushree Dutta said actor Nana Patekar behaved inappropriately on the sets of a film they were shooting in 2008. Patekar has denied any wrongdoing. Since then, more than a dozen men in the media, entertainment, political and art worlds have been accused of offences, ranging from sexual harassment to rape.

MADRID (Dispatches) -- A diplomatic spat broke out between the Spanish and Flemish governments after the president of the Flemish parliament made statements in support of Catalan separatists. The Spanish government stripped the Flemish representative in Madrid of his diplomatic status in retaliation for the remarks by Jan Peumans, in which he criticized Spain's response to last year's Catalan independence referendum. Flemish Minister-President Geert Bourgeois called Spain's decision a "very unfriendly act" and said Wednesday he would summon the Spanish ambassador as soon as possible, according to Belgian media. During the opening of a photo exhibition on the push for Catalanian independence last week, Flemish Parliament President Peumans said of efforts to stop the referendum, deemed illegal by the Spanish judiciary: "Anyone who uses violence at the ballot box burns democracy ... True democrats honor the ballot box as a symbol of the will of the people." He added that violence during a vote is "out of the question," and "so is violence against politicians, because of their opinion. And imprisoning politicians is an act of violence."

# Rohingya Girls Sold Into Forced Labor in Bangladesh



Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh live in crowded camps with little opportunity for jobs.

PHNOM PENH (Thomson Reuters Foundation) -- Rohingya refugee girls are being sold into forced labor to raise money for desperate families in overcrowded camps in Bangladesh, according to the United Nations' migration agency.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) said it had identified 99 cases of human trafficking during the year starting September 2017, although it cautioned that the true number was likely far greater.

Of the victims, 35 were girls and 31 were women, the IOM said in a report this week. Thirty-one of the girls ended up in forced labor as did 26 of the women.

"The stories we commonly hear are of vulnerable people being

approached by traffickers with false promises of work and a better life," said IOM spokeswoman Dina Parmer, adding some refugees were unaware of the risks.

"Others may be aware it is dangerous, but feel their situation is so desperate that they are willing to take extreme measures, perhaps sacrificing one family member for the sake of the rest of the family," she said in a statement.

The rest of the trafficking survivors comprised of 25 adult men and eight boys who were forced into labor. Five women and four girls ended up in situations of sexual exploitation.

The Bangladeshi charity Young Power in Social Action (YPSA) is raising awareness among refugees

of the dangers of trafficking, and has been collecting reports from Rohingya community leaders, as well as local and international groups.

"More than 1,000 have been identified as victims of human trafficking," said Jishu Barua of the YPSA.

More than 900,000 Rohingya, an ethnic and religious Muslim minority in Myanmar, live in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar district, the vast majority in camps, according to the United Nations.

About 700,000 of them arrived in the four months after deadly attacks by Rohingya insurgents on Myanmar security forces in August 2017 were followed by military operations that the United Nations and human rights groups said targeted civilians.

Bangladesh bars refugees from leaving the camps, or holding jobs other than participating in small-scale cash-for-work programs run by humanitarian agencies, IOM noted.

"They are desperate to get out of the camps to make some money," Barua told the Thomson Reuters Foundation by phone from Cox's Bazar.

Traffickers prey on that desperation, offering transportation and work opportunities, according to IOM.

Among the cases IOM documented, one woman was forced to work "extremely long hours for very little pay in the fish processing industry", while girls and young women were used as domestic maids.

# South Korea Denies Refugee Status to Yemenis

SEOUL (Reuters) -- South Korea has denied refugee status but granted temporary stay permits to hundreds of Yemeni asylum seekers who arrived on the southern island of Jeju this year, the Ministry of Justice announced on Wednesday.

More than 500 Yemenis sought refuge in South Korea between January and May, having fled the war that has engulfed their homeland.

The influx of asylum seekers to South Korea - which has only granted refugee status to 839 of 40,470 applicants from various countries since 1994, not including defectors from North Korea - sparked

a backlash and led to the government tightening immigration laws in June.

A total of 481 Yemenis have applied for asylum, with 362 granted temporary humanitarian stay permits, the ministry said in a statement.

Another 34 applications were rejected with no permits issued because officials determined they had criminal records or were seeking asylum for economic reasons, the ministry said. A final 85 cases are still being processed.

Most of the Yemenis flew into the resort island of Jeju, where they have largely been blocked from leaving for mainland South Korea.

On June 1, South Korea dropped

Yemen from a list of countries whose citizens do not require a visa when entering the country.

Under the humanitarian stay permits, the refugees will be able to leave Jeju.

Yemen has been locked in war for the past three years, with aid agencies warning that the country is in danger of tipping into famine if fighting continues to disrupt imports of food aid.

South Korea's justice ministry said it was granting the one-year humanitarian stays on the understanding it would revoke the permits if the situation improves in Yemen.