

# Trump Asks Japan to Quadruple Payments for Troops



U.S. President Donald Trump arrives at the Yokosuka naval base in Japan on May 28, 2019.

**TOKYO (Dispatches) -- U.S. President Donald Trump has asked Japan to quadruple annual payments for U.S. forces stationed there to around \$8 billion, Foreign Policy reported.**

The current agreement that covers the 54,000 U.S. troops stationed in Japan expires in March 2021.

The demand was made to Japanese officials during a trip to the region in July by John Bolton, at that time Trump's national security adviser, and Matt Pottinger, who was then the Asia director for the National Security Council, the U.S. global affairs magazine said, citing unidentified former U.S. officials.

A Japanese foreign ministry spokesman said the report was incorrect and no U.S.-Japan negotiations on a new agree-

ment have taken place.

According to Kyodo news agency, Japanese officials told Bolton the increase is "unrealistic," saying Japan already pays a greater share of stationing costs than other allies.

A U.S. State Department spokesman said in an emailed statement: "The President has made clear that allies and partners should contribute more to their shared defense."

Negotiations to renew the agreement will start in the first half of next year, the spokesman said, adding that the U.S. commitment to Japan's defense was "unwavering."

Japan hosts the U.S. Navy's Seventh Fleet, including the only permanently forward deployed carrier strike group,

as well as the Third Marine Expeditionary Force.

Those units use the archipelago as a base for operations in the wider Asia-Pacific region to counter China's perceived growing influence.

Trump has also insisted Seoul shoulder more of the cost of the U.S. military presence in South Korea and has floated the idea of pulling U.S. troops from the peninsula.

Pentagon chief Mark pressed Washington's case during a visit to the country on Friday.

"This is a very strong alliance we have, but Korea is a wealthy country and could and should pay more to help offset the cost of defense," Esper told a joint news conference with his South Korean counterpart, Jeong Kyeong-doo.

Esper said that while South Korea has provided "a fair amount of support in the past," it is important to point out that "most of that money stays here in this country -- easily over 90% of that money stays here in Korea, it does not go to the United States."

The amount Korea pays for the presence of about 28,000 U.S. troops has varied over the years. This year it is nearly \$1 billion.

South Korean news reports have said the Trump administration is demanding a five-fold increase in South Korean contributions, to about \$4.7 billion for 2020, although Jeong declined to confirm the figure.

# Chinese Troops Join HK Cleanup as Riots Subside



Chinese soldiers carry brooms as they help to clean up Hong Kong after weeks of violent protests, Nov. 16, 2019.

**HONG KONG (AP) — Chinese troops came out of the barracks in Hong Kong on Saturday — not to quell protests but to help clean up.**

It was a rare public appearance by the People's Liberation Army on the streets of the semiautonomous territory, where the local government's inability to end more than five months of often violent riots has fueled speculation that Beijing could deploy its troops.

Running in formation with brooms instead of rifles, they chanted in military cadence before joining street cleaners removing debris near Hong Kong Baptist University, where police fired tear gas at protesters earlier this week.

Most anti-government protesters left Hong Kong's universities Saturday after occupying them for about a week. Small contingents that remained harassed some of those cleaning up and kept a major cross-harbor tunnel closed.

For a city now accustomed to fierce weekend clashes between police and protesters, Hong Kong had a relatively quiet Saturday.

Dozens of Chinese troops, dressed in black shorts and olive drab T-shirts, came out from a nearby barracks to pick up paving stones, rocks and other obstacles that

had cluttered the street and prevented traffic from flowing. Hong Kong riot police kept watch from nearby streets.

China, which maintains a garrison of about 10,000 soldiers in Hong Kong, publicly noted several times earlier during the protests that it could deploy them, though technically it would have to be requested by Hong Kong's government.

There were scattered incidents of protesters arguing with people clearing roadways, and in one instance, throwing a gasoline bomb near City University of Hong Kong.

Protesters also massed near Hong Kong University in the evening to try to block a main road again, but they were stopped by police firing pepper-spray balls.

Several dozen protesters remained at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, some keeping watch on the blocked access road to the Cross-Harbour Tunnel, where they torched the toll booths on previous nights.

Traffic disruptions continued to plague parts of Hong Kong, and schools and universities remained closed in the city of 7.5 million people.

Now in their sixth month, the anti-government protests have grown increasingly violent even as they have shrunk in size, often causing chaos in the streets.

# Muslim Voters Attacked as Sri Lanka Goes to Polls



A police officer is seen as people stand in a line to cast their vote during the presidential election in Colombo, Sri Lanka November 16, 2019.

**COLOMBO, Sri Lanka (AP) — Polls closed Saturday evening after a day of voting for Sri Lanka's next president, an election marred by shots fired at a convoy of Muslims heading to cast their ballots in what some called a coordinated effort to disenfranchise the minority group.**

There were no reported injuries in the convoy attack and police were investigating, said Manjula Gajanayake, a spokesman for the Colombo-based Centre for Monitoring Election Violence. The center said there were reports elsewhere of minor election law violations, such as supporters influencing voters near polling stations and distributing mock ballots with party sym-

bols.

