

Death Toll Nears 100: Number of Missing in California Wildfire Tops 1,000



Rescue workers search an area where they discovered suspected human remains in a home destroyed by the Camp Fire in Paradise, California on November 16, 2018.

CHICO, Calif. (AFP) -- The number of people listed as missing in a northern California wildfire jumped past 1,000 as searchers found the remains of eight more victims on the eve of President Donald Trump's trip to witness the devastation.

Butte County Sheriff Kory Honea told reporters the number of people unaccounted for almost doubled from 631 to 1,011 in 24 hours as authorities receive more reports of people missing and as emergency calls made

when the fire broke out are reviewed. "I want you to understand that this is a dynamic list," he told reporters. He said that on a positive note, 329 people who had been listed as missing since the fire broke out had so far been accounted for.

"The information I am providing you is raw data and we find there is the likely possibility that the list contains duplicate names," he said, adding that some people who had escaped may also be unaware that they were listed as missing.

The eight additional sets of human remains found bring to 71 the total number of dead from the so-called Camp Fire, the deadliest and most destructive in California history.

The inferno erupted November 8, laying waste to the town of Paradise at the northern foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountains and sending thousands fleeing.

Trump was set to visit the region Saturday to survey the damage and meet victims of the fire that has devoured an area roughly the size of Chicago.

In an interview with Fox News ahead of his visit, Trump doubled down on his earlier claim that mismanagement of California's forests was to blame for the fires. And he acknowledged that climate change may have contributed "a little bit" to the wildfires.

Roslyn Roberts, 73, forced from her home in Paradise, said she voted for Trump but would disagree with him if she has the chance on Saturday.

"I would tell him that this fire has nothing to do with forest mismanagement. Thousands and thousands of homes got destroyed with no trees around," she said amongst other evacuees at a shelter set up by the American Red Cross in a church.

In the community of Chico, just west of Paradise, volunteers had erected a tented encampment for others forced from their homes.

Climate Change Protesters Block Bridges in London



Demonstrators gather on Westminster Bridge in London for a protest called by Extinction Rebellion, Nov. 17, 2018.

LONDON (Dispatches) -- Thousands of protesters gathered in central London on Saturday in attempts to block five bridges, as they demanded the government take greater action on climate change.

The Extinction Rebellion group said more than 6,000 people blocked five bridges -- Blackfriars, Waterloo, Westminster, Lambeth and Southwark -- during the "rebellion day" of direct action.

Jo Khimba, who was taking part in the protest, told crowds gathered on Westminster Bridge: "We've got to care for each other, and for god's sake, we've got to care for the world."

Organizers estimated that 50 people

had been arrested for partaking in action over the last week, with 22 people being detained on Monday after protesters blocked traffic and glued themselves to entry gates at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

Two women, who did not want to be named, told the Press Association: "I have concern for my children and grandchildren. I truthfully believe we're all heading for extinction."

A separate rally too, place in Parliament Square on Saturday afternoon. At a U.S. climate protest in Washington DC, environmentalists were expected to try to block the traffic in front of Trump International Hotel.

Meanwhile, the Brazil's new foreign minister said he believed climate change is a Marxist tactic to instill fear, stifle the economic growth of western countries, and benefit China.

The appointment of Ernesto Araújo, who has been named by president-elect Jair Bolsonaro as the country's top diplomat, is a major cause for concern for those already alarmed at the extent of global climate collapse.

Brazil's outgoing government has already been heavily criticized for "inviting deforestation", in the Amazon -- the world's largest and most biodiverse rainforest, which is vital for soaking up carbon emissions.

Araújo's views closely echo those of U.S. President Donald Trump, who has previously called climate change a "hoax" and a "con-job" which was "created by the Chinese in order to make U.S. manufacturing non-competitive".

A new study published Friday found that the climate policies of the U.S., Australia, China, Russia and Canada would exacerbate the issue of global warming and raise the world's temperature high above safe levels by the end of the century.

