

Russia Vows No Mercy as It Buries Daria Dugi-



Daria Dugina was a well-known media personality who worked for a pro-Kremlin TV.

MOSCOW (AFP) -- Russia vowed “no mercy” for the killers of Daria Dugina, the daughter of an ultranationalist intellectual, as hundreds gathered for her funeral following her death in a car bomb blast over the weekend.

“I believe that this is a barbaric crime for which there is no forgiveness,” Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told journalists on Tuesday, calling for “no mercy” for those responsible.

Moscow says Ukrainian intelligence was behind the attack -- a claim dismissed by Kyiv.

Alexander Dugin -- a vocal supporter of the Kremlin’s military campaign who has claimed to be close to President Vladimir Putin

-- may have been the intended target of the attack that killed his 29-year-old daughter.

Mourners -- many carrying flowers -- paid their respects at a hall in Moscow’s Ostankino TV centre where her black-and-white portrait was displayed over an open casket.

Dugin and his wife, both dressed in black, sat next to their daughter’s coffin.

“She died for the people, for Russia, at the front. The front -- it is here,” Dugin said at the ceremony.

“Since childhood, among her first words -- that we taught her of course -- were Russia, our state, our people, our empire,” he added.

Dugina was killed Saturday when a bomb placed in her car went off

as she drove on a highway outside Moscow.

Russia’s powerful FSB security agency said on Monday it had solved the crime -- just two days after the incident -- naming a Ukrainian woman as Dugina’s attacker.

It said the perpetrator had rented an apartment in the same building as Dugina and followed her in a car, suggesting that Dugina was the intended victim.

However, Russian media reported that Dugin and his daughter had had a last-minute change of plans, with Dugina driving her father’s car.

The U.S. Department of State said on Monday that it condemned targeting civilians, while stating that Ukraine had denied any involvement.

Russia’s foreign ministry retorted that Washington’s reaction “discredits the international activity” of the United States.

“Washington has no moral right... to judge human rights in remote parts of the world, since the murder of a journalist is not even commented on from this angle,” foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said on social media.

Dugin, 60, gained prominence in the 1990s in the intellectual chaos that followed the break-up of the Soviet Union. He had been an anti-communist dissident in the last years of Soviet rule.

Trump Asks Court to Block Review of Seized Documents



An aerial view of former U.S. President Donald Trump’s Mar-a-Lago home after Trump said that FBI agents searched it, in Palm Beach, Florida, U.S. August 15, 2022.

WASHINGTON (Reuters) -- Former President Donald Trump asked a federal court to temporarily block the FBI from reviewing the materials it seized two weeks ago from his Florida home, until a special master can be appointed to oversee the review.

Trump’s motion, filed in federal court in West Palm Beach, Florida, also demanded that the U.S. Justice Department provide him a more detailed property receipt outlining items the FBI seized from his Mar-a-Lago home during its Aug. 8 search, and asked investigators to return any items outside the scope of the search warrant.

A special master can sometimes be appointed in highly sensitive cases to go through seized ma-

terials and ensure that investigators do not review privileged information.

When FBI agents had searched the homes of Trump’s former lawyers Michael Cohen and Rudy Giuliani the U.S. Attorney’s office in Manhattan requested the appointment of a special master.

Trump’s request was assigned to U.S. District Judge Aileen M. Cannon, whom Trump appointed to the bench. A Justice Department spokesman said prosecutors would file their response in court.

The Aug. 8 search of Mar-a-Lago marked a significant escalation in one of the many federal and state investigations Trump faces from his time in office and in private business.

After Trump and his allies complained in the media that the search was politically motivated, U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland asked the court to release a redacted copy of the search warrant and property receipt outlining the items taken.

The U.S. government has recovered more than 300 classified documents from Mar-a-Lago, including material from the CIA, the National Security Agency and the FBI, the New York Times reported on Monday, citing multiple people briefed on the matter. The items include material recovered by the National Archives in January and documents that Trump’s aides gave to the Justice Department in June, the newspaper reported.

The search is part of a federal investigation into whether Trump illegally removed documents when he left office in January 2021 after losing the presidential election to Democrat Joe Biden.

During its search the FBI seized 11 sets of classified materials at Mar-a-Lago, some of which were labeled “top secret” - the highest level of classification reserved for the most closely held U.S. national security information and which can only be viewed in special government facilities.

Last week, Trump released a redacted Aug. 15 email he received from Jay Bratt, the Justice Department’s head of counterintelligence, who indicated he had deployed a “filter” team of agents tasked with weeding out privileged materials.

Australian Website Reveals Murdoch ‘Threats’

SYDNEY (AFP) -- A small Australian news website has made an unusual request to be sued by Fox News boss Lachlan Murdoch, taking on one of the world’s most influential media figures.

Crikey, an often pugilistic Australian news site, published on Monday a series of legal threats it said it received from Murdoch’s lawyers over commentary it published about Fox News’ role in the U.S. Capitol attacks.

