



Israeli security and rescue forces work at the scene of a truck ramming incident in Jerusalem yesterday. Inset, Israeli soldiers console each other at the site of the attack. A truck driven by a Palestinian rammed into pedestrians on a popular promenade in the city killing four people and wounding at least 15, according to police who called it a deliberate attack. PHOTO: REUTERS, AFP

LORRY ATTACK

Four soldiers killed, 17 injured in Israel

AFP, Jerusalem
A Palestinian rammed a truck into a group of Israeli soldiers visiting a popular tourist spot in Jerusalem yesterday, killing four and wounding 17 others, authorities said. The driver was also killed at the location overlooking holy sites such as the Dome of the Rock and providing one of the most spectacular views of Jerusalem. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu who visited the scene said in a statement: "We know the identity of the assailant, who according to all indications supported IS (Islamic State group)." Palestinian security officials said the driver was a Palestinian in his late 20s from east Jerusalem's Jabal Mukaber neighbourhood. Palestinian media named him as Fadi Al-Qanbar. Five members of his family were arrested for questioning, Israeli police said. Chaos broke out at the scene when the truck ploughed through the crowd, as hundreds of soldiers took part in a tour about the history of Jerusalem. "A lone terrorist drove his truck into a group of soldiers standing on the side of the road," said police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld. "They got off the bus, and as they were getting off the bus and getting organised, he took advantage." Reacting to claims that soldiers were slow to react, the army released a video of a soldier saying he shot after realising it was not an accident.



Brexit plan to be set out 'in coming weeks' Says PM Theresa May

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK
The plan for Brexit will be set out in the coming weeks, Theresa May has said. The Prime Minister told Sky News the public will be informed of how the Government intends to leave the European Union but sidestepped questions on whether curbs on immigration would mean leaving the single market. "Often people talk in terms as if somehow we're leaving the EU but we want to keep bits of membership of the EU. We're leaving, we're coming out," said May. "I will be setting out some more details in the coming weeks as we look ahead to triggering Article 50." May also told the broadcaster the Government's thinking over Brexit 'isn't muddled at all' in response to comments made by the UK's former ambassador to the EU in his shock resignation message last week. Sir Ivan Rogers urged his colleagues to challenge "muddled thinking" and "speak truth to power" as he quit just weeks before May is expected to trigger the process of leaving the union. The Prime Minister insisted she will be able to secure control over immigration to the UK as well as favourable trading terms with EU during Brexit negotiations. In her first broadcast of 2017, May reiterated her belief that the issue of trade versus immigration control is not "binary". She said: "Often people talk in terms as if somehow we are leaving the EU but we still want to kind of keep bits of membership of the EU." "We are leaving. We are coming out. We are not going to be a member of the EU any longer. So the question is what is the right relationship for the UK to have with the European Union when we are outside."

NEWSIN brief

Anti-graft chief unfit for role: Nepal court

AFP, Kathmandu
Nepal's Supreme Court yesterday ruled that the powerful head of the anti-corruption commission was not fit to hold the position and should be replaced, in an unprecedented move for the country's graft mired politics. Lokman Singh Karki has headed the Commission for the Investigation of the Abuse of Authority (CIAA) since 2013, despite myriad graft allegations against him.

Two Saudi 'jihadists' shot dead in raid

AFP, Riyadh
Saudi security forces on Saturday shot and killed two suspected jihadists including an explosive belt maker during a police operation in the north of the capital, the interior ministry said. Suspect Tayeh al-Saihari, who had been wanted by authorities for his alleged involvement in jihadist attacks, was spotted in a house in a northern Riyadh neighbourhood, a ministry spokesman said.

Philippines police kill a foreigner linked to IS

AFP, Manila
Police have killed a foreign insurgent during a skirmish with a pro-Islamic State group in the southern Philippines, an official said yesterday. The firefight erupted as police were hunting down members of the Ansarul Khilafa Philippines (AKP) group on the remote southern island of Mindanao Saturday, local police spokesman Superintendent Romeo Galgo said.

Tunisian journos are dead: IS suspect

AFP, Tripoli
A suspected jihadist held in eastern Libya told a local television channel late Saturday that two Tunisian journalists who went missing in 2014 were killed by the Islamic State group. IS had claimed in January 2015 to have executed blogger Sofiene Chourabi and photographer Nadhir Ktari but later the same year the Tunisian government said it had evidence the pair were still alive.