The study published in the journal Nature Communications warned of a "collective lack of ambition" by the five nations that threatened to exceed global temperatures above a catastrophic 4-5C compared with pre-industrial levels.

Dutch Break Ranks With EU on European Army

THE HAGUE (AFP) -- France and Germany are jumping the gun with calls for a European army, Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte said, asserting that the continent's safety could be guaranteed only through NATO.

"The idea of a European army is going way too far for the Netherlands," Rutte said at his weekly post-cabinet press conference.

"France and Germany are really jumping the gun. As far as the Netherlands is concerned, NATO remains the cornerstone of our defense policy," he told journalists.

French President Emmanuel Macron sparked controversy last week with his proposal for a "European army" to "protect

ourselves with respect to China, Russia and even the United States".

He said he wanted to reduce Europe's dependence on the U.S. and U.S. weapons for its own security.

Macron's call reflected a desire among several European countries to more autonomously handle their own collective defense, after U.S. President Donald Trump's criticized Europe for what he sees as inadequate contributions to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization defense alliance.

Trump called Macron's idea "very insulting", tweeting that Europe should "first pay its fair share of NATO, which the U.S. subsidizes greatly".

German Chancellor Angela Merkel has seconded Macron's proposal.

During a European parliament session, she emphasized the need for Europe to bolster its self-defense capabilities, and said that a European army could run parallel to NATO.

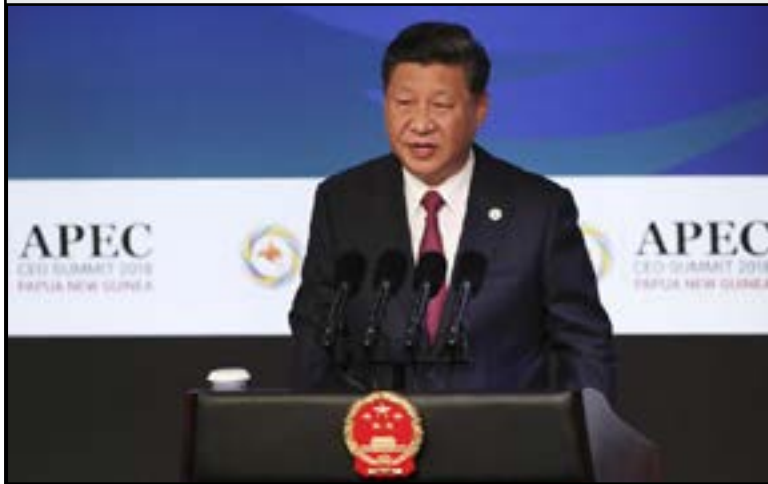
"Europe must take our fate into our own hands if we want to protect our community," she said.

But Rutte insisted NATO remained the primary guardian of Europe's safety.

"As far as I am concerned, it is an illusion to think that the European Union without NATO can guarantee her safety," Rutte said.

"NATO, and the United States within the organization, remains a crucial partner for peace and security in Europe and we will continue to point that out to our partners in our discussions," he said.

China's Xi Hits Out at 'Selfish Agendas' of U.S.



China's President Xi Jinping speaks during at the APEC CEO Summit 2018 in Port Moresby on November 17, 2018, a part of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit.

PORT MORESBY (Dispatches) -- China's leader Xi Jinping and U.S. Vice President Mike Pence traded barbs in speeches to a summit of world leaders Saturday, outlining competing visions for global leadership.

Pence said there would be no letup in President Donald Trump's policy of combating China's mercantilist trade policy and intellectual property theft that has erupted into a trade war between the two world powers this year.

He harshly criticized China's global infrastructure drive, calling many of the projects low quality and saddling developing countries with loans they can't afford.

Pence also announced the U.S. would be involved in a plan by its ally Australia to jointly develop a naval base in Papua New Guinea, where the summit is being held. China has been intensely wooing Papua New Guinea with aid and loans for infrastructure.

