

UK's Ambassador to U.S. Resigns After Trump Spat



Britain's Ambassador to the United States Kim Darroch (R) arrives as then White House Chief Strategist Steve Bannon greets guests prior to a joint news conference at the White House in Washington, January 27, 2017.

LONDON (AP) — Britain's ambassador to the United States resigned Wednesday, just days after diplomatic cables criticizing President Donald Trump caused embarrassment to two countries that often celebrate having a "special relationship." The resignation of Kim Darroch came after Trump lashed out at him on Twitter, describing the ambassador as "wacky" and a "pompous fool." The criticism came after leaked documents revealed the envoy's dim view of Trump's administration, which he described as dysfunctional, inept and chaotic.

"Since the leak of official documents ... there has been a great deal of speculation surrounding my position and the duration of my remaining term as ambassador," Darroch said in his resignation letter. "I want to put an end to that speculation. The current situation is making it impossible for me to carry out my role as I would like." Prime Minister Theresa May said the resignation was "a matter of regret," underlining that "good government depends on public servants being able to give full and frank advice."

applications and interviews, though Simon McDonald, head of Britain's diplomatic service, said the post of ambassador to the U.S. wasn't always chosen that way.

"History shows that there are often bespoke procedures for filling the embassy in Washington, DC," he said.

Though the resignation was brewing for days, Darroch made his decision the morning after a debate between the two contenders to replace May as party leader and prime minister, Boris Johnson and Jeremy Hunt.

Hunt, who is Britain's foreign secretary, had vowed to keep Darroch in the post, but Johnson pointedly did not.

"I think it's very important we should have a close partnership, a close friendship with the United States," Johnson said.

Darroch's forthright, unfiltered views on the U.S. administration — meant for a limited audience and discreet review — appeared in leaked diplomatic documents that were published in Britain's Mail on Sunday newspaper.

In the leaked documents, he called the Trump administration's policy toward Iran "incoherent," said the president might be indebted to "dodgy Russians" and raised doubts about whether the White House "will ever look competent."

"We don't really believe this administration is going to become substantially more normal; less dysfunctional; less unpredictable; less faction riven; less diplomatically clumsy and inept," one missive said.

China, U.S. Negotiators Resume Trade War Talks



China's President Xi Jinping (R) shakes hands with U.S. President Donald Trump before a bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in Osaka on June 29, 2019.

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Top U.S. and Chinese negotiators held phone talks on Tuesday as the world's top two economies seek to resolve their trade war, more than a week after they declared a truce. Talks had broken down in May over U.S. accusations that Beijing had reneged on its commitments, and the dispute escalated with the two sides exchanging steep increases in punitive tariffs. But U.S. President Donald Trump and Chinese leader Xi Jinping agreed to revive negotiations when they met on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Japan on June 29.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer spoke with Chinese Vice Premier Liu He and Commerce Minister Zhong Shan on Tuesday. White House economic adviser Larry Kudlow told reporters the talks "went constructively" but it was "too soon for details." In an interview with the Fox Business Network, Kudlow described the discussions as "preliminary" and said meetings will "probably" be arranged, but did not give more details. Kudlow noted that Trump has agreed to hold off on imposing new tariffs and will allow certain U.S. products to be sold to Chinese tele-

com giant Huawei. "Having said that, we have a very strong -- I want to underscore this -- a very strong expectation that China will really shortly, maybe immediately, begin to purchase U.S. agricultural products," he told the U.S. broadcaster. The Chinese commerce ministry said in a brief statement that the two sides exchanged "opinions on implementing the consensus reached between the two countries' heads of state in Osaka."

Washington and Beijing have hit each other with punitive tariffs covering more than \$360 billion in two-way trade and those duties remain in place. After his meeting with Xi in Osaka, Trump said he would refrain from imposing tariffs on more Chinese products. He had previously threatened to put punitive duties on an additional \$300 billion in Chinese exports.

He also triggered a backlash in the U.S. Congress by agreeing to soften some U.S. export restrictions on components to Huawei, though Trump stipulated that officials would take care to avoid creating new risks to U.S. national security. The United States had imposed tough sanctions on the company, whose equipment U.S. officials fear could be used as Trojan horses for China's intelligence services.

The ceasefire comes as the U.S. presidential campaign has started ahead of the November 2020 election.

Dozens Killed in Tribal Carnage in Papua New Guinea

PORT MORESBY (AFP) — At least 24 people, including two pregnant women and their unborn children, were killed in a three-day spasm of tribal violence in Papua New Guinea's lawless highlands, prompting the prime minister on Wednesday to promise swift justice. Officials said the deaths occurred in Hela province -- a rugged region in the west of the country -- when rival tribes apparently clashed over control of local gold deposits in the mineral-rich soil. Highland clans have fought each other in Papua New Guinea for centuries, but an influx of automatic weapons has made clashes more deadly and escalated the cycle of violence.

