

Russian jets kill 30 civilians in Syria

REUTERS, Amman

At least 30 civilians were killed early yesterday when jets dropped bombs on a residential area in a besieged rebel enclave east of Syria's capital, a war monitor said, identifying the planes as Russian.

At least four bombs flattened two buildings in the Eastern Ghouta town of Misraba, in an attack that killed around 20 and wounded more than 40 people, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights and civil defence sources said.

Elsewhere in Eastern Ghouta, the last major rebel enclave near Damascus, at least ten people were killed in aerial strikes in other nearby towns, the Observatory, rescuers and residents said.

The Observatory, a war monitor based in Britain, said 11 women and a child were among the dead in the strikes in Misraba, which it said were carried out by Russian planes.

Backed by Russian strikes, government forces have escalated military operations against Eastern Ghouta in recent months, seeking to tighten a siege that residents and aid workers say is a deliberate use of starvation as a weapon of war, a charge the government denies.

Russia rejects Syrian opposition and rights groups' accusations that its jets have been responsible for deaths of thousands of civilians since its major intervention two years ago that turned the tide in the country's nearly seven-year-old war in favour of President Bashar al-Assad.

Moscow says it only attacks hardline Islamists.

Video footage posted yesterday by activists on social media in Eastern Ghouta showed rescue workers pulling women and children from rubble. The footage could not be independently confirmed.

Jets also pounded Harasta, on the western edge of the enclave, where rebels this week besieged and overran a major military base which residents say the army uses to pound residential areas.



Syrian boys watch a boy walk amid destroyed buildings following bombardment a day earlier in the rebel-controlled town of Misraba, in the eastern Ghouta region on the outskirts of the capital Damascus, yesterday.

Macron plans law to fight fake news

REUTERS, Paris

President Emmanuel Macron announced on Wednesday he would overhaul French media legislation this year to fight the spread of "fake news" on social media which he said was a threat to liberal democracies.

Macron has said he and his team were victims of fake news and a major data hack during his election campaign last year.

Since coming to office in May 2017, he has particularly pointed the finger at Russian media, accusing TV channel RT of sowing disinformation about him via its website and social media during the campaign.

"If we want to protect liberal democracies, we must have strong legislation," Macron said in a New Year's address to journalists, adding that the reform he envisaged would also change the role of France's media watchdog CSA.

"At election time, on internet platforms, the rules applying to content won't be exactly the same," Macron said.

"There will be increased



Trump breaks with Bannon

Says former White House aide lost his mind in the fallout over damaging comments in excerpts from a new book

REUTERS, Washington

US President Donald Trump blasted former White House chief strategist Steve Bannon on Wednesday as having "lost his mind" in the fallout over damaging comments Bannon made about Trump's son Donald Trump Jr in excerpts from a new book.

Trump, who had continued to speak privately with Bannon after firing him in August, essentially cut ties with his former aide at least for now in a blistering statement issued after Bannon's comments came to light.

"Steve Bannon has nothing to do with me or my presidency. When he was fired, he not only lost his job, he lost his mind," Trump said.

Trump had relied heavily on Bannon, chairman of the right-wing Breitbart News website, for advice in the months leading up to his upset victory in the November 2016 election.

Bannon helped Trump shape a populist, anti-establishment message and has been the president's link to his conservative base of support. It was not clear if the split would push Bannon to

be even more aggressive in his campaign against the Republican establishment and whether he would now also target Trump, or would emerge much weaker.

According to excerpts from "Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House" by Michael Wolff, to be released on Tuesday, Bannon

described a June 2016 meeting with a group of Russians at Trump Tower in New York as "treasonous" and "unpatriotic." The meeting was arranged by the president's son and attended by top Trump campaign officials.

