

NEWSIN brief

IS second-in-command killed in Iraq airstrike

REUTERS, Baghdad
Ayad al-Jumaili, the man believed to be the deputy of Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, has been killed in an air strike, Iraqi State TV said yesterday, citing Iraq's military intelligence. Jumaili was killed with other Islamic State commanders in a strike carried out by the Iraqi air force in the region of al-Qaim, near the border with Syria.

Trump sends letter to Vietnam's president

REUTERS, Hanoi
US President Donald Trump has written to Vietnamese President Tran Dai Quang to promote more cooperation between the two countries. Vietnam and the US had advanced ties to a new level under the Obama administration amid a dispute with China over South China Sea issues, while Trump has also expressed his hope for a stronger relationship.

Boko Haram kidnap 22 girls, women in Nigeria

AFP, Kano
Boko Haram Islamists have abducted 22 girls and women in two separate raids in northeast Nigeria, residents and vigilantes told AFP Friday. In the first attack on Thursday, the jihadists raided the village of Pulka near border with Cameroon where they kidnapped 18 girls. The attackers were loyal to the faction headed by Abu Musab Al-Barnawi.

New jihadist group claims Mali attack

AFP, Dakar
A new jihadist alliance yesterday claimed responsibility for an attack that killed three members of Mali's security forces on March 29, according to a statement released by SITE. Three Malian jihadist groups with previous al-Qaeda links recently joined forces to create the "Group to Support Islam and Muslims" (GSIM), led by Iyad Ag Ghaly of Islamist organisation Ansar Dine.



Protestors set fire to the Congress building in Asuncion, Paraguay, on Friday night after the Senate secretly voted for a constitutional amendment that would allow President Horacio Cartes to run for re-election. Inset, a demonstrator shows the wounds caused by rubber bullets during clashes with riot police.



PHOTO: REUTERS, AFP

Paraguay rioters set fire to Congress

One activist killed, 30 injured in violent protests after senators approve a law allowing president to be re-elected

REUTERS, Asuncion
A protester was killed in Paraguay after a secret Senate vote for a constitutional amendment that would allow President Horacio Cartes to run for re-election sparked violent clashes and the country's Congress was stormed and set alight.

Rodrigo Quintana, 25, was killed by a rubber bullet fired by police in the headquarters of the liberal youth activist group, the Paraguayan opposition said.

The interior ministry said in a statement an investigation into Quintana's death would be opened. His doctor said he had suffered a severe head injury.

Activists were arriving in Paraguay's capital Asuncion yesterday from the landlocked country's interior in a sign of the violent protests that resulted in a fire in the first floor of Congress on Friday could continue.

Cartes called for calm and a rejection of violence in a statement released on Twitter. He promised the government would do its best to maintain order.

Firefighters managed to control the flames after protesters left the building late on Friday, although protests and riots continued in other parts of Asuncion and elsewhere in the country into the early hours of yesterday.

Around 200 protesters were detained and 30 injured, police said, and shops and government buildings were vandalized.

Top White House aides' finances revealed

Filings show Ivanka Trump, her husband's assets were estimated at up to \$740m

AFP, Washington
Donald Trump's daughter Ivanka and her husband Jared Kushner have held onto real estate and business investments valued in the hundreds of millions while working government jobs, according to ethics filings released late Friday by the White House.

The disclosures came in a mass document release showing the wealth and financial assets of scores of senior White House staff members at the time they began government work.

Ivanka Trump's stake in the Trump International Hotel, located blocks from the White House, is one source of income that could represent a conflict of interest.

Critics have noted that interest groups or foreign governments could stay at the luxury hotel to get in the administration's good graces.

The White House documents show that Ivanka Trump and Jared Kushner, who are both officially close advisers to the president,

are still getting income from holdings valued at between \$240 million and \$740 million.

Ivanka Trump -- who just days ago announced she would officially enter a federal role as an unpaid adviser to the US president -- will hang on to her stake in the Trump International Hotel.

According to her husband's disclosure the hotel stake is worth between \$5 million and \$25 million. Between January 2016 and March 2017 she made between \$1 million and \$5 million in rent or royalties from the hotel, the documents showed.

Kushner was recently tapped by his Republican father-in-law to lead a new White House office that aims to use business ideas to help streamline the government, according to the Washington Post.

