

Trump shakes up team amid campaign chaos

Promises to 'reject bigotry' if elected; Clinton surges in poll

AFP, New York
Donald Trump restructured his campaign team for the second time in two months, fending off suggestions that his presidential run is in crisis as polls show Hillary Clinton cruising towards victory.

languishes behind her in virtually every key battleground state, raising the prospect of a Clinton landslide win.

With 82 days to go until the election, Trump's campaign has been listing badly following a recent series of gaffes that had even members of his own party begging him to reel in his brash remarks.

Trump's denigration of the family of a fallen Muslim-American soldier was seen by many as a monumental campaign misstep and a turning point in the contentious 2016 presidential race.

In a surpris move, Trump on Tuesday made his first substantial pitch to African American voters, telling voters in Wisconsin that Democrats had "betrayed" them.

Trump's outreach to black voters came after he said earlier Tuesday that he would reject bigotry "in all forms" if elected president.

It was another unexpected move from the Republican nominee who during his presidential campaign has vowed to ban Muslim immigrants and erect a wall to prevent Mexican immigration.



A fighter from the pro-government forces loyal to Libya's Government of National Unity (GNA) fires a rocket-propelled grenade launcher on Tuesday towards Islamic State group's (IS) positions in an area of central Sirte, known as District Two. Inset, GNA troops in District two. IS jihadists yesterday carried out nine suicide bombings in a failed bid to recapture the district which GNA fighters captured on Tuesday.

Russia continues raids from Iran

Rejects US criticism over Syria air strikes

REUTERS, Moscow

Russia used an Iranian air base to launch air strikes in Syria for a second day running yesterday, rejecting US suggestions its co-operation with Tehran might violate a UN resolution.

Russia's Defence Ministry said that SU-34 fighter bombers flying from Iran's Hamadan air base had struck Islamic State targets in Syria's Deir al-Zor province, destroying two command posts and killing more than 150 militants.

Moscow first used Iran as a base from which to launch air strikes in Syria on Tuesday, deepening its involvement in the five-year-old Syrian civil war and angering the United States.

Washington called the move "unfortunate" and said on Tuesday it was looking into whether Russia's move had violated UN Security Council resolution 2231, which prohibits the supply, sale and transfer of combat aircraft to Iran.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov yesterday said there were no grounds to suggest Russia had violated the resolution, saying it was not supplying Iran with aircraft.

"These aircraft are being used by Russia's air force with Iran's agreement as a part of an anti-terrorist operation at the request of Syria's leadership," Lavrov told a Moscow news conference, after holding talks with Murray McCully, New Zealand's foreign minister.

Russia's use of the Iranian air base comes amid intense fighting for the Syrian city of Aleppo, where rebels are battling Syrian government forces backed by the Russian military, and as Moscow and Washington are working towards a deal on Syria that could see them cooperate more closely.

Russia backs Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, while the United States believes the Syrian leader must step down and is supporting some rebel groups which are fighting to unseat him.

India says ready for Pak talks

UN regrets as access denied to restive areas; ambush on army convoy kills 3

REUTERS, Srinagar

India is ready to send its top diplomat to Pakistan for talks focused on fighting cross-border terrorism, sources at India's foreign ministry said yesterday, after a spike in tension in the disputed northernmost region of Kashmir.

Indian Foreign Secretary Subrahmanyam Jaishankar was willing to attend talks on the invitation of his Pakistani counterpart, the sources said, stressing that cross-border terrorism was central to the situation in Jammu and Kashmir state.

The olive branch comes after 40 days of violent protests in Indian-ruled Kashmir that were sparked by the killing by security forces of a field commander of Pakistan-based Islamic militant group Hizbul Mujahideen who enjoyed wide support.

At least 64 people have died and thousands been injured in clashes with security forces that have been denounced by Pakistan, which also claims the right to rule Jammu & Kashmir in a territorial dispute that dates back to partition in 1947. The clashes have also blinded dozens of people as Indian forces have been accused of using shotguns with pellets.

The Indian sources, who declined to be identified, made it clear, however, that India "rejects in their entirety the self-serving allegations regarding the situation in J&K, which is an integral part of

India." No comment was immediately available from Pakistan's foreign ministry.

Meanwhile, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein expressed "deep regret" at the failure of both the Indian and



A Indian Kashmiri boy holds a placard during a demonstration yesterday.

