

China Vows to Respond Strongly to U.S. Escalation



Workers load goods for export onto a crane at a port in Lianyungang, Jiangsu province, China June 7, 2019.

BEIJING (Reuters) -- China will respond firmly if the United States insists on escalating trade tensions, the foreign ministry said on Tuesday after U.S. President Donald Trump said further tariffs were ready to kick in if no deal was reached at a G20 summit this month.

Trump has repeatedly said he is getting ready to meet Chinese President Xi Jinping at the Osaka summit at the end of June, but China has not confirmed it.

Trump said last week he would decide after the meeting of the lead-

ers of the world's largest economies whether to carry out a threat to impose tariffs on at least \$300 billion in Chinese goods.

On Monday, Trump said he was ready to impose another round of punitive tariffs on Chinese imports if he cannot make progress in trade talks with Xi in Osaka.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang again would not be drawn on confirming a Xi-Trump meeting at G20, saying information would be released once it was available to the ministry.

"China does not want to fight a

trade war, but we are not afraid of fighting a trade war," he said, adding China's door was open to talks based on equality.

"If the United States only wants to escalate trade frictions, we will resolutely respond and fight to the end."

U.S. Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross on Tuesday downplayed this month's summit in Japan, saying it would not be "a place where anyone makes a definitive deal."

"At the G20, at most it will be ... some sort of agreement on a path forward, but certainly it's not going to be a definite agreement," Ross told CNBC in a television interview.

Tensions between Washington and Beijing rose sharply in May after the Trump administration accused China of having reneged on promises to make structural economic changes during months of trade talks.

On May 10, Trump raised tariffs on \$200 billion of Chinese goods up to 25% and took steps to levy duties on an additional \$300 billion in Chinese imports. Beijing retaliated with tariff hikes on a revised list of \$60 billion in U.S. goods.

The U.S. government has also angered China by putting Huawei Technologies Co Ltd on a blacklist that effectively bans U.S. companies from doing business with the Chinese firm, the world's biggest telecoms equipment maker.

North Korean Leader's Brother Was CIA Informant: WSJ



Kim Jong Nam apparently fell from grace after being deported from Japan in 2001 for trying to enter on a forged passport to visit Disneyland.

WASHINGTON (AFP) -- Kim Jong Nam, the estranged half brother of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un who was killed in Malaysia in 2017, was a CIA informant, the Wall Street Journal reported Tuesday.

Citing "a person knowledgeable about the matter", the paper said Kim Jong Nam had met with CIA operatives several times.

Kim Jong Nam, who was once seen as heir apparent to the North's leadership, died after having his face smeared with the outlawed VX nerve agent as he waited at Kuala Lumpur airport.

According to the Journal's source there was a "nexus" between Kim Jong Nam and the CIA, but the paper said many details of his connection with the intelligence agency were unclear.

The source said Kim Jong Nam travelled to Malaysia in February 2017 to meet his CIA contact, but that may not have been the only purpose of his trip.

Kim Jong Nam died after being attacked at Kuala Lumpur International Airport on February 13, 2017 in a Cold War-style assassination that shocked the world.

Two young women, one Vietnamese and one Indonesian, were arrested and charged with the murder. They insisted they were tricked by North Korean agents into carrying out the hit and had thought

it was a reality TV show prank.

Malaysian prosecutors eventually dropped the murder charges against them and Indonesian Siti Aisyah was released in March this year while her Vietnamese co-accused Doan Thi Huong was freed in May.

South Korea has accused the North of ordering the hit, which Pyongyang denies.

Once seen as leader Kim Jong II's natural successor, Kim Jong Nam apparently fell from grace after being deported from Japan in 2001 for trying to enter on a forged passport to visit Disneyland.

Since then he had been living in virtual exile, mainly in the southern Chinese enclave of Macau.

He had spoken to Japanese and other overseas media with surprising candor on various occasions and 2011 he told a Japanese newspaper that he opposed the idea of the North's dynastic power transfer.

"Several former U.S. officials said the half brother, who had lived outside of North Korea for many years and had no known power base in Pyongyang, was unlikely to be able to provide details of the secretive country's inner workings," the Journal said.

The report comes amid a deadlock in talks between the United States and North Korea over Pyongyang's nuclear weapons.

Sudan Shuts Down on Third Day of 'Civil Disobedience'



Sudanese customers queue to access money services at the Faisal Islamic Bank (Sudan) in Khartoum, Sudan June 11, 2019.

KHARTOUM (Reuters) -- Many shops and business stayed closed and troops watched the streets of Sudan's capital Khartoum on Tuesday, the third day of a civil disobedience campaign called by the opposition to push military rulers to hand over power to civilians.

The campaign follows a crackdown by security forces which killed dozens of people and the collapse of talks between the military and the opposition which had been aimed at bringing civilian rule to Sudan after the overthrow of the authoritarian president Omar al-Bashir in April.

Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed visited Sudan on a mediation mission last week and opposition

sources said he proposed a 15-member transitional council comprising eight civilians and seven military officers with a rotating presidency.

A leader of the Declaration of Freedom and Change Forces (DFCF) said on Monday night that the alliance had decided to nominate eight members to the council and to name Abdullah Hamdoug, a former executive secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, as new prime minister.

A source said the announcement was due to be made officially on Tuesday. The military council had made no comment on the report.

Witnesses said many shops, commercial banks and business re-

mained shuttered on Tuesday. But movement on the streets appeared more than the previous two days, they said.

In some areas, people had erected roadblocks of bricks and tires.

"These barricades are in fact a form of protection against the attacks waged by military forces of various kinds," opposition leader Khaled Omar told reporters on Monday.

"The revolution is ongoing and the peaceful methods of resistance continue. I believe that the revolutionary road taken since December will reach its goal in the end - maybe tonight, a month from now, or a year from now."

Security forces, including units of the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, manned positions in the streets. Some lounged around pickups mounted with automatic weapons.

Bashir's removal by the military ended three decades of repressive rule in this country of 40 million people and followed months of generally peaceful protests.

But the Transitional Military Council and the DFCF alliance were unable to agree on sharing power in a sovereign council that would run the country during a three-year interim period.

The council is headed by Lieutenant General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan but his deputy, Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, who commands the RSF, is believed to wield considerable power.

France to Ban Fossil Fuel-Powered Cars by 2040



Protesters wearing yellow vests, a symbol of a French drivers' protest against higher fuel prices, at the entrance of a shopping centre in Nantes, France, on November 17 2018.

PARIS (Reuters) -- The French government's new law on mobility will uphold a planned ban on fossil fuel-powered cars by 2040, Transport Minister Elizabeth Borne said on Tuesday.

Former environment minister Nicolas Hulot said in July 2017 - at the beginning of President Emmanuel Macron's term - that France aimed to end the sale of gasoline and diesel vehicles by 2040 in a bid to become carbon neutral by 2050.

Hulot resigned in September 2018 in protest over Macron's lack of commitment to environmental causes and the government has since rarely mentioned the planned ban, partly because of the "yellow vest" protest movement against carbon taxes on fuel prices and the high cost of living.

Borne, who is a deputy to Hulot's successor Francois de Rugues, fulfilled in an interview with BFM television that the objective set out by Hulot would be met.

"We have target for carbon neutrality by 2050 and we need a credible trajectory towards that, which includes a ban on the sale of vehicles that consume fossil fuels by 2040," she said.

She said France - which has a large car manufacturing industry led by PSA

and Renault - would help its car makers switch to electricity, hydrogen and possibly biogas.

"Since the start of Emmanuel Macron's term, our target is the climate plan that Nicolas Hulot announced in the summer of 2017. We will now inscribe this target into law," Borne said.

The mobility law will also facilitate the rollout of electric vehicle (EV) charging stations, notably by giving the residents of apartment buildings the right to ask for the installation of EV plugs in their parking lots.

The much-delayed law, which is currently being debated in parliament, is expected to be approved after the summer and will update a 1982 law on transportation.

The reform wants to favor alternatives to individual automobile usage, upgrade railway networks and create a legal framework for new mobility solutions such as free-floating bicycles, electric scooters and car-sharing.

It will also give companies the option to offer employees a tax-free 400 euro subsidy to come to work on bicycles or with car-sharing. Borne said companies would be obliged to discuss this subsidy in wage negotiations with unions, but the subsidy would not be mandatory for all companies.

U.S. States Begin Examining Sex Abuse by Priests

DETROIT (AP) -- Hundreds of boxes. Millions of records. From Michigan to New Mexico this month, attorneys general are sifting through files on clergy sex abuse, seized through search warrants and subpoenas at dozens of archdioceses.

They're looking to prosecute, and not just priests. If the boxes lining the hallways of Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel's offices contain enough evidence, she said, she is considering using state racketeering laws usually reserved for organized crime. Prosecutors in Michigan are even volunteering on weekends to get through all the documents as quickly as possible.

For decades, leaders of the Roman Catholic Church were largely left to police their own. But now, as American bishops gather for a conference to confront the reignited sex-abuse crisis this week, they're facing the most scrutiny ever from secular law enforcement.

A nationwide Associated Press query of more than 20 state and federal prosecutors last week found they are looking for legal means to hold higher ups in the church accountable for sex abuse. They have raided diocesan offices, subpoenaed files, set up victim tip lines and launched sweeping investigations into decades-old allegations. Thousands of people

have called hotlines nationwide, and five priests have recently been arrested.

"Some of the things I've seen in the files makes your blood boil, to be honest with you," Nessel said. "When you're investigating gangs or the Mafia, we would call some of this conduct a criminal enterprise."