Xi, who spoke before Pence, said countries are facing a choice of cooperation or confrontation as protectionism and unilateralism spreads.

Xi expressed support for the global free trading system that has underpinned his country's rise to world's second-biggest economy after the U.S.

"Mankind has once again reached a

crossroads," he said. "Which direction should we choose? Cooperation or confrontation? Openness or closing doors. Win-win progress or a zero sum game?"

He lashed out at "America First" trade protectionism and in an open criticism of Washington underlined that global trade rules should not be applied "with double standards or selfish agendas."

Xi also defended China's "belt and road" infrastructure initiative, insisting it was "not a trap" amid criticism from the United States among others.

"It is not designed to serve any hidden geopolitical agenda, it is not targeted against anyone and it does not exclude anyone... nor is it a trap as some people have labeled it," Xi told business leaders ahead of an APEC summit.

The "belt and road" initiative is a massive infrastructure and development project spanning Southeast Asia, Central Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Africa.

Pence began his speech at the summit by slamming the initiative, claiming that Chinese funding of infrastructure project was burdening developing nations with debt.

Leaders of Pacific Rim countries that make up 60 percent of the world economy were meeting in the capital of Papua New Guinea for an annual Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit.

Argentina Finds Submarine a Year After Disappearing



The Argentine military submarine ARA San Juan and crew are seen leaving Buenos Aires in 2014.

BUENOS AIRES (Reuters) -- The Argentine Navy submarine that went missing a year ago off the country's Atlantic Coast was found by a private company involved in what had been a massive search for the vessel and its 44-member crew, the Navy announced by tweet Saturday.

The submarine ARA San Juan had a seven-day supply of air when it last reported its position on Nov. 15, 2017. It was found some 800 meters below the ocean's surface by a marine tracking contractor Ocean Infinity.

The disappearance gripped the nation's attention as the government struggled to provide information about the tragedy.

At the time of the disappearance, the Navy said water that had entered the submarine's snorkel caused its battery to short-circuit. Naval officials said international organizations helping to search for the missing vessel a year ago detected a noise that could have been the submarine including.

Hopes of rescuing survivors faded about two weeks after the submarine went missing. The navy said it searched for double the amount of time the submarine would have had oxygen.

The first anniversary of the submarine's disappearance was marked with an event

at the Mar del Plata naval base on Nov. 15, with President Mauricio Macri in attendance.

The crew had been ordered to return to Mar del Plata on the country's east coast. But the vessel was never heard from again.

Ocean Infinity, a U.S. company that can search and map the seabed, was hired by Argentina following the failure of an international operation to find the vessel after it went missing in the South Atlantic. The San Juan was some 430 km off Argentina's Patagonian coast when it sent its last signal.

The disaster spurred soul-searching over the state of the military in Argentina, which -- after a series of financial crises -- has one of Latin America's smallest defense budgets relative to the size of its economy.

Subs are used to patrol sovereign maritime areas throughout South America and can transform themselves into a lethal threat to potential adversaries.

Argentina learned a harsh lesson of submarines' military value during the 1982 Falklands War, when a British sub sank the ARA General Belgrano cruiser. It was the only major ship Argentina lost in the war over the disputed Falkland Islands, which Argentina calls the Malvinas.



ABUJA (Dispatches) -- Nigerian Muslims on Saturday rallied here to demand the release of top Muslim cleric Sheikh Ibrahim Zakzaky. Calling for justice for the 65-year-old cleric, arrested in 2015 along with his wife on trumped-up allegations, the protesters chanted slogans in support of Zakzaky. The leader of Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN) has been held since December 2015 following a deadly raid by Nigerian army troops on his residence in the country's northern Kaduna State. He and his wife as well as a large number of his followers have been kept in detention ever since. During the raid, Zakzaky's wife sustained serious wounds and more than 300 of his followers and three of his sons were killed. The latest protest rally for Zakzaky's freedom came after a court in the city of Kaduna ruled earlier this month against his immediate release due to his deteriorating health that requires urgent medical care.