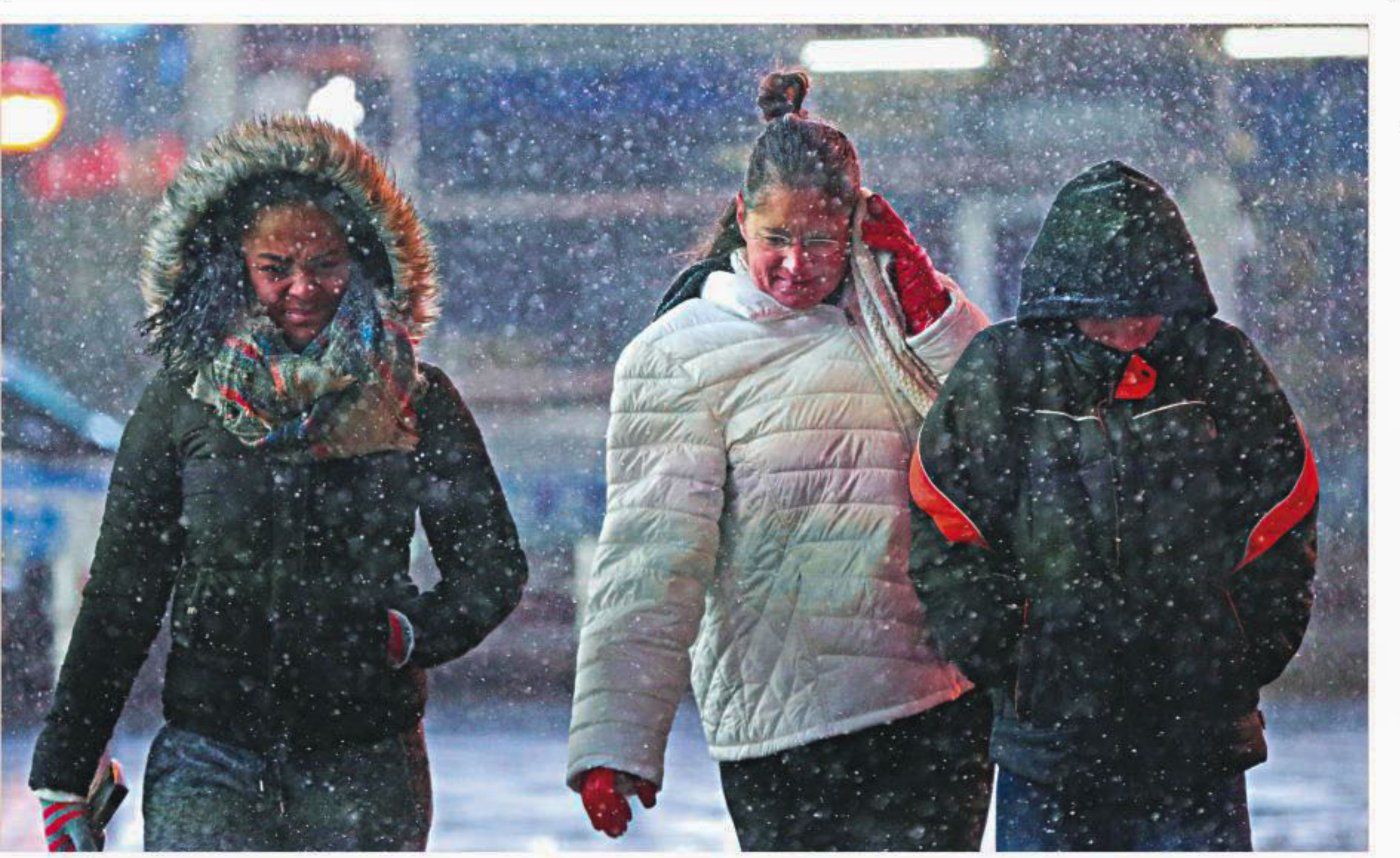
Trump has in the past praised Bannon for his friendship, but the president said in his statement on

Wednesday Bannon had little to do with his election victory over Democrat Hillary Clinton, calling him "a staffer who worked for me" after he had already won the Republican nomination.

The president said Bannon was to blame for the loss of a Republican-held US Senate seat in Alabama in December when Republican Roy Moore, whose campaign was derailed by accusations of sexual misconduct with teenage girls, lost to Democrat Doug Jones. Trump and Bannon backed Moore in the campaign.

"Now that he is on his own, Steve is learning that winning isn't as easy as I make it look. Steve had very little to do with our historic victory, which was delivered by the forgotten men and women of this country. Yet Steve had everything to do with the loss of a Senate seat in Alabama held for more than thirty years by Republicans," Trump said.

Meanwhile, lawyers for Trump are seeking to stop the release of a book containing explosive insights into his presidency, US media reported.



People walk in Times Square during a winter storm in Manhattan in New York, US, yesterday. Heavy snow and high winds pounded the US East Coast along a front stretching from Maine as far south as North Carolina, knocking out power, icing over roadways and closing hundreds of schools.

14 dead in South Africa train crash

AFF, Johannesburg

A passenger train smashed into a truck at a level crossing in South Africa yesterday, killing at least 14 people, injuring 180 and throwing several carriages off the rails.

Flames ripped through the twisted wreckage and choking black smoke rose into the air as desperate passengers clambered out of the train to escape the inferno.

Rescuers rushed to the scene to search for survivors and treat the injured. Officials warned the toll could rise as operations continued to clear the crash site.

New York to install 1,500 more security barriers

CNN ONLINE

New York City plans to install more than 1,500 protective barriers in high-profile locations to guard against vehicle attacks and other terror-related incidents.

The effort, unveiled Tuesday by Mayor Bill de Blasio, is part of a \$50 million investment in security infrastructure after vehicles were used to mow down pedestrians in 2017. Known as bollards, the cylindrical metal posts will replace concrete barriers that went up on sidewalks after vehicle-related attacks in Times Square and Lower Manhattan.

"In 2017, New Yorkers witnessed the horrible capacity of people willing to do us harm, whether it was in our subways, on our bike paths or in Times Square," de Blasio said. "But we will not be cowed, and our expanded investment today in barriers and bollards in our public spaces underscores our resolve in keeping New York City safe from future attacks."

