RUSSIA PROBE

RATTLE TRUMP

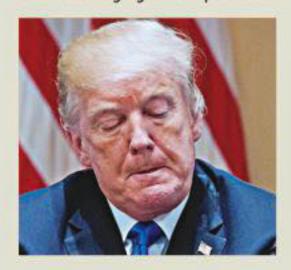
President Donald Trump's intensifying attacks this week against the Russia collusion investigation underscore a growing nervousness over how much evidence investigators may have accumulated on the 2016 Trump campaign's ties to Moscow. In new charges unveiled Thursday by Special Counsel Robert Mueller, former top Trump aide Michael Cohen admitted direct communications with Russian President Vladimir Putin's office on behalf of Trump's business through the first half of 2016. And the most recent news from the investigation suggests that Mueller, a cagey former FBI director, is holding back and could have more shocks in store for the US leader as he nears the conclusion of the 18-month-old investigation.

COHEN TALKED TO TOP PUTIN AIDE

Cohen, who was Trump's personal lawyer and a senior executive in the president's real estate business, the Trump Organization, admitted to having lied to Congress about trying to negotiate a deal for a Trump Tower in Moscow well into the middle of 2016, even when Trump had wrapped up the Republican nomination for president. Trump in the past denied any ongoing contacts with Moscow. But the criminal complaint filed Thursday depicts Cohen in regular contact with Putin's top spokesman Dmitry Peskov during that period, seeking to arrange a trip by Trump to Russia to meet Putin. The complaint also says that Cohen kept senior Trump campaign figures, including members of Trump's family, informed of these efforts -- suggesting Trump himself might have been in the loop. That could be trouble for a number of people if they have denied to Mueller or Congress knowledge of Russia contacts during that period.

THE WIKILEAKS NEXUS

Mueller has already shown he has evidence that the Trump campaign and Trump's family entertained offers of dirt on Clinton from Russia. He is expected to soon charge conservative activist Jerome Corsi and campaign advisor Roger Stone in relation to their alleged attempts to coordinate with WikiLeaks over July-October 2016 as the group published Democratic emails damaging to Trump's election rival Hillary Clinton. The US says the





emails were hacked by Russian intelligence which supplied them to WikiLeaks, aiming to tilt the election in Trump's favor. Mueller has already indicted 25 Russians as part of a criminal "conspiracy" to influence the election. The key question is, does Mueller have evidence that, in trying to contact WikiLeaks, Corsi and Stone were working on behalf of and with the knowledge of Trump or top Trump campaign officials? And would that mean they could be seen as conspiring with the Russians?

MANAFORT'S BROKEN COOPERATION DEAL

On Monday Mueller accused former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort of violating a cooperation deal by lying to investigators. What the lies were about remains a mystery, but it could underscore what most observers believe: that Mueller has far more evidence than his targets know. Trump has held out the possibility of a pardon to Manafort, who he says was treated "cruelly" by the investigation. Now questions are being raised on whether Trump has obstructed justice by suggesting the pardon.

MUELLER'S QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TRUMP

The new Cohen and Manafort charges came just after Trump returned answers to a long list of questions submitted to him by Mueller that focus on Russia contacts. The White House delayed answering the questions since the beginning of this year, worried that Trump could be trapped in a possible lie by making statements contrary to evidence presented Mueller by others. Trump's anger about the investigation raises the possibility that his answers might be contradicted by Cohen, Manafort and others. SOURCE: AFP



Ukraine bars Russian men US raid kills 23 from entry amid tensions

EU to extend Russia sanctions in December

AFP, Kiev

Ukraine yesterday barred Russian men aged 16-60 from entry as tensions mounted between the two countries over Moscow's seizure of three Ukrainian ships last week.

The move came after Kiev imposed martial law in border regions this week in response to the Russian seizure of the ships and 24 sailors off Moscow-annexed Crimea. The incident was the most dangerous in

years between the ex-Soviet neighbours -who are locked in conflict over Russianbacked separatist regions -- and has raised fears of a wider escalation.

"As of today, entry is restricted for foreigners -- in the first instance for male citizens of the Russian Federation age 16 to 60," the head of the border service Petro Tsyhykal said at a meeting with President Petro Poroshenko that was broadcast live.