Murdoch is the eldest son of billionaire media tycoon Rupert Murdoch, owner of scores of outlets including Fox News, The Wall Street Journal and the New York Post.

His lawyers claimed a June article - headlined “Trump is a confirmed unhinged traitor. And Murdoch is his unindicted co-conspirator” - had defamed the media scion 22 times.

The article was mostly focused on former U.S. president Donald Trump’s role in the January 6, 2021 insurrection attempt.

It did not name Lachlan Murdoch specifically but it referred to the “Murdochs and their slew of poisonous Fox

News commentators”.

Crikey said it had decided to “fight” the threats from Murdoch’s lawyers and rebuffed their demands to permanently remove the article from its website and publish an apology.

“We want to defend those allegations in court,” Crikey’s editor and chairman said in a joint open letter, published as an advertisement in The New York Times.

The pair framed the issue as a battle for press freedom, and said they welcomed the opportunity “to test this important issue of freedom of public interest journalism in a courtroom”.

The legal tussle pits an upstart website, with subscriber numbers in the low tens of thousands, against one of the world’s largest media empires.

If the case moves ahead, Crikey will have to face Australia’s tough libel laws, which offer little protection to media.

The Murdoch family remains a major player in the Australian media, despite its global expansion into the United States and Britain.

Malaysia’s Ex-PM Najib Goes to Jail for Graft



Former Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak speaks to journalists outside the Federal Court during a court break, in Putrajaya, Malaysia August 23, 2022.

PUTRAJAYA (AFP) -- Malaysia’s highest court Tuesday upheld former prime minister Najib Razak’s 12-year jail sentence for corruption in the 1MDB financial scandal, a decision analysts said could slam the door to a political comeback.

Najib’s daughter-in-law Nur Sharmila Shaheen said the family was told he was sent to Kajang Prison, located south of the capital Kuala Lumpur.

“My father-in-law asked us to take care of the family. He remained strong and calm,” she said.

Federal Court chief justice Maimun Tuan Mat, speaking on behalf of a five-judge panel, said the tribunal found Najib’s “complaints as contained in the petition of appeal devoid of any merit”.

The appeals are “unanimously dismissed and the conviction and sentence are affirmed”, Maimun said.

The 69-year-old former prime minister looked somber and dejected, seated by his wife Rosmah and two children as the verdict was read.

Journalists who were in an adjacent room watching the proceedings through video link saw Najib surrounded by family members, friends and party mates before the connection was cut off.

Just before the verdict was read, Najib, who had said he received an unfair trial, made an impassioned plea

asking for a two-month adjournment so he can adequately prepare for a defense.

During a break in the proceedings, he spoke to supporters, telling them “if I am guilty, please forgive me”.

Najib is the UK-educated son of one of Malaysia’s founding fathers who had been groomed for the prime minister’s post from a young age.

The final ruling on the jail sentence also came four years after his long-ruling party’s shock election defeat in 2018, during which allegations he and his friends embezzled billions of dollars from state fund 1MDB were key campaign issues.

A lower court in July 2020 found Najib guilty of abuse of power, money laundering and criminal breach of trust over the transfer of 42 million ringgit (\$10 million) from SRC International, a former unit of state fund 1MDB, to his personal bank account.

An appellate court in December denied his appeal, prompting him to go to the Federal Court for a final recourse.

Najib and his ruling party were voted out in 2018 following allegations of their involvement in a multibillion-dollar financial scandal at 1MDB.

He and his associates were accused of stealing billions of dollars from the country’s investment vehicle and spending it on everything from high-end real estate to pricey art.

Venezuela Blasts U.S. Court’s \$8bn Award to Conoco



A Venezuelan flag in Caracas, Venezuela.

HOUSTON (Reuters) -- A U.S. court upheld a tribunal’s \$8.75 billion award to U.S. oil producer ConocoPhillips (COP.N) over the expropriation of its Venezuelan oil assets, granting a default judgment in the case on Friday.

The decision gives the U.S. company new authority to collect on a 2019 award by a World Bank tribunal. The award includes interest that adds at least \$1 billion to the amount owed to Conoco.

The World Bank’s International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes awarded Conoco \$8.75 billion over the 2007 expropriation of three of its oil projects in the country. Conoco had sought up to \$30 billion for the takeover.

Venezuela’s government rejected the court’s decision in a statement issued by the president’s office on Monday evening, saying the country would continue to take legal action to “preserve its patrimony.”

“This unfair decision has been forged by violating... Venezuela’s right to defense,” the statement said.

It added that the decision was in

“complicity with Venezuelan extremists, including (opposition leader) Juan Guaido.”

Guaido didn’t immediately respond to a request for comment.

Venezuela seized Conoco assets during late President Hugo Chavez’s nationalizations of oil, electricity and steel industries.

The country was bound by the terms of the ICSID Convention and Conoco had properly notified the country of its lawsuit through the U.S. Department of State, U.S. District Court Judge Carl Nichols said in his decision.