The increased security measures come as the trend of cars as lethal weapons grows ever more common. On December 21, the driver of an SUV plowed into Christmas shoppers in Melbourne, Australia, injuring 18.

In New York, eight people were killed and almost a dozen injured in October when a man drove a rented pickup truck down a busy bicycle path near the World Trade Center.



Turkey fury over US move

Calls New York trial of Turkish banker as legal disgrace

REUTERS, Ankara

Turkey yesterday condemned the US conviction of a Turkish banker for evading Iran sanctions as unprecedented meddling in its internal affairs, seeking to rally nationalist sentiment against a case that has implicated President Tayyip Erdogan.

Wednesday's court decision capped a trial that had strained diplomatic relations between the two countries and is likely to further aggravate tension between the Nato allies.

The case has angered Erdogan and his ministers, some of whom accuse US court officials of ties to a cleric blamed for a 2016 coup attempt. Some of the testimony at the trial implicated senior officials, including Erdogan. Ankara has said the case was based on fabricated evidence.

Mehmet Hakan Atilla, an executive at Turkey's majority state-owned Halkbank, was convicted on five of six counts in a Manhattan federal court, including bank fraud and conspiracy to violate US sanctions law.

"The US court, in a process carried out by relying on so-called 'evidence', which is fake and open to political exploitation, ... made an unprecedented interference in Turkey's internal affairs," Turkey's foreign ministry said.

US prosecutors have charged a total of

nine people in the case, including a former economy minister, Zafer Caglayan. However, only Atilla and a wealthy Turkish-Iranian gold trader, Reza Zarrab, are in US custody.

Erdogan, who has yet to comment on the decision, has previously dismissed the trial as a politically motivated attack on his government, and has attempted to use it to tap into anti-American sentiment among his supporters.

Ankara has not, however, threatened to take concrete measures.

The US case against Atilla was based on the testimony of the gold trader Zarrab, who cooperated with US prosecutors and pleaded guilty to charges of leading a scheme to evade US sanctions against Iran.


In his testimony Zarrab implicated top Turkish politicians, including Erdogan. Zarrab said

Erdogan, who has governed Turkey for nearly 15 years, personally authorised two Turkish banks to join the scheme when he was prime minister.

"The Zarrab court case is a political plot", Deputy Prime Minister Bekir Bozdag tweeted yesterday.

Halkbank said Atilla had the right to appeal against the decision and said it had not been a party to the US case. It noted there had been no financial or administrative decision taken against it by the court.

Executive at state lender convicted on Iran sanctions evasion
Case has infuriated Erdogan, his ministers
Ankara sees case as political plot



Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers & Exporters Association
BGMEA Complex, 23/1 Panthpath Link Road, Kawran Bazar, Dhaka

CORRIGENDUM TO TENDER NOTICE

NOTICE INVITING TENDER FOR CONSTRUCTION OF 2(TWO) BASEMENT OF (13+2B) STORIED BGMEA COMPLEX AT SECTOR-17, BLOCK-H1, ROAD AVENUE-06, UTTARA (PHASE-III).

Sealed tenders are hereby invited by Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers & Exporters Association (BGMEA) for construction of 2 (Two) Basement of (13+2B) storied BGMEA Complex from the experienced construction Firms.

Qualification Criteria:-

- a)** The Bidder must have at least 10 (Ten) years of experience in the same field with Proven past records.
- b)** The Bidder must have successful completion records of at least 1(One) similar nature of works having value of minimum Tk. 100 (One Hundred) crore in a single work order having at least One Basement.
- c)** The Bidder must have valid upto date Trade License, VAT Registration certificate, Income-Tax clearance certificates etc. as per prevailing Govt. rules and regulations.
- d)** The intending Bidders must have required qualified technical Personnels and sufficient equipments owned by them.
- e)** Proper documents must be submitted in support of Qualification criteria as mentioned above.
- The intending Bidder shall submit their offer in sealed envelope as per instructions of the tender documents. The prescribed tender schedule with Bill of Quantities (BOQ) shall be available in Accounts Section of BGMEA at Tk. 10,000/= (Taka Ten thousands) only (non-refundable) during office hours from **27.12.2017 to 11.01.2018**
- Prospective Bidders are requested to contact C&M Cell of BGMEA for detailed information about the works during office hours only.
- The tender schedule shall be received upto 12:00 Noon on 11.01.2018 in the designated Tender Box: After the above mentioned time, no tender schedule shall be received and tender shall be opened on the same day at 3:00PM in presence of the interested Bidders.
- The bidder must submit 2% earnest money of the total bid amount in favor of "BGMEA" in the form of Pay Order/Demand Draft from any schedule Bank. Without earnest money the offer shall be treated as non-responsive tender.
- The Bidders are requested to visit the site before submission of Financial Proposal.
- All tender documents sold earlier shall be treated as cancelled.

BGMEA reserves the right to accept any tender and reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason(s) whatsoever. Any sort of persuasion in connection to this shall be treated as disqualification.

Secretary, BGMEA