LONDON (AP) -- British Prime Minister Theresa May fought back Saturday against critics of her Brexit deal, telling her Conservative opponents that their alternative plans for Britain's departure from the European Union wouldn't work. May is battling to win over rebels in her own ranks and save her leadership after a grueling week, with two Cabinet ministers quitting and other Conservative critics plotting to oust her immediately after Britain struck a divorce deal with the EU. In a public relations offensive, May tried to win support in a Daily Mail interview that revealed how her husband supported her during what she admitted to be "a pretty heavy couple of days." She also laid into political opponents, saying the alternatives they favor to tackle a key stumbling block -- the issue of how to avoid a hard border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland after Brexit -- wouldn't resolve the problem. "People say 'If you could only just do something slightly different, have a Norway model or a Canada model, this backstop issue would go away.' It would not. That issue is still going to be there," she said in the interview, published Saturday.

HELSINKI (Reuters) -- Russia's Ambassador to Finland Pavel Kuznetsov has been summoned to a meeting on Monday with Finnish state secretary Matti Anttonen over the disruption of Finland's global positioning system (GPS) signal during recent NATO war games. "We don't have anything to hide here. Disruption is a serious matter which disturbs civil aviation. We will act towards Russia, we will discuss this and we expect answers," Finnish Foreign Minister Timo Soini said in a statement to public broadcaster Yle while on a state visit to the United States. The Finnish foreign ministry said on Thursday that the disruption of Finland's GPS signal during recent NATO war games came from Russian territory. The Kremlin on Monday dismissed an earlier allegation from Finland that Russia may have intentionally disrupted the signal during the war games. Earlier in November, Finland's air navigation services issued a warning for air traffic due to a large-scale GPS interruption in the north of the country. Russia was also recently accused by Norway, which had posted a similar warning in its own airspace.

MOSCOW (Reuters) -- An unmanned rocket carrying cargo blasted off into space on Friday in the first launch of a Russian-made Soyuz-FG rocket from Kazakhstan's Baikonur cosmodrome since a dramatic aborted launch in October. The rocket took off with a Progress MS-10 spacecraft at 18:14 GMT (00:14 local time) carrying supplies to the International Space Station (ISS). The Progress MS-10 is expected to dock at the ISS on Nov. 18, Russia's space agency said. The last manned mission to the ISS was abruptly cut short on Oct. 11 two minutes after liftoff when the Soyuz-FG rocket failed, forcing a Russian cosmonaut and U.S. astronaut to perform an emergency landing. The rocket failure was caused by a sensor that was damaged during assembly at the Soviet era-cosmodrome at Baikonur, according to Russian investigators. The first manned mission to the ISS since the failure is due to take off at the beginning of December.

LA PAZ, Bolivia (AP) -- Archaeologists say they found tombs at a Bolivian quarry containing remains from more than 500 years ago that give an insight into the interaction of various peoples with the expanding Inca empire. The remains, which were found about 12 miles (20 kilometers) from La Paz, belong to more than 100 individuals from an indigenous civilization and were buried with more than 30 vessels used by the Incas for performing death rites, said an archaeologist involved in the excavation. "The vessels are whole and are Incan," said Jedu Sagarnaga, an archaeology professor at Universidad Mayor de San Andres in La Paz, who led the investigation. The site near the modern-day town of Viacha also contained elongated skulls that may have been stretched to differentiate the social rank of individuals, he said.

BANGUI, Central African Republic (AFP) -- Central African Republic (CAR) lawmaker and former militia leader Alfred Yekatom was extradited to The Hague Saturday to stand trial in the International Criminal Court probing war crimes and crimes against humanity, a government source said. The source said the charges against Yekatom, a former militia leader of a faction of the anti-balaka movement involved in sectarian bloodletting, were not specified. It was the first extradition from CAR to the court. The ICC launched an investigation in September 2014 into crimes committed in the country since 2012.