ConocoPhillips said it plans “to pursue all available legal avenues to obtain a full and fair recovery,” but did not comment on planned actions.

Conoco previously has used legal seizures of Venezuelan oil assets to enforce its claims. Its share price rose less than 1% to \$105.24 on a day in which the broader market fell sharply.

Venezuela’s main foreign asset is U.S.-based Citgo Petroleum, an oil refiner that split from its parent in 2019 and has been operating under legal protections from creditors issued by the U.S. Treasury Department.

News in Brief

NICOSIA (Reuters) -- Cypriot police have arrested a Ukrainian woman suspected of threatening a group of Russians with a knife as they celebrated their National Flag Day, police and media said on Tuesday. The woman, aged 55, appeared holding a knife as a group of about 20 flag-waving Russians gathered in the coastal town of Larnaca on Monday night. They were due to start a car convoy through the town. She was being held on custody on suspicion of common assault, public drunkenness, possession of a weapon and of disrupting the peace, police spokesman Harris Hadjiyiusemis told the semi-official Cyprus news agency. Thousands of Russians and Ukrainians live in Cyprus. On Saturday a small group of Russians gathered in the city of Limassol, waving flags and creating the “Z” symbol which has become synonymous with Russia’s military operation in Ukraine.

WASHINGTON (AFP) -- Anthony Fauci, the top infectious disease expert who became the face of America’s fight against Covid-19, announced he will leave government service after more than 50 years in December, stepping down as advisor to President Joe Biden. In the chaotic early days of the pandemic, Fauci became the nation’s most trusted expert on Covid -- but his clashes with former president Donald Trump over the virus response drew anger from the right, and he now lives with security protection following death threats against his family. The 81-year-old, who has served under seven presidents beginning with Ronald Reagan, said in a statement he would be leaving both his position as director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), and that of chief medical advisor to Biden. His honest takes on America’s early failures to get to grips with the virus soon brought Fauci into conflict with Trump. The White House at one point barred him from doing TV interviews and launched a media blitz against him.

LONDON (AFP) -- The number of people crossing the Channel to the UK from northern France in small boats has hit a new high, the government in London said Tuesday. Some 1,295 people were detected on Monday, beating the previous single-day record of 1,185 on November 11, 2021, the Ministry of Defense said. So far this year there have been some 22,670 crossings -- nearly double the number at the same point in 2021. Last year, the UK authorities intercepted and brought ashore a total of 28,526 people as they tried to cross the busy shipping lane. The issue has caused a major political headache for the UK government, which promised tighter border controls after leaving the European Union. It has also heightened tensions between London and Paris, with the UK government accusing France of not doing enough to stop the crossings.

WELLINGTON (Reuters) -- About 2,000 anti-government demonstrators gathered outside New Zealand’s parliament on Tuesday to vent their frustration on a range of issues nearly six months after protesters were forcibly removed from the grounds of the legislature. The protesters, organized by the Freedom and Rights Coalition, arrived from around New Zealand and assembled on the lawns outside parliament in the capital, Wellington, as politicians worked inside. People, some with placards calling for freedom, were protesting over a range of issues including tighter environmental regulations for farmers, a government bid to take over regionally owned water assets and now largely removed COVID-19 restrictions. Barriers were erected in front of parliament and there was a heavy police presence around the grounds. Police in March ended an anti-vaccine protest that had disrupted the capital for three weeks, dismantling an encampment in the same location, towing away vehicles and arresting dozens.

BRASILIA (Reuters) -- Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro said he would respect the result of an October election regardless of the result, as long as the voting is “clean and transparent.” In an interview with TV Globo’s Jornal Nacional, a nightly newscast with the largest audience in Brazil, the far-right politician insisted without evidence there had been fraud in past Brazilian elections. Bolsonaro did not mention the electronic voting system that he has attacked relentlessly for months, alleging they are open to manipulation. But the former army captain said the military should have a role in deciding the transparency of the vote. Opinion polls show Bolsonaro trailing in the presidential race to leftist rival, former President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who governed from 2003-2010 when Brazil’s economy was booming.

MEXICO CITY (AFP) -- A journalist was shot dead in southern Mexico, authorities said, shortly after posting online about the disappearance eight years ago of 43 students from a nearby area. Fredid Roman, who published his work on various social media pages and contributed to a local newspaper, was found dead in his car in the city of Chilpancingo, the capital of Guerrero state, the local prosecutor’s office said Monday evening. The case of the 43 students from Guerrero, who went missing in 2014 after commandeering a bus to head to a protest, is considered one of the worst human rights disasters in Mexican history. The case was forced back into the spotlight last week when a truth commission branded the atrocity a “state crime” that involved agents of various institutions. A few hours before his death, Roman published a long Facebook post titled “State Crime Without Charging the Boss,” in which he mentioned an alleged meeting between four officials at the time of the students’ disappearance, including former attorney general Jesus Murillo Karam.