Pakistani authorities to grant access to the separate parts of Kashmir that each run to investigate allegations of serious human rights violations.

He said in a statement issued in Geneva it was unfortunate that sincere attempts by the United Nations to independently assess the facts in relation to reports of human rights violations had failed. "Without access, we can only fear the worst,"

said Zeid. In the latest violence, militants killed three members of the Indian security forces when they ambushed an army convoy and then fired on a police jeep that came to the scene.

In a worrying escalation the previous day, Indian security forces fired live rounds at a crowd of stone-throwing protesters in Kashmir's Baramulla district, killing five and wounding 10.

Earlier, police and troops trying to control crowds had resorted to the use of shotguns, whose pellets are meant to incapacitate but not kill.

But residents of Kashmir say the shotguns have inflicted severe injuries and even blinded hundreds of people including bystanders.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi ratcheted up tensions in his annual Independence Day speech on Monday, accusing Pakistan of glorifying terrorism.

In a tit-for-tat escalation in the war of words between the nuclear-armed neighbours, Modi said he had received messages of support from leaders in restive regions of Pakistan, in particular the troubled southwestern province of Baluchistan.

India accuses Muslim Pakistan of supporting Kashmiri fighters while Pakistan accuses India of meddling in Pakistani trouble spots, in particular of helping separatists fighting the Pakistani state in resource-rich Baluchistan.

Both sides deny the accusations.

NEWSIN brief

Kites string kills three in India

AFP, New Delhi

Two children and a man have died in the Indian capital after their throats were slit by glass-covered strings called 'manjha' used for flying kites during Independence Day celebrations, police said yesterday. The tragedies prompted the Delhi government to issue an immediate ban on the production, sale and storage of the razor sharp strings. The children, aged four and six, died in separate incidents in New Delhi on Monday after they looked out of the sunroof of their cars. A 22-year-old man also died in the same way while he was riding his motorbike on a flyover in the capital, another officer said.

Yemen rocket hits Saudi; seven killed

AFP, Riyadh

A rocket fired by Yemeni rebels killed seven civilians inside Saudi Arabia on Tuesday, the civil defence agency said. More than 100 civilians and soldiers have been killed in southern Saudi Arabia by retaliatory rocket strikes or skirmishes since the coalition began operations to support Yemen's government against Huthi rebels.

Rio police kill three in raid on favela

AFP, Rio De Janeiro

Rio police on Tuesday said they killed three alleged gunmen in a raid on a favela dominated by drug traffickers where an elite police officer was shot a week ago. Shootings, often deadly, are a regular occurrence in Rio, despite the presence of tens of thousands of police and army reinforcements during the ongoing Olympics.

Baby girl born on flight; pilot makes emergency landing

AFP, New Delhi

A woman gave birth to a premature but healthy baby girl mid-flight while travelling from the United Arab Emirates to the Philippines, forcing the plane to carry out an emergency landing in India. The mother, whose due date was two months away, went into labour on board the Cebu Pacific Air flight Sunday as it flew from Dubai to Manila. Panicked flight attendants started calling out for medical assistance -- discovering two nurses among the passengers -- before turning the front of the cabin into a makeshift delivery room. The pilot landed the plane in Hyderabad so the mother and newborn could receive medical attention before continuing on to Manila. They were given three-day visas.

US man killed in 'anti-Muslim hate crime'

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A man who shot dead his neighbour had called the Lebanese family "dirty Arabs" and had an "unusual fixation" with them, according to police.

Stanley Vernon Majors, 61, is suspected of shooting Khalid Jabara, 37, just eight minutes after Jabara reported him and the Tulsa Police Department had responded and left the scene without questioning the suspect.

After they received another call about the shooting, police found Majors hiding under a tree by the local library and he was taken to hospital before being interviewed.

The Jabara family said they had "lived in fear" of Majors for years. Jabara's sister, Victoria Jabara Williams, wrote on Facebook that her family was "outraged" that the killing could have been



Homes and vehicles burst into flames as the Blue Cut wildfire rages near Cajon Pass, north of San Bernardino, California on Tuesday. A fire raging east of Los Angeles spread rapidly yesterday, posing a threat to more than 82,000 people and prompting the governor of California to declare a state of emergency.

