

Trump Attacks Macron:

They Were Starting to Learn German in Paris!



U.S. President Donald Trump (L) speaks with French President Emmanuel Macron prior to their meeting at the Elysee Palace in Paris, on November 10, 2018.

WASHINGTON/PARIS (Dispatches) -- U.S. President Donald Trump attacked his French counterpart Tuesday in a series of tweets that underscored how much the once-friendly ties between the two leaders have soured, just two days after returning from Paris. In five posts sent on the same day

that French officials marked the anniversary of the 2015 terrorist attacks that killed 130 people in Paris, Trump blasted the key U.S. ally over its near defeat to Germany in two world wars, its wine industry and Macron's approval ratings.

Trump returned to Washington from a weekend in Paris to commemorate

the 100th anniversary of World War One, where strained relations between the U.S. president and European allies was on full display.

On Tuesday, Trump cited Macron's "low approval rating" and unfair trade practices, and defended his absence from a commemoration event on Saturday saying the U.S. Secret Service had vetoed driving to the venue due to poor weather.

Trump pointed to Macron's recent comments about Europe's need to protect itself, writing that "it was Germany in World Wars One & Two - How did that work out for France? They were starting to learn German in Paris before the U.S. came along. Pay for NATO or not!"

"By the way, there is no country more Nationalist than France, very proud people-and rightfully so!" Trump wrote in a series of tweets, ending with "MAKE FRANCE GREAT AGAIN!"

Asked about Trump's tweets, a key adviser to Macron said the French president had briefed Trump and his chief of staff during the Paris trip to reassure them that "that France is not about to make a choice between a European defense system and a multilateral approach."

Search for Bodies After Worst Wildfire in California



A plume of smoke rises above the Camp Fire.

PARADISE, Calif. (Reuters) - Search teams were set to sift through the charred wreckage of Paradise, California, on Tuesday in the search of human remains as authorities investigated the cause of state's deadliest ever wildfire.

The "Camp Fire" blaze, still raging in northern California, has killed at least 42 people and left 228 others listed as missing.

Another two people died in the separate "Woolsey Fire," which has destroyed 435 structures and displaced about 200,000 people in the mountains and foothills near Southern California's Malibu coast, west of Los Angeles.

Authorities are probing the cause

of the fires. A spokeswoman for the California Public Utilities Commission told the Chico Enterprise-Record on Monday the regulator has launched investigations that may include an inspection of the fire sites once the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire) allows.

The Camp Fire - California's most destructive on record - has consumed more than 7,100 homes and other buildings since igniting on Thursday in Butte County's Sierra foothills, about 175 miles (280 km) north of San Francisco.

One hundred fifty search-and-recovery personnel were due to

arrive on Tuesday, bolstering 13 coroner-led recovery teams in the fire zone, Butte County Sheriff Kory Honea said.

Honea has requested three portable morgue teams from the U.S. military, a "disaster mortuary" crew, cadaver dog units to locate human remains and three groups of forensic anthropologists.

Firefighting crews have carved containment lines around 30 percent of the Camp Fire perimeter, an area encompassing 117,000 scorched acres.

Nearly 9,000 firefighters have been battling the wildfires. Cal Fire said that 16 other states, including Oregon, Texas, Missouri and Georgia, have sent fire crews or other resources to combat the fires.

Most of the Camp Fire's destruction and deaths occurred in and around Paradise, a town of nearly 27,000 people that was virtually destroyed overnight Thursday, just hours after the blaze erupted. Some 52,000 people remained under evacuation orders, Sheriff Honea said.

Authorities said on Monday they found the bodies of 13 more victims, bringing the total killed by the Camp Fire to 42.

This makes it California's deadliest ever wildfire, surpassing the death toll of 29 in the 1933 Griffith Park blaze in Los Angeles.

North Korea Missile Bases Up and Running: Think Tank



A Digital Globe satellite image purportedly shows an undeclared missile operating base at Sakkanmol, North Korea.

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) -- U.S. analysts said they have located more than half of an estimated 20 secret North Korean missile development sites, highlighting the challenge the Trump administration faces in ensuring that North Korea ends its nuclear and missile programs.

The findings, which were released amid signs the administration's negotiations with the North have stalled, draw on commercial satellite imagery and identify 13 secret facilities used to produce missiles and related technology. They suggest that Pyongyang is continuing its missile work, even though it has halted test launches in what President Donald Trump and his administration have claimed as a success since his historic June meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Singapore.

Although the sites are not launch facilities and in some cases are rudimentary, the authors of the report from the Center for Strategic and International Studies say they are hidden and illustrate the scope of the North's weapons program and the country's determination to conceal its military might.

North Korea analysts not involved in the report said the findings were not surprising given Pyongyang's past activities. They noted that Kim had not agreed to halt either nuclear weapons or missile development in negotiations with Trump or Secretary of

State Mike Pompeo.

