

Trump Says Republican Memo Vindicates Him in Russia Probe

PALM BEACH - U.S. President Donald Trump said on Saturday that a controversial memo attacking federal law enforcement written by congressional Republicans vindicates him in the investigation of Russian meddling in the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

Trump's embrace of the memo raised again the prospect that he could use it as justification to fire special counsel Robert Mueller, who is conducting the investigation, or Deputy Attorney Rod Rosenstein, who oversees Mueller.

Tweeting from his resort in Palm Beach, Florida, Trump said the memo "totally vindicates" him but added "the Russian Witch



Hunt goes on and on. Their (sic) was no Collusion and there was no Obstruction." He called the investigation "an American disgrace."

The White House has said there will be no changes at the Justice Department as a result of the memo's conclusions.

The memo, written by Republicans on the U.S. House of Representatives Intelligence Committee chaired by Devin Nunes, argues that the federal investigation of potential collusion between Trump's 2016 presidential campaign and Russia was a product of political bias against Trump at the Federal Bureau of Investigation and Justice Department. (Reuters)

Government Document Leak a "Disgraceful Act of Negligence": Aussie PM

CANBERRA - Australia's Prime Minister has called for public servants responsible for classified government documents falling into the hands of journalists to be fired.

The Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) on Wednesday published a series of documents from the Cabinet of Australia, the inner sanctum of government, after they were found in a locked filing cabinet sold at a second-hand government furniture auction.

All the documents have since been returned to the

government after lawyers for both parties negotiated their return. Martin Parkinson, head of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, on Sunday confirmed that his department was responsible for the breach, saying in a statement that it would have implications for the entire public service. Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull told the ABC on Sunday that those responsible should lose their jobs. "This is a disgraceful, almost unbelievable act of negligence," he said. (Xinhua)

India a "Central Strategic Partner" in Indo-Pacific, Says US Air Force Chief

NEW DELHI: The Indian and the US air forces will significantly step up operational cooperation to complement the strategic interests of the two countries in the Indo-Pacific region, Chief of US Air Force General David L. Goldfein has said, while expressing concern over China's rising military influence over the area. Calling India a "central strategic partner" of the US in pursuing common interests in the region, he said two of the world's largest air forces were

going to jointly shift the focus on the Indo-Pacific region while asserting that the rules-based order must be preserved in the critical sea lanes. Mr Goldfein, who held extensive talks with Air Chief Marshal BS Dhanoa and the top brass of the defense set-up during his three-day India visit that ended yesterday, said the "Quadri-lateral" coalition among the US, India, Japan and Australia would provide for deeper cooperation between the Indian



and American air forces. Asked if cooperation between the two forces would deepen in the wake of the four countries joining hands, he replied, "I do (think so) and that is a big part of my visit and in my discussions here". (Agencies)

UAE Private Equity Giant Abraaj Denies Media Reports of Having Allegedly "Misused Funds"



DUBAI - United Arab Emirates (UAE)-based Abraaj Growth Markets Health Fund (AGHF) was returned to all investors, denying a New York Times report which

stated that some investors allegedly accused the group of having "misused funds." Abraaj (Arabic for 'towers') said following discussions with investors that it "returned the unused capital to all investors in the fund at the end of December 2017."

On February 2, 2018, U.S. daily New York Times (NYT) reported that some of its 24 inves-

tors have "complained" about an alleged stir among some investors in relation to "more than 200 million U.S. dollars that they and others had provided was not spent." The article titled "Leading Private Equity Firm Accused of Misusing Funds" by NYT, which is also available online, said since late 2016, the Abraaj group "drew down 545 million U.S. dollars from investors to buy hospitals in Nigeria, Pakistan and India." (Xinhua)