The 36-year-old is a senior adviser to Trump with far-reaching influence over domestic and foreign policy.



MYANMAR BY-ELEC

Suu Kyi's new govt faces first test

AFP, Yangon

Aung San Suu Kyi's government faced its first test at the ballot box yesterday in by-elections around Myanmar seen as a barometer for growing disillusionment with her party after a year in office.

The euphoria that surrounded the democracy icon's landslide electoral win in 2015 has ebbed as her party struggles to push through promised reforms.

With only 19 contested seats, the by-elections will not alter the balance of power in a government firmly dominated by Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD).

But the voting offers a chance to gauge the party's popularity after a rocky 12 at the helm. Discontent is particularly acute in frontier areas where many ethnic minorities see Suu Kyi as working too closely with the military that ran the country for 50 years.

Venezuela drops bid to strip congress of power

Supreme Court reverses its ruling as int'l pressure mounts on President Maduro

AFP, Caracas

Venezuela's Supreme Court yesterday abandoned measures to seize power from the opposition-controlled legislature after the moves drew international condemnation and raised pressure on President Nicolas Maduro.

Maduro had earlier said the court would review its controversial rulings, which prompted opposition calls for mass protest marches yesterday in the volatile country stricken by an economic and political crisis.

The court said in a ruling published on its website that it was revoking a March 29 decision to take over legislative powers from the National Assembly, a move opponents had branded a "coup d'etat."

It also revoked an earlier ruling that stripped lawmakers of their immunity from prosecution.

Maduro had hinted at the coming announcement in a brief televised address just after midnight yesterday, hours after his own attorney general broke ranks to condemn the court rulings.

"We have reached an important agreement to solve this controversy," Maduro said.



PHOTO: REUTERS

An opposition supporter holds a placard as he takes part in a rally against President Maduro's government in Caracas yesterday.

The president faced the strongest criticism ever from within his own camp when Attorney General Luisa Ortega condemned Wednesday's Supreme Court rulings strengthening the socialist president's grip on the levers of power.

The court decisions neutralized the opposition-majority National Assembly and revoked lawmakers' immunity from prosecution. Ortega called them a "rupture of constitutional order."

Maduro's opponents had called on Venezuelans to take to the streets yesterday and urged the army to abandon him.

9/11 ATTACK ON PENTAG

FBI releases never-seen photographs

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

FBI images of the Pentagon in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, have resurfaced years after they were first released.

The photographs show the devastation caused after American Airlines flight 77 into the side of the building, killing 184 people - including all 59 passengers and crew on board.

Images show first responders battling stubborn blazes at the complex, debris from the plane's fuselage and haunting images from the scorched interior of the Arlington, Virginia landmark.

The airliner's wings clipped off light poles before hitting into the western side of the building at the first-floor level. The jet ripped a hole in the structure that extended more than 100 yards into the building. It took firefighters days to fully extinguish the blaze.

Luckily, the plane struck a portion of the building that was under renovation and relatively empty. If it had struck another side or happened after the renovations were completed, the death toll would have been significantly higher, experts said at the time.

One haunting image shows a fireman holding the US stars and stripes flag in the gutted building while others survey the devastation.

The batch of 27 archived images uploaded to the website, FBI Records: The Vault also show fragments of the plane, which had left Dulles International airport in Washington DC for Los Angeles before it was hijacked by terrorists.

The plane which struck the Pentagon at 9.37am was the third of the four attacks and happened 30 to 45 minutes after the attack on the World Trade Centre towers in New York were hit, with the fourth plane - United 93 - aimed at Washington DC, crashing Pennsylvania shortly after 10am after passengers and crew fought to regain control.

One of the pictures of the aftermath of the Pentagon attack shows rescue workers with sniffer dogs searching the rubble for survivors or bodies. Officers spent several days trying to recover bodies hidden within the debris.

The total number of people killed in the 9/11 attacks was 2,996, while more than 6,000 were injured, making it the single worst act of terrorism in history.

It was previously thought that the images had been newly released because of a fresh date stamp. But FBI spokeswoman Jillian Stickels said the pictures were first posted online in 2011.



