

Trump to Begin Expelling Millions of Immigrants



Migrants from Central America walk on a highway during their journey towards the United States, in Ciudad Hidalgo, Chiapas state, Mexico, June 5, 2019.

WASHINGTON (AP/AFP) — President Donald Trump is threatening to remove millions of people living in the country illegally on the eve of formally announcing his re-election bid. In a pair of tweets Monday night, Trump said that U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement would next week “begin the process of removing the millions of illegal aliens who have illicitly found their way into the United States.”

“They will be removed as fast as they come in,” he wrote.

An administration official said the

effort would focus on the more than 1 million people who have been issued final deportation orders by federal judges but remain at large in the country. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to explain the president’s tweets.

It is unusual for law enforcement agencies to announce raids before they take place. Some in Trump’s administration believe that decisive shows of force — like mass arrests — can serve as effective deterrents, sending a message to those considering making the journey to the U.S. that it’s not worth

coming. Trump has threatened a series of increasingly drastic actions as he has tried to stem the flow of Central American migrants crossing the southern border, which has risen dramatically on his watch. He recently dropped a threat to slap tariffs on Mexico after the country agreed to dispatch its national guard and step-up coordination and enforcement efforts.

A senior Mexican official said Monday that, three weeks ago, about 4,200 migrants were arriving at the U.S. border daily. Now that number has dropped to about 2,600.

Trump has called it “an invasion,” and has made the fight against illegal migration a central plank of his administration.

Earlier Monday the U.S. said it would not offer any more aid to El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras unless they take “concrete actions” to deter undocumented migrants from heading for the U.S.

Immigration was a central theme of Trump’s 2016 campaign and he is expected to hammer it as he tries to fire up his base heading into the 2020 campaign.

Trump was to formally launch his re-election bid Tuesday night at a rally in Orlando, Florida — a state that is crucial to his path back to the White House.

Report Reveals UN Silence on Rohingya Ethnic Cleansing



Rohingya refugees are seen waiting for a boat to cross the border through the Naf river in Maungdaw, Myanmar.

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — The United Nations experienced “systemic failures” in its handling of the situation in Myanmar leading up to the 2017 mass exodus of Rohingya, a UN report said.

The finding came after UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres in February ordered the internal review of the world body’s operations in Myanmar after its officials in the country were accused of ignoring warning signs of the attacks against the Rohingya, a Muslim minority.

Today some 740,000 Rohingya are living in camps in Bangladesh after fleeing Myanmar’s northern Rakhine state during a 2017 military campaign the UN has described as ethnic cleansing.

with Myanmar’s government. The 36-page report authored by veteran Guatemalan diplomat Gert Rosenthal and shared with UN member states denounces a “dynamic of divisions rather than cohesion within the UN system”, “the absence of a clear and unified strategy” and shortcomings of “systematic and unified analysis from the field.”

Rosenthal wrote that the UN “needs to improve, systematize and share the gathering of data, information and analysis of events on the ground in real time,” and if there are “diverse interpretations coming from different quarters,” they should be shared and efforts made to understand them.

The report says that while “it is difficult to assign responsibility for systemic failures,” there is a shared responsibility “on the part of all parties involved” in not “conveying more forcefully the United Nations’ principled concerns regarding grave human rights violations.”

Some of the criticism of the UN has focused on allegations that the world body’s then-resident coordinator, Renata Lok-Dessallien, downplayed concerns about worsening abuses against the Rohingya in favor of prioritizing economic cooperation

Among the causes of the UN’s failures, the diplomat notes “the initial fascination on the part of the international community with the political transition, based in no small part on the almost legendary status that Aung San Suu Kyi had reached,” referring to the country’s civilian leader.

He said then-United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein most consistently called out the rights violations taking place but this led to “some unease among those in the UN who favored the ‘quiet diplomacy’ approach.”

Italy’s Salvini Stresses ‘Shared Vision’ With Trump



Italy’s far-right Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini (left) meets the U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo at the State Department in Washington, June 17, 2019.

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Matteo Salvini, the far-right Italian deputy prime minister, met with top US officials in Washington and spoke of his “closeness” to President Donald Trump’s administration. Salvini, whose League party won the most votes in last month’s European Parliament elections in Italy, met with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and later with Vice President Mike Pence.

During a news conference at the Italian embassy, Salvini, whose party is often at odds with their coalition partners, the Five Star Movement, spent little time discussing his own

role in cracking down on boats trying to save migrants crossing the Mediterranean from North Africa. He focused instead on a “shared vision” with the Trump administration of “Iran, Venezuela, Libya, the situation in the Middle East, Israel’s right to exist” and “concerns about Chinese arrogance towards Europe and the African continent.”

Like Trump, he called for dialogue with Russian President Vladimir Putin in order to “bring Moscow closer to the system of Western values rather than be driven into Beijing’s arms.”