UK Will Not 'Surrender' Over Bespoke Brexit Deal with EU

LONDON - Britain will not "surrender" in its fight to win a bespoke deal with the European Union that would offer tariff-free trade as well as control over immigration, a minister said on Sunday before a crunch week for the government in Brexit negotiations. Interior minister Amber Rudd was one of several senior Conservative lawmakers to take to the airwaves to support Prime Minister Theresa May, under pressure from Brexit hardliners who fear she is diluting her plans for a clean break with the EU. With reports in the local media suggesting that pro-Brexit ministers are being urged to get ready to replace May, Rudd tried to play down the deep divisions in government, saying there was more unity than so-called Brexiters thought. "We want to have a bespoke agreement. Now we're not going to surrender before we have that battle," Rudd told the BBC when asked whether ministers were pursuing what the EU has already ruled out as "having its cake and eating it" - demanding tariff-free access to the EU's market while controlling immigration. (Reuters)

Rising World Oil Prices Will Save Libya's Economy from Deficit: Parliament Member

TRIPOLI - The rise of world oil prices will save Libya's national economy from deficit, Tariq Al-Jarushi, a member of the Libyan eastern-based House of Representatives, said Saturday.

"The high oil prices will save the Libyan economy from paralysis and disability. After mid-2018, the price of Libyan crude oil will be as high as 90 U.S. dollars per barrel," Al-Jarushi said in a statement. Al-Jarushi expressed fears over international pressure, which could lead to subversive activities carried out by militia and terrorist organizations against oil fields to prevent Libya from increasing its oil production. (Agencies)

DPRK Accuses South Korean Defense Chief of Trying to Scuttle Inter-Korean Detente

PYONGYANG - The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) on Sunday accused South Korean Defense Minister Song Young-moo of trying to scuttle the on-going inter-Korean detente by making a nuclear-related statement against the DPRK. Calling the minister "scabbed sheep in a whole flock" and "traitor," the official RodongSinmun newspaper said in a commentary that Song's statement would chill the hard-won climate for improving the north-south relations. According to the daily, the minister said earlier that if the DPRK "uses nuclear weapons" against the United States and South Korea, it will be "wiped off the face of the earth." (Agencies)

DPRK Denounces Trump's State of The Union Address As "Omen of New Disaster"

PYONGYANG - The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) on Sunday denounced the State of the Union address by U.S. President Donald Trump as "an omen of new disaster," after Trump described the DPRK as an adversary in the address. The whole world is seeing "an omen of new disaster" in Trump's address which asserted "American first" and "unmatched power" based on nuclear arms forcing other countries to submit to the "U.S. chauvinistic interest," a spokesman for the Ministry of For-



eign Affairs was quoted by the official Korean Central News Agency as saying. The spokesman also accused Trump of "insisting upon 'maximum pressure' against DPRK" and "viciously slandering" the country. "It is purely a nasty perversity aimed to disturb

the advance of inter-Korean relations," he added. Trump said in his State of the Union address last week that the U.S. government is "waging a campaign of maximum pressure" to prevent the DPRK's pursuit of nuclear missiles from threatening U.S. homeland. (Xinhua)

Resurrecting Outdated Monroe Doctrine Reflects Washington's Entrenched Backyard Thinking

BEIJING - Ahead of his visit to Latin America, U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said Thursday that Washington's Monroe Doctrine "clearly has been a success" and "is as relevant today as it was the day it was written" in 1823. The doctrine was first put forward to drive Europeans away from the region almost two centuries ago. With such an interventionist foreign policy, Washington officially staked out its backyard. In 2013, then U.S. President Barack Obama announced that the era

of the Monroe Doctrine had ended and predicted a new relationship with Latin America featuring equal rights. Today, with Tillerson's remarks, the Trump administration is signaling that it wants to resurrect the obsolete foreign policy. Over the past year, U.S. President Donald Trump has brandished a big stick against Cuba and Venezuela. His government has abandoned a rapprochement with Cuba and issued a series of sanctions against Venezuela with the purpose of promoting a change of government in the country. (Xinhua)

Paris Trial Sheds Light on Terrorists' Efforts to Hide After Attacks

PARIS - The trial of a drug dealer and slum landlord accused of harbouring two members of the cell that attacked Paris in November 2015 has given a glimpse of the tense five days after the deadliest night in France since the second world war. The trial of Jawad Bendaoud, which opened last month and is the first linked to the attacks that killed 130 people and injured 500 more, has heard from survivors and victims' relatives who have told horrific stories of loss and the desire to see justice. Bendaoud has provoked anger from relatives over his behaviour in court, where he has bragged about his criminal activities and sex life. He has also openly fought with his co-defendant and fellow dealer, Mohamed Soumah, who is being prosecuted for failing to alert police about the terrorists' plot. A third man, Youssef Aitboulahcen, the brother of a woman killed in a raid on the terrorists' hideout, is also on trial.