Police seize MH17 crash debris from reporter

AFP, The Hague
Dutch police have taken from a journalist items, including possible human remains, which he found at the crash site of flight MH17 in eastern Ukraine, prosecutors said yesterday. Freelancer Michel Spekkers was met by police as he returned to Schiphol airport late Saturday after visiting the region and writing an article about his discovery at the site.

France thwarted 24,000 cyber-attacks last year

AGENCIES
France says it was the subject of 24,000 cyber-attacks against defence targets last year. Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said such attacks were doubling every year and this year's presidential elections could be targeted. France is no less vulnerable than the United States to cyber attacks from foreign countries and the French military will boost its resources to defend against them, the minister said yesterday. In an interview with French weekly Le Journal du Dimanche Drian said there is a real risk of cyber attacks on French civil infrastructure such as water, electricity, telecommunications and transport, as well as against French democracy and the media, reports Reuters. US intelligence agencies said in a report released on Friday that Russian President Vladimir Putin had directed a cyber campaign to help Republican Donald Trump's electoral chances by discrediting Democrat Hillary Clinton in the 2016 presidential campaign. Asked whether France was immune from such attacks, Le Drian said "No, of course not, we should not be naive". France will hold presidential elections in April-May and leading conservative challenger Francois Fillon has said he wants to improve relations with Russia and has been praised by Putin. Far-right candidate Marine Le Pen also favours closer relations with Russia. French-Russian relations have been strained by Russia's annexation of Ukraine's Crimea in 2014 and over Russia's role in the war in Syria. Outgoing socialist French President Francois Hollande has cancelled the sale of warships to Russia, and played a key role in imposing sanctions on Russia over Crimea. Le Drian said that if the US election had indeed been manipulated, it would be an unbearable interference, as targeting a country's electoral means attacking its democratic foundations and its sovereignty.

Trump slams Russia critics

Says having good relationship with Moscow 'is a good thing'; Obama admits underestimating impact of hacking

AFP, Washington
President-elect Donald Trump condemned Russia critics on Saturday, calling those who oppose better relations with Moscow "stupid" people and "fools" in his latest Twitter tirade. His attack comes a day after the Republican president-elect met the country's leading intelligence agency chiefs -- including the director of national intelligence, James Clapper, and CIA chief John Brennan -- who told him that Russian President Vladimir Putin directed a vast cyberattack and leaking campaign aimed at helping install Trump in the White House. "Having a good relationship with Russia is a good thing," he tweeted on Saturday. "Only 'stupid' people, or fools, would think that it is bad!" "When I am President," he added, "Russia will respect us far more than they do now and both countries will, perhaps, work together to solve some of the many great and pressing problems and issues of the WORLD!" But the formal announcement of former Indiana Senator Dan Coats as Trump's pick for US director of national intelligence, also on Saturday, may go at least a little toward reassuring those critical of

Trump's praise for Putin and desire to improve relations with Moscow. A mild-mannered former ambassador to Germany who also served on the Senate Intelligence Committee, Coats, 73, has been a vocal critic of Russia's annexation of Crimea. Meanwhile, President Barack Obama yesterday admitted that he "underestimated" the impact misinformation and hacking could have on democracies, a remark that follows an intelligence report on Russian meddling in the US presidential vote. In a pre-taped interview on ABC's "This Week," Obama denied underestimating Russian President Vladimir Putin, who US intelligence agencies say ordered a campaign of hacking, leaking and media manipulation aimed at undermining the presidential campaign of the Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton and boosting Republican Donald Trump.

"But I think that I underestimated the degree to which, in this new information age, it is possible for misinformation for cyber hacking and so forth to have an impact on our open societies, our open systems, to insinuate themselves into our democratic practices in ways that I think are accelerating," Obama said.