After polls closed, Elections Commission chairman Mahinda Deshapriya said there were "no serious incidents of violence."

Campaigning for Sri Lanka's presidential election was dominated by worries over national security, which was pushed to the forefront after deadly Daesh-inspired suicide bomb attacks on Easter Sunday that killed 269 people. At the same time, there's fear among both Tamils and Muslims about a return to power of front-runner Gotabaya Rajapaksa, a hardline former defense official under his brother, ex-President Mahinda Rajapaksa.

The Rajapaksa brothers are revered by Sri Lanka's Sinhalese

Buddhist majority for defeating the Tamil Tiger rebels in 2009 and ending the nation's long-running civil war. But because of their heavy-handed rule during and after the war, some minorities dread their return.

Rajapaksa had been widely expected to triumph over the ruling party candidate, Housing Minister Sajith Premadasa. But as the election approached, the race became very close.

Nearly 16 million of the 22 million people were eligible to vote and choose a new president from a record 35 candidates. President Maithripala Sirisena, who was elected in 2015, is not seeking re-election. Results are expected as early as Sunday.

A decade of peace following nearly 30 years of civil war was shattered earlier this year when home-grown militants pledged loyalty to the Daesh group detonated suicide bombs at three churches and three hotels on April 21. Gotabaya Rajapaksa, 71, cast himself as the only candidate capable of protecting Sri Lankans from such attacks.

The Muslims attacked Saturday were part of a convoy organized by Premadasa's supporters and was taking them back to vote in the northern district of Mannar. Many Muslims fled the area in 1982, when the Tamil insurgency began to grow, and others were evicted from the north in 1990.

# Ousted Ambassador Says Intimidated by Trump



Former U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine Marie Yovanovitch sits next to her attorney, Larry Robbins, before testifying to the House Intelligence Committee on Capitol Hill on Nov. 15, 2019.

**WASHINGTON (AP) — In chilling detail, ousted U.S. Ambassador to the Ukraine Marie Yovanovitch described to Trump impeachment investigators Friday how she felt threatened upon learning that President Donald Trump had promised Ukraine's leader she was "going to go through some things."**

Trump was unwilling to stay silent during Yovanovitch's testimony, focusing even greater national attention on the House hearing by becoming a participant. He tweeted fresh criticism of her, saying that things "turned bad" everywhere she served before he fired her — a comment that quickly was displayed on a video screen in the hearing room.

Rather than distract from the career diplomat's testimony, Trump's interference could provide more evidence against him in the probe. Democrat Adam Schiff, chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, said Trump's attacks were intimidation, "part of a pattern to obstruct justice." Others said they could be part of an article of impeachment.

The former ambassador was testifying on the second day of public impeachment hearings, the fourth time in American history that the House of Representatives has launched such proceedings. The investigation centers on whether Trump's political rivals amounted to an abuse of power, a charge he and Republicans vigorously deny.

Yovanovitch, asked about the potential effect of a presidential threat on other officials or witnesses, replied, "Well, it's very intimidating."

When she saw in print what the president had said about her, she said, a friend told her all the

color drained from her face. She was "shocked, appalled, devastated" at what was happening after a distinguished 30-year career in the U.S. Foreign Service.

Unabashed, Trump said when asked about it later: "I have the right to speak. I have freedom of speech."

But not all Republicans thought it was wise. Rep. Liz Cheney of Wyoming said Trump's live tweeting at the ambassador was wrong. She said, "I don't think the president should have done that."

More hearings are coming, with back-to-back sessions next week and lawmakers interviewing new witnesses behind closed doors.

Yovanovitch, a career diplomat who served for decades under both Republican and Democratic presidents and was first appointed by Ronald Reagan, was pushed from her post in Kyiv earlier this year amid intense criticism from Trump allies.

During a long day of testimony, she relayed her striking story of being "kneecapped," recalled from Kyiv by Trump in a swiftly developing series of events that sounded alarms about a White House shadow foreign policy.

She described a "smear campaign" against her by Trump's personal lawyer, Rudy Giuliani, and others, including the president's son, Donald Trump Jr., before her firing.

# News in Brief

**WASHINGTON (AFP) -- The teenager who gunned down classmates at a California high school before shooting himself died Friday, leaving detectives baffled over the motive of a Boy Scout with no obvious alarm bells in his background. Nathaniel Berhow died in a hospital one day after shooting himself in the head at the end of a 16th birthday rampage that left two fellow students dead. Berhow had been in critical condition since police officers storming the campus found him lying among the wounded. The Los Angeles sheriff's department confirmed Berhow died shortly after 3:30 pm (2330 GMT) on Friday. The puzzle of what led him to open fire at Saugus High School, a short commute from Los Angeles, deepened as a picture emerged of a quiet yet sociable teen who was familiar with guns but had no history of troubled behavior. "We know it was a planned attack, it was deliberate... The motive? We don't have it yet," Los Angeles County Sheriff Alex Villanueva told a news conference. The victims -- a boy and a girl died while another three students were wounded -- appeared to have been chosen at random, he said.**