In the Karida attack, six women and eight children -- as well as two pregnant women and their unborn children -- were hacked and shot to death in a 30-minute rampage.

Local health worker Pills Kolo said it was hard to recognize some of the body parts, and posted images of remains bundled together with mosquito nets used as makeshift body bags.

Images provided by local police showed the corpses of two children of school age, one with severe head injuries.

Local media reported the attack appeared to be related to the ambush and murder of six people the day before.

Marape blamed the violence on three related warlords who have been fighting against the Tagali tribe over local gold deposits.

Tribal clashes are a frequent occurrence in Papua New Guinea's highlands, where old rivalries prompted by rape or theft, or disputes over tribal boundaries or resources, often prompt violence.

But this is the most serious incident in years and the government -- which has only 40 police and 16 soldiers in the area according to Bando -- is struggling to respond.

Killing of Black Teen Sparks New Revolt in U.S.



White man Michael Paul Adams, right, randomly slit 17-year-old Elijah Al-Amin's throat because his rap music made him feel "unsafe".

PHOENIX (AP) — Hundreds of people including a presidential candidate spoke out on Twitter this week after a 17-year-old black youth was killed at suburban convenience store, allegedly by a white man charged Tuesday with first-degree murder who has said he felt threatened by the boy's rap music.

Family members have told local media that Elijah Al-Amin would have turned 18 in two weeks and was looking forward to his last year in high school.

The Maricopa County Attorney's Office said it filed a direct complaint Tuesday charging Michael Adams, 27, in the Thursday morning killing. First-degree murder carries a sentence of life behind bars or death.

Adams is next scheduled to appear in court July

The Twitter hashtag #JusticeForElijah began trending over the Independence Day weekend after police in the suburban Phoenix city of Peoria arrested Adams. He had been released from state prison two days before.

"Another one of our children has been murdered in a heinous and unprovoked way, the DOJ must investigate this hate crime immediately," Democratic candidate Cory Booker wrote on his Twitter account Monday. "RIP Elijah. #JusticeForElijah."

Linda Sarsour, a Palestinian American civil

rights activist from Brooklyn, New York, called the crime "outrageous" and said it recalled the 2012 killing of 17-year-old high school student Jordan Davis in Jacksonville, Florida. "Rest in power Elijah Al-Amin," she wrote.

Michael Dunn, who is white, was later convicted of first-degree murder in that earlier killing, a shooting that erupted during an argument about loud music coming from a car carrying Davis and other black teenagers.

In the Arizona attack, first responders discovered Al-Amin collapsed outside the Peoria Circle K store's gas pumps and took him to a hospital, where he died. Several people inside the store had watched as Al-Amin was stabbed in the throat and the back before he ran outside.

Officers found Adams nearby with a pocket knife and blood on his body. Adams told them he had felt threatened by the rap music coming from Al-Amin's vehicle.

Adams' attorney, Jacie Cotterell, told the judge at his initial appearance hearing that her client was mentally ill and released without any medication, "no holdover meds, no way to care for himself."

Many of the people commenting on Twitter said that claims about Adams' mental illness should not be used to explain away what they believe was a hate crime.

Chancellor Merkel Suffers Third Trembling Bout



German Chancellor Angela Merkel receives Finland's new Social Democrat Prime Minister Antti Rinne with military honours at the Chancellery in Berlin, July 10, 2019.

BERLIN (AFP) -- German Chancellor Angela Merkel insisted she was "very well", despite suffering her third trembling spell in less than a month on Wednesday that revived questions about her health.

Merkel began shaking involuntarily as national anthems were being played at the reception of Finnish Prime Minister Antti Rinne.

But she attended a press conference as planned just around an hour later, telling journalists that her health was no cause for concern.

"I feel very well, there is no need to worry," she said, adding that she was simply still in a phase of "processing" a previous shaking spell, but that "there has been progress".

"I must now keep going with that," added Merkel, who turns 65 next week.

A source close to the government had said the cause of the repeat shaking was now psychological, with memories of the first incident provoking renewed trembling at events with similar settings.

The shaking on Wednesday was visible although less severe than during the first episode in June.

On that occasion she appeared unsteady and shook as she stood in the midday sun next to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, whom she

was welcoming with military honors.

That first bout of shaking was blamed on dehydration, but a second episode struck a week later at the end of June, just hours before she was due to board a plane for a G20 summit in Japan.

Officials had sought to play down fears over her health then, saying that she was fine and that she would not be cancelling any planned engagements.

Merkel, who has been leader of Europe's biggest economy for almost 14 years, has always enjoyed relatively robust health.

Frequently called the European Union's most influential leader and the most powerful woman in the world, Merkel has said she will leave politics at the end of her term, in 2021.

But she has struggled to stamp out repeated speculation that she may leave the political stage earlier than planned.