"The fact that North Korea has continued to build nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles in the midst of high-level diplomacy with China, South Korea, and the U.S. should not come as a surprise," said Abraham Denmark, the Asia program director at The Wilson Center. "Despite all the summitry, North Korea is just as dangerous today as it was a year ago."

"Improving relations with Pyongyang may be a laudable goal, but any claim that the North Korean nuclear and missile threats have been solved is either wishful thinking or purposefully deceptive," he said.

"Interesting but unsurprising report," said Kelsey Davenport, director for nonproliferation policy at the Arms Control Association. "Kim Jong Un only committed voluntarily to halt long-range missile tests."

The report was released less than a week after North Korea abruptly called off a new round of negotiations with Pompeo that had been set for Thursday in New York. The cancellation, which the U.S. ascribed to scheduling issues, followed threats from North Korean officials to resume nuclear and missile testing unless U.S. sanctions are lifted.

The U.S. administration has said repeatedly that sanctions will not be lifted until a denuclearization agreement is fully implemented.

UN Not to Help Myanmar With Rohingya Camps



A view from outside Taung Pyo Letwe reception camp near the border with Bangladesh, in Rakhine state, Myanmar, during a trip by United Nations envoys to the region May 1, 2018.

YANGON (Reuters) -- The United Nations' refugee agency will not provide humanitarian assistance to Rohingya Muslims who return to Myanmar if they are interned in camps, according to an internal position paper circulated days before the initial repatriation is due to start.

The confidential briefing paper, dated this month and reviewed by Reuters on Tuesday, outlines the position of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on the repatriation process, and reflects a desire not to be drawn into supporting long-term camps for the Muslim minority.

A UNHCR spokeswoman said it did not comment on leaked documents.

Myanmar and Bangladesh agreed in late October to begin in mid-November the repatriation of some of the hundreds of thousands of Rohingya who fled Myanmar last year to escape an army crackdown, despite warnings by the UN and aid agencies that conditions were not yet safe for their return.

Myanmar has been building transit centers for the refugees that it says will be temporary, but many Rohingya say they fear the sites could become permanent because of harsh restrictions on movement imposed on the largely stateless minority.

The UNHCR paper says the agency "will not provide individual assistance in situations of encampment, including in reception facilities

or transit camps, unless they are clearly temporary in nature and used for the sole purpose of facilitating free movement to places of returnees' origin or choice".

The document, which was circulated to diplomats, also advises other agencies not to assist with any such camps.

Tens of thousands of Rohingya have been languishing in UN-supported camps and villages across western Myanmar since 2012, when they were driven out of their homes during a previous wave of ethnic violence. They were told the camps, razor-wire ringed areas they are forbidden to leave, would be temporary.

More than 700,000 Rohingya fled to Bangladesh to escape a sweeping army crackdown in the north of Myanmar's Rakhine state last year. UN-mandated investigators have accused the Myanmar military of "genocidal intent" and ethnic cleansing.

In the document, the UNHCR also outlines its involvement in the repatriation process organized by Myanmar and Bangladesh, saying that its officials will seek to ascertain whether several thousand Rohingya on a list of refugees identified for repatriation to Myanmar want to go back.

Last week, more than 20 individuals on the list of potential returnees submitted by Bangladesh told Reuters they would refuse to return, saying they feared for their safety.



STRASBOURG (Reuters) -- German Chancellor Angela Merkel called Tuesday for an integrated European Union military, echoing language used by French President Emmanuel Macron last week which irritated U.S. President Donald Trump. "We should work on a vision of one day establishing a real European army," Merkel told the European Parliament during a keynote speech in which she consciously backed Macron's call for European defense planning, operations and weapons development. Macron's call, which reflects a broad trend of EU thinking but is not universally accepted, was meant to show European willingness to meet U.S. demands that Europe do more for its own security and rely less on America's security umbrella. Merkel said such armed forces would not undermine the U.S.-led military alliance NATO but could be complementary to it. Her remarks drew loud applause in the legislature but also boos from nationalist members.

WASHINGTON (Reuters) -- U.S. President Donald Trump has told advisers he wants to remove Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen from her post, and could do so in the coming weeks, the Washington Post reported, citing five current and former White House officials. In an article posted late Monday, the Post reported her dismissal could be announced as soon as this week. Trump canceled plans to travel with Nielsen, charged with carrying out his immigration crackdown, to visit U.S. troops at the southern border in Texas this week, according to the newspaper. Trump is seeking a replacement who will implement his controversial immigration policy with more zeal, the Post said. White House Chief of Staff John Kelly, who could also soon leave his job, is trying to postpone any firing, the Washington Post reported, citing three officials. The paper reported that Department of Homeland Security officials who work with Nielsen declined to directly address her potential departure. A department spokesman said the secretary "is committed to implementing the President's security-focused agenda to protect Americans from all threats and will continue to do so."