Also like the U.S. president, he denounced alleged financial misman-

agement at the United Nations, and defended massive tax cuts despite concerns in Brussels about Rome’s soaring debt, and went as far as calling for a “Trumpian budget” in his country.

Salvini distanced himself from Italy’s signing of an accord that saw it become the first G7 member to join China’s “New Silk Road” global trade network, which the United States views with suspicion as a means of expanding Chinese hegemony.

And he denounced his government’s failure to formally recognize Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaido as interim president, as Washington and other European countries have done.

“If it was up to me, we would have already recognized him,” he said.

As for the European Union, which Trump has often targeted, Salvini criticized “weaknesses” before laying into the EU’s chief diplomat and fellow Italian Federica Mogherini a day before she makes her own visit to Washington.

Trump and his administration have not made any secret of their affinity for the populist government in Rome.

“Salvini’s background and approach to foreign policy... draws a lot of inspiration from President Trump’s America First policy and this creates a lot of fractures” with the Five Star Movement, said Italian researcher Giovanna De Maio at the Brookings Institution.

U.S. Use of Airbase on Ecuador Island Sparks Protests



A woman holds a sign with a message that reads in Spanish; “Galapagos is not to be sold, but to be defended,” during a protest outside the government palace in Quito, Ecuador, June 17, 2019.

QUITO, Ecuador (AP) — A plan by Ecuador to let the U.S. military use a Galapagos island for aircraft on anti-drug trafficking flights is drawing criticism that the agreement would damage the archipelago’s unique animal and plant life.

People protested outside the main government office in Quito on Monday, calling the plan a threat to the environment of the UN world heritage site as well as Ecuador’s sovereignty. Protester Gloria Reinoso said she was concerned about the noise and infrastructure required to support a U.S. military presence.

Last week, Defense Minister Oswaldo Jarrin said San Cristóbal Island could be a staging point for American aircraft flying surveillance missions aimed at stopping drug traffickers who transport illicit cargo by sea. Jarrin said flight crews would stay a week at most on the island and would be monitored by Ecuadorian authorities.

The United States Southern Command, which is responsible for U.S. military affairs in the region, did not immediately comment.

One analyst said little information is available about the plan for the archipelago in the Pacific Ocean, which

is about 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) from the Ecuadorian coast. Charles Darwin developed his theory of evolution after studying the extraordinary diversity of species on the islands in the 19th century.

The United States had a base in the Galapagos during World War II and operated it without the involvement of Ecuadorian authorities.

Grace Jaramillo, a political scientist at the University of British Columbia in Canada, said more needed to be known about reasons for the recent plan with the U.S. military as well as the environmental costs for “our ‘touristic jewel.’”

“What are the benefits? How was it negotiated?” Jaramillo said.

Carlos Espinosa, an analyst at the Universidad San Francisco de Quito, said it would be better to stage anti-drug flights from the South American mainland so as to safeguard Galapagos ecosystems.

Another commentator, Farid Simon, gave a different view, saying that relatively brief stopovers by U.S. planes did not mean an airport in the Galapagos would become a military base.

“We have an obligation to contribute to the fight against drug trafficking,” Simon said.

U.S. Increasingly Denying Visa to China Academics

WASHINGTON (AFP) — A rise in U.S. visa denials for Chinese academics and intensified scrutiny of alleged links to Beijing over fears of potential espionage is having a chilling effect on long-standing research collaboration, researchers say.

American and Chinese scientists have co-authored thousands of papers each year, far outpacing the output from scientific collaborations between any other two nations, according to a 2018 survey by academic database Nature Index.

But it is getting tougher for researchers to work together on projects and share data for peer review, as American institutions tighten rules for accepting foreign funding and intensify vetting of foreign partners, several researchers told AFP.

The pressure is the result of a clampdown by Washington on what it describes as espionage and technology theft through academic contacts, with the White House warning last year that Chinese nationals studying or working in the United States could be manipulated or forced to “serve Beijing’s military and strategic ambitions.”

In one of the latest countermeasures, the U.S. Department of Energy — which conducts advanced research on everything from supercomputers to nuclear weapons — blocked its scientists from participating in a foreign government’s talent recruitment programs, citing national security and competition concerns.

Its order, seen by AFP, did not mention a specific country, but

officials pointed to Beijing’s lucrative ‘Thousand Talents’ program.

The initiative offers non-Chinese, and Chinese working abroad, high pay to deliver top-level technology to China.

The increased mistrust is bound to have an impact on research collaboration, academics and experts say.

An increasing number of young Chinese scholars are told they cannot participate in a project for security reasons, said an official at Pennsylvania State University, who requested anonymity given the sensitivity of the topic.

“Research collaboration between China and the U.S. will be severely disrupted by the trade war-turned-technology war, which essentially is a talent war,” said Cao Cong, professor of innovation studies at Nottingham University’s China campus in the city of Ningbo.

Beijing has committed billions of dollars in recent years to narrow China’s science and technology gap with the United States, Cao said.