I Coast soldiers end mutiny

Reach a deal on their demands for pay rises

AFP, Bouake
Ivory Coast soldiers yesterday ended a two-day mutiny in the second city Bouake and other key areas after reaching a deal on their demands for pay rises, housing and faster promotion. "There has been no firing since Saturday night," a local journalist in Bouake said. "Traffic has resumed this morning and the shops have reopened." One of the leaders of the mutiny in the world's top cocoa producer said he was "happy with the turn of events" after soldiers returned to their barracks. "All we are asking is for the president to be attentive to the living conditions of soldiers," he said on condition of anonymity. The west African country was rocked by two days of unrest after soldiers seized control of Bouake's streets early Friday, firing rocket-launchers and terrifying residents, in a mutiny that spread to other cities including the economic capital Abidjan. In Abidjan -- a bustling seaport that is home to the presidency and parliament -- national television reported that shots had been fired at the Akouedo barracks in the east of the city on Saturday. The soldiers had detained Defence Minister Alain Richard Donwahi for two hours on Saturday in a tense standoff over their demands, firing Kalashnikovs and heavy weapons around the home of a senior local official where Donwahi was meeting with the soldiers' representatives. Yesterday, Abidjan's central Plateau area where several government offices and leading businesses are located, was calm. "Life is back to normal," a resident said. The same was true for the northern city of Korhogo and Man in the west. A Man resident, who identified himself as Jean, said: "The soldiers have returned to their barracks."



People gather at the site of a car bomb attack at a vegetable market in eastern Baghdad, Iraq, yesterday. Suicide bombs at two marketplaces in Baghdad, one of them claimed by IS, killed at least 20 people, police and medics said.

ROW OVER WWII SEX SLAVERY

Japan urges S Korea to remove statue

AFP, TOKYO
Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has called on South Korea to remove a statue of a "comfort woman" which has reignited a diplomatic row over Tokyo's wartime sex slavery. Tensions spiked on Friday when Tokyo recalled its ambassador over the statue which was placed outside its consulate in Busan last month, symbolising women forced to work in Japanese military brothels mostly during World War II. Japan argues it is against a 2015 agreement between the neighbours meant to put an end to the hugely emotional and decades-long "comfort women" issue with a Japanese apology and payment of money. "Japan has already paid one billion yen (\$8.6 million) as we sincerely fulfilled our obligation. I think it's now South Korea's turn to show sincerity in an unwavering manner," Abe said in a programme aired yesterday on public broadcaster NHK. The plight of the women has marred relations for decades but the governments of Abe and South Korean President Park Geun-Hye reached an agreement in late 2015 to finally resolve it. Under that accord, which both countries described as "final and irreversible," Japan offered an apology and a one-billion yen payment to surviving Korean comfort women.

FLORIDA SHOOTING

Suspect could face death penalty

AFP, Miami
US authorities have charged the Iraq war vet accused of shooting five people dead and wounding six at a Florida airport with federal crimes that could carry the death penalty. The Justice Department on Saturday charged Esteban Santiago, 26, with firearms offenses and carrying out an act of violence when he opened fire at the busy Fort Lauderdale airport. Santiago, who had earlier shown signs of "erratic behavior," arrived Friday on a flight from Alaska. At baggage claim he retrieved a 9mm semi-automatic handgun and ammunition that he had declared and stowed inside his checked luggage, then allegedly loaded the weapon in a bathroom and opened fire in the crowded baggage claim area. FBI special agent George Piro said agents were looking into the motives for the attack, including "continuing to look at the terrorism angle." Santiago is scheduled to make an initial court appearance today.

Chinese cops to tackle smog

CNN ONLINE
Officials in Beijing are taking steps toward tackling the city's long-standing smog problem with the creation of an environmental police force, according to state media. Spearheaded by Beijing's acting mayor Mayor Cai Qi, the political crackdown on burning fossil fuels comes amid a flurry of concern over the country's choking air pollution. At a meeting on Saturday, the mayor promised to take tougher measures to improve the air quality in the city's 16 districts by 2017, official state media agency Xinhua reported. The new environmental police would among other things, crack down on open-air barbecues, garbage incineration and biomass burning -- areas previously overlooked by authorities, Xinhua reported. These recent efforts come amid Beijing's latest spell of smog. Nearly 24 cities were issued "red alerts," Xinhua said. Red alerts are the highest of the four-tiered pollution warning system used by mainland China. When red alerts are in effect, authorities take measures to reduce the air pollution by closing businesses, shutting down factories and banning high-polluting vehicles off the road. While China has tried to squash smog offenders, enforcement remains a challenge. The Ministry of Environmental Protection punished more than 500 Chinese companies and around 10,000 car-owners for alleged violations, according to Xinhua. China has "held accountable" 2,682 officials for failing to enforce pollution efforts, Xinhua reported. About \$35 million worth of fines had been levied, the news agency said. Beijing's latest spell of smog has lasted more than a week, with air quality indexes reaching "Unhealthy," according to the US Embassy in Beijing air quality guide.