The court case has pieced together the story of how the suspected co-ordinator of the attacks, a senior Islamic State jihadi from Belgium, Abdelhamid Abaaoud, and another gunman hid while allegedly plotting another attack on the business district of La Défense. They were killed, along with Hasna Aitboulahcen, in a dawn police assault on a slum flat in Saint-Denis north of Paris, which belonged to Bendaoud. (The Guardian Daily)

Neighbor News

China Criticizes US for Nuclear Adversary Claims

BEIJING - China on Sunday criticized a U.S. government report that cast Beijing as a potential nuclear adversary and called on Washington to reduce its own much larger arsenal and join in promoting regional stability. A Defense Ministry statement said China's nuclear arsenal is the "minimum level" required for security. It pledged never to be the first to use nuclear

weapons "under any circumstances." The sweeping U.S. nuclear strategy review issued Friday said Washington wants to prevent Beijing from mistakenly concluding that any use of nuclear weapons, however limited, is acceptable. "The Chinese side expresses firm opposition" to the report, said a ministry spokesman, Ren Guoqiang. (AP)

Iran's Rouhani Raps New U.S. Nuclear Plan as Threat to Russia

DUBAI - Iran accused the United States on Sunday of threatening Russia with new atomic weapons after Washington published a document outlining plans to expand its nuclear capabilities to deter others.

The review of U.S. nuclear policy published on Friday has riled Russia, which viewed the document as confrontational, and raised fears that it could increase the risk of miscalculation between the two world powers.

"The Americans are shamelessly threatening Russia with a new atomic weapon," Iranian President Hassan

Rouhani, a pragmatist who opened the way to Tehran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers including longtime adversary Washington, said in a speech.

"The same people who supposedly believe that using weapons of mass destruction is a crime against humanity ... are talking about new weapons to threaten or use against rivals," he said in his televised address.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif earlier warned in a tweet that the U.S. policy document posed the risk of "bringing humankind closer to annihilation". (Reuters)

Cultivation on Scientific Lines Can Make Pakistan Self-Sufficient in Edible Oil Production: Ambassadors

RAWALPINDI - Pakistan can be self-sufficient in edible oil production if the Olive Valley set up by Punjab government in Potohar region is promoted on scientific lines, said the Ambassadors of various countries including Tunisia, Morocco, Kenya, Sudan, Nigeria and Mauritius during their visit to Barani Agriculture Research Institute (BARI) Chakwal.

The ambassadors were informed during a briefing about steps being taken to promote

the olive plantation in the country, particularly in Potohar region.

The ambassadors of Tunisia and Morocco showed great interest expressed their willingness to work jointly in collaboration with BARI in Olive sector.

The delegates also visited various technology sites and appreciated efforts of the Agri Department for transforming Potohar into Olive valley. They also took keen interest to know how the water harvesting and water saving technologies being adopted in the region.

The ambassadors appreciated the involvement of females and youth in various projects being carried out in the rain-fed areas.

They were informed that the Punjab agriculture department has chalked out a five-year plan for making Potohar Region an Olive Valley. Under the project, the government would provide two million free olive plants to the selected farmers in Chakwal, Jhelum and other districts. (Monitoring desk)

Entrepreneurs of Uzbekistan's Tourism Sector to Get Money, Loans

TASHKENT - The Uzbekistan Reconstruction and Development Fund has opened a credit line of \$200 million to co-finance investment projects for the construction of hotels, adjacent road, engineering and communication infra-

structures. The amount of loan allocated to one client can not exceed 50 percent of the project cost, and the amount of a loan given to one borrower should not be more than \$10 million for one project.

All this is noted in the decree of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev "On additional organizational measures to create favorable conditions for the development of tourism potential of Uzbekistan", which introduces a number of benefits for business entities in the tourism industry. (Trend)