From S Korean president to prisoner 503

AFP, Seoul

Ousted South Korean president Park Geun-Hye is now just prisoner 503, incarcerated in a spartan cell while prosecutors decide whether to indict her over a corruption scandal that precipitated her fall from grace.

The former head of state spent her first night in solitary confinement at Seoul Detention Centre after a court Friday ordered her to be held pending charges.

She had her mugshot taken and was given a prison kit including toiletries, a meal tray and a quilt, reports said.

After being processed like any other prisoner, Park, 65, was assigned a 10.6 square metre (114



square feet) solitary cell, larger than the average 6.5 square metre cell. Yonhap news agency said.

"After taking a bath, she changed into green-coloured winter-season prison garb" an official of the Justice Ministry was quoted as saying by the JoongAng Ilbo daily.

The chest of Park's uniform was emblazoned with her prison number -- 503 -- by which she will be known during her incarceration.

Park burst into tears as guards showed her to her cell, TV Chosun said, quoting unidentified sources.

Prosecutors have yet to specify formal charges against her, but previously said she is suspected of bribery, abuse of authority and leaking government secrets.



A plastic raft overcrowded by over 100 migrants is seen drifting during a search and rescue operation by Spanish NGO Proactiva Open Arms in central Mediterranean Sea, some 22 nautical miles north of the Libyan town of Sabratha yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

UK to stand up for Gibraltar

Says British foreign secretary Boris Johnson

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

UK Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson has said the UK will stand up for Gibraltar, in the wake of what the territory called "unacceptable" lobbying from Spain over Gibraltar's future as part of the Brexit negotiations.

On Friday, documents published by the European Council showed that decisions affecting Gibraltar would be referred to the Spanish government. The small territory in southern Spain has voted overwhelmingly to remain part of the UK in a referendum in 2002, but in 2016, 97 percent of its citizens voted to remain in the EU.

Gibraltar's chief minister Fabian Picardo said Spain's lobbying for its interests over Gibraltar was "unacceptable."

Boris Johnson revealed he had held talks with Picardo to make clear the UK would continue to support its wish to remain part of the United Kingdom.

Johnson said: "As ever, the UK remains implacable and rock-like in our support for Gibraltar." Clare Moody, Labour MEP for Gibraltar and south west

England, told BBC Radio Four's Today programme it was the government's job to "represent the people of Gibraltar".

She said: "I was amazed that they failed to do that in the letter they sent on Wednesday."

"It worries me that we are about to enter into the most detailed negotiations that we have known for decades."

"If the government has overlooked the interests of Gibraltar, which is a crucial part of the kind of constitutional arrangements of our membership of the European Union, then what else are they going to overlook as well?"

Christian Hernandez, president of the Gibraltar Chamber of Commerce, said the British government needed to "stand firm in the face of Spanish bullying".

"We don't want to be independent from the UK."

"We've made it very clear in the last 100 years, in the last 20 years, in the last 15 years, we want a constitutional relationship with the UK, where we continue to be part of the UK and independence is not something we aspire to," he added.

Spain has long contested Britain's 300-year rule of Gibraltar.



BREXIT ROW WITH SPAIN



PHILIPPINES DRUG WAR Duterte wants to slap EU critics

REUTERS, Manila

Philippines' President Rodrigo Duterte lashed out on Friday at European Union critics of his bloody anti-narcotics campaign, threatening to "slap" them.

It is the latest of the leader's near-daily diatribe against the United States, EU and the United Nations while heaping praise on China and Russia.

"Come here and we will talk because I want to slap you," Duterte said in a speech during celebrations of Women's Day at the presidential palace late on Friday.

Duterte scoffed at the bloc for recommending the Philippines build "clinics around like in other countries, and give shabu, cocaine and heroin like in Holland."

The Southeast Asian leader lashed out on the EU last week for hypocrisy and called the bloc "sons of bitches" for recommending a rehabilitation-centred solution to the drugs problem.

More than 8,000 people have been killed since Duterte took power on June 30 last year, with police taking responsibility for a third of those deaths, citing self-defence during anti-narcotics operations.

The government rejects local and international human rights groups' allegations that police are involved in thousands of mysterious deaths.

Duterte castigated the EU for believing reports of non-government groups that tag the leader for the killings. "Even if it's just epilepsy, they count it against me," he said, to the laughter of the crowd.