The coalition that she had forged with the centre-left Social Democratic Party was fragile from the start, and has lurched from crisis to crisis.

The latest health scares have prompted additional questions over the length of her reign.

There were brief concerns about her well-being in 2014 when she was taken ill during a television interview. The broadcast was interrupted when she experienced a drop in blood pressure.



PARIS (AFP) — The French government said Wednesday that its missiles had been found in Libya on a base used by rebel forces loyal to Khalifa Haftar, in an embarrassing admission that raises fresh questions about its role in the conflict. Confirming a report in the New York Times, the defense ministry said in a statement that US-made Javelin missiles discovered in a camp south of Tripoli at the end of June had been purchased by France. But it denied supplying them to rebel commander Haftar and breaching a UN arms embargo, saying French forces operating in the war-torn country had lost track of them after they were judged to be defective. The anti-tank missiles, worth 170,000 dollars (150,000 euros) each, were seized when forces loyal to the UN-recognized government in Tripoli overran the rebel base in Gharyan, 100 kilometers (60 miles) south of Tripoli. Three of them, as well Chinese-made shells bearing the markings of the the United Arab Emirates (UAE), were shown off to journalists including AFP reporters on June 29.

MOSCOW (Reuters) — Russian President Vladimir Putin questioned on Tuesday the use of wind power, saying wind turbines were harmful to birds and worms. Russia, a world-leading producer of fossil fuel, is lagging other countries in its development of renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind-powered energy. Wind power is rarely used in the country to generate electricity. Enel Russia pledged 90 million euros to build a power generation facility by 2024 with a capacity of 71 megawatts. "Wind-powered generation is good, but are birds being taken into account in this case? How many birds are dying?" Putin said at a televised conference on industry in the Russian city of Yekaterinburg. "They (wind turbines) shake, causing worms to come out of the soil. This is not a joke," he said. Putin added that people would not like to live on a planet dotted with "rows of wind-powered generators and covered by several layers of solar panels".

LONDON (AFP) — Boris Johnson stood accused Tuesday of having nothing to offer Britain but "blind optimism" as he and his rival Theresa May later this month, wooing voters with a promise to take Britain out of the European Union on October 31 whatever happens. But in their first and only head-to-head debate, his rival Jeremy Hunt accused him of not being honest about the risks of leaving the bloc without a deal with Brussels. "If we want to make a success of Brexit it's not about blind optimism, it's about understanding the details that will get us the deal that's right for country," said Hunt, the current foreign minister. Johnson, a former London mayor who preceded Hunt at the Foreign Office, is known for his rhetoric and jokes but has been accused of having only a vague plan for office. He retorted that "we've had a bellyful of defeatism", saying he would help Britain "get back our mojo" and "off the hamster wheel of doom".

ISTANBUL (Reuters) — Turkey said on Wednesday it rejected Greek and European Union assertions that Turkish drilling for gas and oil off Cyprus was illegitimate, and said they showed the EU could not be an impartial mediator on the Cyprus problem. The foreign ministry said Turkey's Fatih ship had started drilling to the west of the Mediterranean island at the start of May and its Yavuz ship had recently arrived east of Cyprus and would also carry out drilling. Cyprus says Turkey's actions are contrary to international law. Turkey and the internationally-recognized government of the divided island have overlapping claims in that part of the Mediterranean, an area thought to be rich in natural gas. The Yavuz drillship dropped anchor on Monday to the south of Cyprus' Karpasia peninsula, a jutting northeastern panhandle. It triggered a strong protest from Nicosia and a rebuke from the European Union. In June, EU leaders warned Turkey to end drilling in waters around the island or face action from the bloc.

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korean President Moon Jae-in on Wednesday criticized comments by Japanese officials who questioned the credibility of Seoul's sanctions against North Korea while justifying Tokyo's stricter controls on high-tech exports to South Korea. The issue has become a full-blown diplomatic dispute between the neighboring U.S. allies. In a meeting with South Korean business leaders at Seoul's presidential palace, Moon said his government was committed to resolving the matter diplomatically and urged Japan to refrain from pushing the situation to a "dead-end street." Tokyo last week tightened the approval process for Japanese shipments of photoreists and other sensitive materials to South Korean companies, which need the chemicals to produce semiconductors and display screens used in TVs and smartphones.

BUCHAREST, Romania (AP) — Romania's president says the country's government is ignoring the will of its own citizens by not adopting anti-corruption recommendations made by a European anti-graft body. President Klaus Iohannis said Wednesday that it was "extremely worrying" that Romania was still in the focus of European institutions. A report by the Council of Europe's corruption monitoring division said Tuesday that Romania had fully complied with only four of 13 recommendations for handling high-level corruption. Iohannis, a former leader of Romania's National Liberal Party, said that the ruling coalition led by Prime Minister Viorica Dancila's Social Democrat Party, "got a red card once again" for the "damages made by this government by modifying the justice and penal laws."