DUBLIN (Times) -- Irish authorities are investigating unidentified flying objects (UFOs) reported by multiple commercial pilots in the skies on November 9. Several pilots called air traffic control in western Ireland to inquire about what one called "a very bright light" traveling at "very high speed," according to a recording published by the aviation website AirLive. "It was moving so fast," said the pilot of a British Airways flight from Montreal to London. "It came up on our left-hand side and then rapidly veered to the north. It was a very bright light that disappeared at very high speed." "There is nothing showing on either primary or secondary [radar]," air traffic control said, adding that there were no military exercises in the area. Another pilot from a Virgin plane then chipped in, denting hopes of aliens: he suggested it could be a "meteor or another object making some kind of re-entry."

SINGAPORE (Reuters) -- The United States objects to China's unilateral military steps in the South China Sea and the pace of U.S. freedom of navigation operations in the disputed waterway has increased, U.S. National Security Adviser John Bolton said Tuesday. He said also that U.S. President Donald Trump was prepared to hold a second summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. The comments came after the release of a report detailing undeclared missile sites in the North that had been undergoing maintenance. Bolton was speaking to reporters in Singapore on the sidelines of meetings this week between the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and external partners, including the United States and China.

ROME (Guardian) -- Italian press unions have called on journalists to join protests after leaders of the Five Star Movement (M5S) branded those working in the profession as "jackals" and "whores". The anti-establishment party, which is ruling in coalition with the far-right League, also renewed threats to cut funding for publishers and introduce new conflict-of-interest laws as relations with the media hit a new low after the mayor of Rome was acquitted for cronyism on Saturday. Virginia Raggi was cleared of abuse of power after a judge ruled that the alleged offence did not constitute a crime. Luigi Di Maio, the M5S leader and deputy prime minister, lashed out at journalists who had reported on the case for two years, calling them "jackals" and accusing them of generating "fake news" in order to bring down the M5S mayor. Alessandro Di Battista, a prominent party figure, described the journalists as "whores". The insults sparked fury among the journalists' unions, FNSI and Usigrai, which have organized flash mobs to take place on Tuesday in major Italian cities as well as in Brussels and London.

WASHINGTON (Reuters) -- CNN filed a lawsuit Tuesday against the Trump administration over the revocation of press credentials for White House correspondent Jim Acosta, whose questions and reporting have been a frequent target of criticism by President Donald Trump. "We have asked this court for an immediate restraining order requiring the pass be returned to Jim, and will seek permanent relief as part of this process," CNN said in a statement. "While the suit is specific to CNN and Acosta, this could have happened to anyone. If left unchallenged, the actions of the White House would create a dangerous chilling effect for any journalist who covers our elected officials."

Brexit Deal Within Touching Distance: May's Aide

LONDON/BRUSSELS (Reuters) -- A Brexit deal is almost within touching distance, Prime Minister Theresa May's de facto deputy said on Tuesday, as Britain and the European Union sought to avoid missing a deadline for approving the divorce.

While officials choreograph the first withdrawal of a sovereign state from the EU, it remains unclear whether May can get any deal approved by the British parliament.

"We are almost within touching distance now," Cabinet Office Minister David Lidington told BBC radio. Asked if he was saying a deal was possible in the next 24 or 48 hours, he said: "Still possible but not at all definite, I think pretty much sums it up. Cautiously optimistic."

A British government source said an agreement on a withdrawal deal was closer than it had been on Monday, after negotiators worked late into the night at the European Commission's modernist Berlaymont building in

Brussels.

Brussels wants to get agreement on a draft deal by the end of Wednesday at the latest if there is to be a summit this month to approve it, although few in Brussels seemed to hold out much hope that a breakthrough could come this week.

The EU and the United Kingdom need an agreement to keep trade flowing between the world's biggest trading bloc and the fifth largest national economy.

But May has struggled to untangle nearly 46 years of membership without damaging trade or upsetting the lawmakers who will ultimately decide the fate of any deal she can secure.

Delaying approval of a deal by EU leaders until their next scheduled summit on Dec. 13-14 would shift the timetable close to the British parliament's Christmas holiday which is scheduled for Dec. 20-Jan. 7, potentially pushing the vote into the new year.

May told senior ministers in her cabinet on Tuesday that good progress had been made, a spokesman said, adding that a small number of outstanding issues remained.

It is unclear when the cabinet will be called to discuss a draft withdrawal agreement struck with the EU, or the outline of the future relationship.

But the intricacies of any deal are unlikely to stem the growing opposition to May at home: Brexit-supporting opponents fear she is signing up the United Kingdom to EU subjugation.

Brussels diplomatic sources said the bloc was trying to cajole May into sealing a deal this week and rubber-stamping it later this month, fearing that any delay would increase the chances of rejection by her ministers or parliament.

The European Commission has piled pressure on May by advancing contingency preparations for a no-deal Brexit.