Top N Korea envoy defects to S Korea

AFP, Seoul

South Korea yesterday said that North Korea's deputy ambassador to Britain had defected to Seoul, in a rare and major loss of diplomatic face for Pyongyang.

The Unification Ministry said Thae Yong-Ho -- the number-two at the North's mission in London -- had defected together with his family and they were now in the South Korean capital.

"They are under government protection and are going through necessary procedures with related institutions," ministry spokesman Jeong Joon-Hee told reporters.

Jeong declined to reveal Thae's defection route, citing the diplomatic sensitivities involved for the concerned countries.

"On his reasons for defection, Minister Thae cited disgust with (North Korean leader) Kim Jong-Un's regime, admiration for South Korea's free, democratic system and the future of his family," Jeong said.

Increasingly isolated internationally because of its nuclear weapons programme, North Korea maintains relatively few overseas embassies, and defections by diplomats of Thae's stature are extremely rare.

The last such case was that of the North Korean ambassador to Egypt who defected to the United States in 1997.

Thae was believed to have worked at the embassy in London for 10 years.



PNG 'prison camp' to close

Says Australia after criticism; fate of refugees uncertain

AFP, Sydney

Australia yesterday agreed to close a camp for asylum-seekers on Papua New Guinea, one of two controversial Pacific island centres attracting growing criticism, but said none of the hundreds of men there now would be resettled on its soil.

Canberra's policy of sending asylum-seekers who arrive by boat to outposts on Papua New Guinea and the tiny Pacific state of Nauru was thrown into turmoil in April when a PNG court ordered the Manus Island centre closed.

"Both Papua New Guinea and Australia are in agreement that the centre is to be closed," PNG Prime Minister Peter O'Neill said in a statement following talks with Australian Immigration Minister Peter Dutton in Port Moresby.

Canberra has been under pressure to shut the Australian-funded Manus facility, which as at June 30 held 854 men, following a PNG Supreme Court ruling declaring that holding people there was unconstitutional and illegal. The centre was in the spotlight this week after Australian media published graphic images of two bloodied Afghan men who had

allegedly been attacked with an iron bar by locals on Manus.

The government is also facing criticism about the plight of some 442 asylum-seekers on Nauru, after thousands of leaked incident reports last week detailed allegations of widespread abuse and self-harm, including children wanting to kill themselves.

Under 'Operation Sovereign Borders' asylum-seekers trying to reach Australia by boat -- even if they are refugees -- are either sent back to where they departed from or transferred to Nauru and Manus. Dutton said the policy would not change.

The policy has been criticised by rights groups as essentially placing refugees in indefinite detention on remote Pacific islands. But the government says it has stopped deaths at sea after a spate of drownings.

Dutton said Australia and PNG would work together to support asylum-seekers and refugees transition to lives in the developing Pacific nation or return to their country of origin.

Refugee advocates welcomed the decision to close Manus Island, but called on the government to resettle refugees in Australia.

Laden son urges overthrow of Saudi rulers

AFP, Dubai

The son of al-Qaeda's slain founder Osama bin Laden has urged Saudis to "overthrow" the kingdom's rulers in order to "free" themselves from US influence, SITE Intelligence Group reported yesterday.

In an undated audio message, Hamza bin Laden urged Saudi youth to join the Yemen-based al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) to "gain the necessary experience" to fight, according to SITE.

Classified by the United States as the network's deadliest franchise, AQAP was formed in January 2009 as a merger of the Yemeni and Saudi branches of al-Qaeda.

Safety before religious fun

India court bans children from 'Dahi Handi' festival

AFP, New Delhi

India's top court yesterday banned children from taking part in a popular but potentially dangerous religious festival in the country's west that sees young boys scale human pyramids.

The Supreme Court barred children aged under 18 from scaling the pyramids and restricted their height to six metres following a string of accidents in recent years.

The ruling comes ahead of the annual Dahi Handi festival in Maharashtra state next week that traditionally sees scores of boys hoisted to the top of wobbly pyramids in homage to Hindu child-god Krishna.

"Krishna didn't do acrobatics... you cannot risk the lives of children," Justice Nageswara Rao told the court in New Delhi. Crowds flock to the colourful spectacle in the state capital Mumbai where groups try to outperform each other with the highest pyramid, some reaching 13 metres.