If a prosecutor applies racketeering laws, also known as RICO, against church leaders, bishops and other church officials could face criminal charges, bishops and other church officials, experts say. Such a move by Michigan or one of the other law enforcement agencies would mark the first known time that actions by a diocese or church leader were branded a criminal enterprise akin to organized crime.

"That would be an important step because it would set the standard for pursuing justice in these cases," said Marci Hamilton, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania and CEO of CHILF USA, a Philadelphia-based think tank that tracks statute of limitations reforms.

Monsignor G. Michael Bugarin, who handles sex abuse accusations for the Detroit Archdiocese, said they too are committed to ending abuse and cover-ups. Bugarin said they cooperate with law enforcement, and that won't change if the attorney general is considering organized crime charges.



MOSCOW (VOA News) -- A pro-Kremlin Russian TV network is planning to air a mini-series about Chernobyl, one suggesting a CIA saboteur was behind the 1986 Soviet-era nuclear disaster in Ukraine, which left up to a million people exposed to radiation. The Kremlin was angered by the recent, highly acclaimed HBO five-part mini-series on Chernobyl, which lauded the self-sacrificing bravery of those who battled to contain the fire and mitigate the effects of a reactor meltdown, but also detailed Soviet-era mismanagement, the delayed response and the denial for years by Soviet officials of a design fault. The officials at the time tried to place the blame for the deadly explosion solely on the mishandling of a test by a handful of incompetent plant managers.

WASHINGTON (AP) -- Three days after U.S. President Donald Trump announced a deal with Mexico to stem the flow of migrants at the southern border, the two countries appear unable to agree on exactly what's in it. Stung by criticism that the agreement mostly ramps up border protection efforts already underway, Trump on Monday hinted at other, secret agreements he says will soon be revealed. "We have fully signed and documented another very important part of the Immigration and Security deal with Mexico, one that the U.S. has been asking about getting for many years," Trump wrote Monday, saying it would "be revealed in the not too distant future." Not so, said Mexican Foreign Secretary Marcelo Ebrard, holding up a paper and pointing to the previously announced details. He told reporters the two countries agreed on two actions made public Friday and said if those measures didn't work to slow migration, they would discuss further options. "There is no other thing beyond what I have just explained," he said.

BERLIN (AP) -- The European Union has published EU-wide rules on drones to provide a clear framework for what is and isn't allowed, improve safety and make it easier for drone users to operate their craft in another European country. The European Aviation Safety Agency said Tuesday that the new rules will come into force from July 2020, giving member countries and operators time to prepare. The rules will override any relevant existing national rules. EASA said the rules specify that new drones must be "individually identifiable," allowing authorities to trace a particular drone if needed. They will also allow operators authorized in one EU country to fly their craft in others. EASA Executive Director Patrick Ky said that "common rules will help foster investment, innovation and growth in this promising sector."

BANGKOK (Reuters) -- A fishing boat carrying more than 60 Rohingya Muslims was found beached on an island in southern Thailand on Tuesday, officials said. The passengers - 28 men, 31 women and five children - were stranded on Rawi island in Tarutao National Park in Thailand's southern Satun province after the boat suffered engine trouble, a park official told Reuters. Scores of Rohingya Muslims have boarded boats in recent months to try to reach Malaysia, part of what authorities fear could be a new wave of people smuggling by sea after a 2015 crackdown on trafficking. A Satun government official said the passengers would be transferred to the mainland. "Everyone will be investigated in order to see whether they are victims of trafficking or illegal immigrants," said the official who declined to be named. More than 700,000 Rohingya crossed into Bangladesh in 2017 fleeing an army crackdown in Myanmar's Rakhine state, according to U.N. agencies. Myanmar regards Rohingya as illegal migrants from the Indian subcontinent and has confined tens of thousands to sprawling camps in Rakhine since violence swept the area in 2012.

MADRID (Reuters) -- Spain's Socialists agreed on Tuesday to cooperate on forming a government with far-left party Podemos, stopping short of announcing a coalition as they explore a combination of options for securing a majority in parliament. The Socialists won a national election in April but only a minority of seats, leaving Spain's political landscape deeply fragmented. Acting Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, invited last week by King Felipe VI to seek a mandate for government, threatened on Monday to call another election if opposition parties blocked his efforts to form one. Sanchez met on Tuesday with Podemos leader Pablo Iglesias. Even combined, their two parties lack a majority of parliamentary seats, but Iglesias told journalists that both men were optimistic, and he was hopeful that the meeting could "translate into a more concrete, progressive agreement" on government. Iglesias wants Podemos to be part of a ruling coalition, an idea Sanchez has so far rejected.

KIEV (Reuters) -- Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has asked parliament to sack General Prosecutor Yuri Lutsenko and to appoint a former Ukrainian envoy to NATO, Vadym Prystaiko, as new foreign minister, a presidential official said on Tuesday. "The law on the prosecutor's office says that the prosecutor can only be a person who has ... an experience in the field of law. Lutsenko doesn't have this experience," Ruslan Lyuboshapka told reporters.