Poroshenko said the restriction will not apply to "humanitarian cases."

Moscow slammed the move, but said it will not impose similar restrictions on Ukrainians.

Moscow and Kiev have traded angry accusations since Russian navy vessels fired on, boarded and captured the three Ukrainian ships last Sunday.

Courts in Crimea sentenced the 24 Ukrainian sailors to two months detention, despite international calls for their release.

US President Donald Trump scrapped a planned meeting at the G20 summit with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin over Moscow's detention of the sailors. Russia insists they crossed into Russian

waters illegally, with Putin saying the border guards "fulfilled their military duty" in seizing the ships. European leaders this week rebuffed calls

from Ukraine for greater support against Russia, after Kiev urged Nato to send ships into waters disputed with Moscow.

European Council President Donald Tusk yesterday said the bloc will extend its existing economic sanctions on Russia next month.

Afghan civilians

Most them are women, children: UN REUTERS, Kabul

A United Nations investigation has found that at least 23 Afghan civilians, most of them women and children, were killed in a US airstrike in the southern province of Helmand this week, the latest in a growing toll of casualties from air operations.

The US military says it is investigating the incident on Tuesday in which a helicopter hit a compound during a joint operation with US and Afghan forces in Garmsir district in Helmand.

Local residents said at least 30 people were killed in the strike, which came amid a surge in air operations as the US military takes a more aggressive approach to force the Taliban towards peace negotiations. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

noted a sharp increase in civilian casualties from air strikes and said it was particularly concerned that children have been hit. Up to 10 children and eight women were among the

victims of the latest attack, it said. According to UN figures, there were 649 civilian casual-

ties from air strikes in the first nine months of the year, more than in any entire year since at least 2009, when UNAMA began systematic documentation of casualty figures.

In the first nine months of the year, US aircraft released 5,213 weapons, more than in any other year since 2011 when there were more than 100,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan.

The Ebola outbreak in eastern Congo is now the second biggest in history, with 426 confirmed and probable cases, the health ministry said late on Thursday. It is believed to have killed 245 people in North Kivu and Ituri provinces. The epidemic is now only surpassed by the 2013-2016 outbreak in West Africa, where more than 28,000 cases where con-

BITS OF HISTORY

1900: The Irish wit and dramatist Oscar

1939: Twenty Russian divisions -almost half a million men -- invaded

1982: Michael Jackson's "Thriller"

album released.

president to visit Northern Ireland.

UN cautious as rebels back

AFP, Buenos Aires

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Thursday played down hopes for an imminent breakthrough on ending Yemen's brutal war, saying he hoped talks would start

Huthi rebels, who have persisted in their fight despite an onslaught from neighboring Saudi Arabia, earlier Thursday said they were ready to take part in negotiations that the United Nations had earlier mooted

But Guterres lowered hopes on the timing of the talks, which are being arranged as millions of Yemenis are feared to be on

"I don't want to raise too much expectations, but we are working hard in order to make sure that we can start meaningful peace talks still this year,"

Guterres told reporters in Buenos Aires, where he will take part in the G20 summit. "But, as you know, there have been some setbacks,"

described Yemen, which is under both a blockade and a bombing campaign by Saudi Arabia, as the world's worst humanitarian disaster, with at least 10,000 people killed since the

support for the Saudi-led coalition, outraged at accounts of attacks on civilian targets including hospitals and a school bus.

unusual defiance of President Donald Trump, who has defended a strong partnership with the kingdom's ambi-

Trump decries scrutiny of 'very legal' real estate business AFP, Washington

US President Donald Trump yesterday reiterated his innocence in connection with a Moscow real estate deal that has reportedly been a focus of a probe into whether his 2016 presidential campaign conspired with Russian operatives.

Trump's tweets came one day after his exlawyer pleaded guilty to lying to Congress over the ultimately shelved Trump Tower deal in a bid to limit the Russia investigation. "Oh, I get it! I am a very good developer,

happily living my life, when I see our Country going in the wrong direction (to put it mildly)," Trump tweeted from the G20 summit in Argentina. "Against all odds, I decide to run for

President & continue to run my businessvery legal & very cool, talked about it on the campaign trail," he said. "Lightly looked at doing a building some-

where in Russia," the Republican leader continued. "Put up zero money, zero guarantees and didn't do the project. Witch Hunt!"