**BARCELONA (Reuters) -- Dozens of protesters crowded into Barcelona's main railway station on Saturday in the latest show of dissent to grip the city more than a month after a Spanish court handed stiff prison sentences to nine Catalan separatist leaders. Protesters poured into Barcelona's Sants station, some staging a sit-in while a handful scuffled with police, heeding a call by a separatist group known as CDR. The organization had urged people to show up at nine railway stations across Barcelona in hopes of provoking what they described as a "total blockage" on social media. Police said the protest was limited to one station and protesters were removed after about an hour, joining a wider crowd who had gathered outside the station, some waving separatist flags. No arrests were made and transit services were not disrupted, authorities added. The regional capital Barcelona has seen weeks of protests, at times erupting in violence, since Spain's supreme court sentenced nine of the region's leaders to up to 13 years in prison over their role in a failed 2017 bid for Catalan independence.**

**CARACAS (Dispatches) -- The Western-backed opposition in Venezuela held protests on Saturday in the hope of reviving a stalled campaign to oust President Nicolas Maduro with the help of aggressive U.S. sanctions. Opposition leader Juan Guaido kick-started protests in January after declaring himself interim president after Maduro's 2018 re-election a fraud. But the energy has waned and frustration is mounting as Maduro remains in control. The opposition has been emboldened by the ouster of Bolivian President Evo Morales, a Maduro ally, in what has been characterized by many Latin American leaders as akin to a military coup. But change in Venezuela continues to hinge on a shift in allegiance of the armed forces, which remain loyal to Maduro and the ruling Socialist Party. That contrasts with Bolivia's military leaders, who pressured Morales to step down.**

**STOCKHOLM/BEIJING (Reuters) -- Beijing has doubled down in its criticism of Stockholm's support for Gui Minhai, a book publisher detained in China, after Sweden's minister for culture attended a literary award ceremony in his honor. The Chinese ambassador to Sweden had threatened Minister of Culture Amanda Lind with a ban on entering China if she attended the prize-giving on Friday. After the ceremony where Lind defended freedom of speech, China's embassy in Stockholm said in a statement on Saturday that Lind's attendance was a "serious mistake". It did not reference the potential ban but warned that "wrong deeds will only meet with bad consequences. "Giving an award to such a criminal is an outright political farce ... It also constitutes a gross interference in China's judicial sovereignty," the statement said.**

**MELBOURNE (Reuters) -- Dozens of wild fires burned across broad swaths of Australia's east and west on Saturday and firefighters scrambled to shore up defenses ahead of hotter weather and stronger winds expected to bring more danger in the coming days. Temperatures of above 40 degrees Celsius (104°F) were forecast for parts of Western Australia on Sunday before spreading east next week and worsening conditions in New South Wales (NSW) and Queensland, two states already stricken by devastating bushfires. Australia's bushfire are a common and deadly threat but the early outbreak this year in the southern spring has already claimed several lives and destroyed more than 300 homes over the past week. Severe fire danger conditions are expected to continue in NSW on Sunday where about 60 bush and grass fires are still burning, according to NSW Rural Fire Service.**

**FRANKFURT (Reuters) -- A federal judge on Saturday ordered that a German citizen arrested on her return to the country on suspicion of being a member of Daesh should remain in custody, prosecutors said. Authorities said the suspect, identified only as Nasim A., had left Germany for Syria in 2014, married a fighter and moved with him to Iraq. There, she was paid to maintain a Daesh-controlled house and carried a weapon. She and her husband later moved to Syria, where she also maintained a house, prosecutors said. She was arrested in early 2019 by Kurdish security forces. The woman was arrested on Friday evening in Frankfurt upon her return to Germany.**

# Submerged Venice on Alert for More Floods

**VENICE, Italy (AFP) -- Venice was on alert for more floods and fierce winds on Saturday after an exceptionally high tide swamped the city of canals, where authorities have declared a state of emergency.**

Mayor Luigi Brugnaro ordered the iconic St Mark's Square closed on Friday as the latest sea surge struck with strong storms and winds battering the region.

The square was open again on Saturday, but the city forecast a high water of 160 centimeters (over five feet) for Sunday, lower than Tuesday's high of 187 centimeters but still dangerous.

Civil protection authorities downgraded a weather "red alert" for the Venice region to orange, with Saturday's midday high forecast to be a manageable 105 centimeters.

Churches, shops and homes in the city, a UNESCO World Heritage site, have been inundated by unusually intense "acqua alta", or high water, which on Tuesday hit its highest level in half a century.

"We've destroyed Venice, we're talking about one billion (euros) in damage and that's just from the other day, not today," Brugnaro said.

The crisis has prompted the government to release 20 million euros (\$22 million) in funds to tackle the devastation.

Surveying the damage, Culture Minister Dario Franceschini warned the task of repairing the city would be huge. More than 50 churches had suffered damage, he said.

Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte declared a state of emergency for the city on Thursday.

Residents whose houses have been hit are eligible for up to 5,000 euros in immediate government aid, while restaurant and shop owners can receive up to 20,000 euros and apply for more later.

Mayor Brugnaro on Friday also announced the opening of a fund where people in Italy and around the world could contribute to the historic city's repair.