But China is still “heavily dependent” on the U.S. for technology transfers and training, he added, and the “cut off” will have an impact in coming years.

The rising number of visa denials have prompted a warning from China’s education ministry that students and academics could have their study or research plans foiled by refusals or delays.

News in Brief

BEIJING (AFP) — The toll from a strong 6.0-magnitude earthquake in southwest China rose to 12 dead and 134 injured on Tuesday as rescuers pulled bodies and survivors from wrecked buildings. More than 4,000 people were relocated as dozens of structures were damaged or collapsed following late Monday’s earthquake outside Yibin in Sichuan province, according to the city government. State broadcaster CCTV showed footage of rescuers bringing a survivor out of the rubble of a building on a stretcher overnight. Other images showed a woman being helped out of another collapsed structure. Cracks appeared in several highways and a major highway connecting Yibin and Xuyong County was closed, according to the official Xinhua news agency. Xinhua reported overnight that a hotel close to the epicenter collapsed, but there was no immediate word of any casualties.

Nine people died in Changning County and three others in Qixian County, the Yibin city government said in its Twitter-like Weibo account, up from an initial death toll of six overnight.

LONDON (AFP) — At least one of the six candidates vying to become Britain’s next prime minister was to be eliminated in the second round of voting in parliament on Tuesday, with the final pair to be decided by the end of the week. The outcome of the Conservative party leadership battle could determine under what conditions Britain leaves the European Union. Brexit is currently scheduled for October 31. All eyes are on whether frontrunner Boris Johnson can maintain his strong lead from the first round of voting, and whether dark horse Rory Stewart can cause a shock by taking out one of the other big hitters. The Conservative party’s 313 MPs are voting in the secret ballot to replace outgoing leader Theresa May, in a contest that has been marked by the past drug confessions of leading candidates.

DALLAS (AP) — An Army veteran wearing a mask and carrying more than 150 rounds of ammunition for his high-powered rifle was shot dead after he opened fire outside a busy federal courthouse in downtown Dallas, authorities said. Federal officers killed 22-year-old Brian Isaac Clyde of Fort Worth after he approached an entrance of the Earle Cabell Federal Building and began shooting. Glass panes were shattered in a revolving door during the gunfight, but no one else was seriously hurt. “It’s a lot of rounds — a lot of rounds at his disposal, a large powerful weapon at his disposal,” FBI agent Matthew DeSarno said. Clyde’s attack began about 8:40 a.m., and three officers from the Federal Protective Service who were stationed at the building confronted him. DeSarno and other officials praised their courage at a news conference. Officials are still trying to determine a motive, but said there was nothing to indicate the presence of any other shooters or threats to the city, DeSarno said.

HONG KONG (Reuters) — Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam on Tuesday signaled the end of a controversial extradition bill that she promoted and then postponed after some of the most violent protests since the former British colony returned to Chinese rule in 1997. In a closely watched press conference, Lam apologized for the turmoil but refused to say the bill would be “withdrawn”, only that it wouldn’t be re-introduced during her time in office if public fears persist. “Because this bill over the past few months has caused so much anxiety, and worries and differences in opinion, I will not, this is an undertaking, I will not proceed again with this legislative exercise if these fears and anxieties cannot be adequately addressed,” Lam told reporters. Lam apologized for plunging the city into major upheaval, saying she had heard the people “loud and clear” and would try to rebuild trust.

BERLIN (AP) — Diplomats and climate experts gathered in Germany for UN-hosted talks on climate change amid growing public pressure for governments to act faster against global warming. Officials meeting in the western city of Bonn for the June 17-27 talks are focusing on resolving issues that couldn’t be agreed upon at last December’s climate summit in Poland. Over the weekend, a picture taken by Danish climate researchers showing sled dogs on the ice in northwest Greenland with their paws in melted ice water was widely shared on social media. Greenland’s ice melting season normally runs from June to August but the Danish Meteorological Institute said this year’s melting started on April 30, the second-earliest time on record going back to 1980. Students in Europe and beyond have staged regular street protests demanding leaders do more to meet the 2015 Paris accord’s goal of keeping average temperature increases below 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 Fahrenheit) — ideally 1.5 degrees C (2.7 degrees F) — by the end of the century, compared to pre-industrial times.

GENEVA (Reuters) — More than 300,000 people have fled inter-ethnic violence in northeastern Democratic Republic of Congo since early June, complicating the tracing and treatment of patients at risk from Ebola, UN aid agencies said on Tuesday. At least 161 people have been killed in a northeastern province of Democratic Republic of Congo in the past week, local officials said on Monday, in an apparent resurgence of ethnic clashes between farming and herding communities. “The situation in Ituri province has deteriorated since the middle of last week, with multiple attacks involving the Hema and Lendu groups,” the UN refugee agency spokesman Babar Baloch told a news briefing. The UNHCR fears that the escalation could engulf large parts of the province, amid reports of killings, kidnappings and sexual violence unleashed against civilians, he said.