Michael Cohen, who once famously said he would take a bullet for the Republican

kingdom killed a dissident journalist.

President Donald Trump and

his daughter Ivanka and shak-

ing hands with French

President Emmanuel Macron

at the start of a two-day meet-

ing of the world's top econo-

Prince Mohammed and

Russian President Vladimir

Putin both grinned broadly and

shook hands robustly as leaders

British Prime Minister

converged for a group photo.

mies in Buenos Aires.

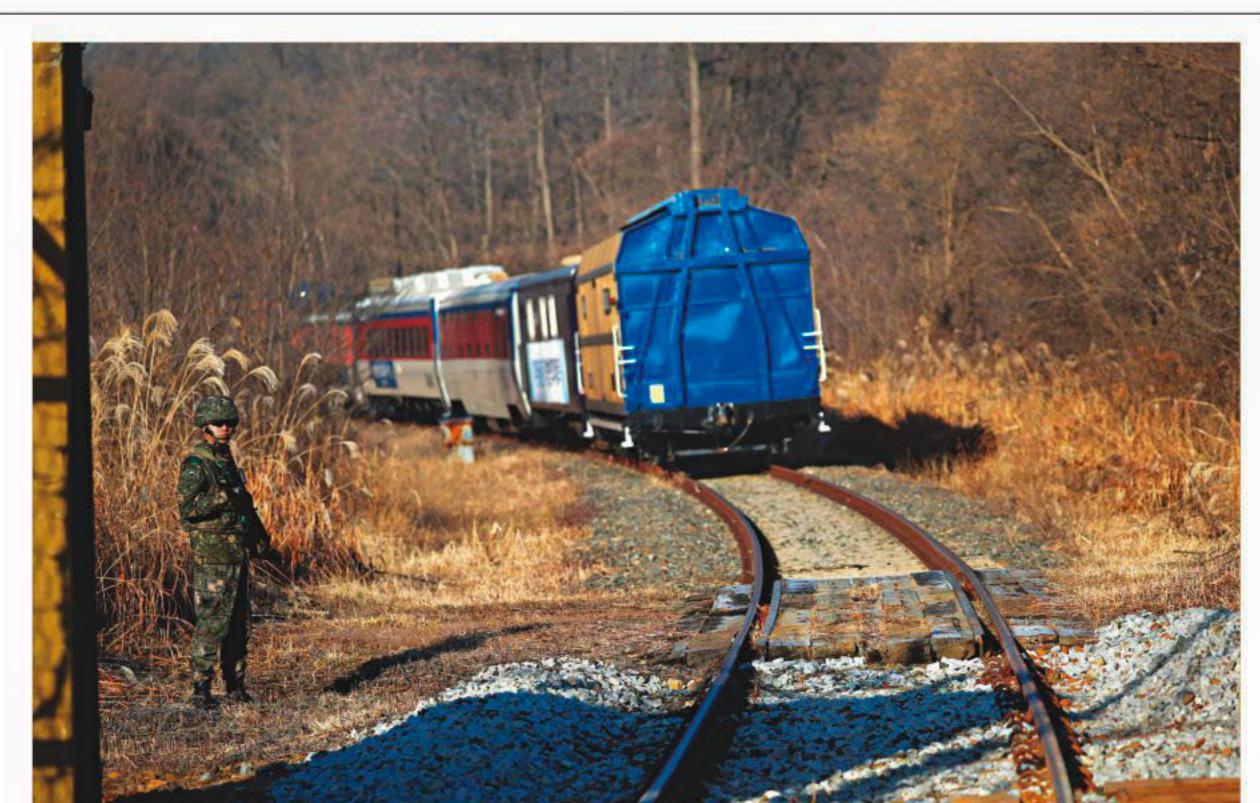
billionaire, said that he lied in written testimony to Congress in which he suggested the project was shelved in January 2016 -- before the first caucus and primary voting began.

Contrary to his original testimony, the project was discussed multiple times within the company -- beyond January 2016 -- and with efforts to obtain Russian governmental approval being discussed as late as June of that year.

Cohen also mulled traveling to Russia in connection with the project and in May 2016 was offered a possible introduction to either the Russian president or prime minister on the sidelines of a Russian forum in June 2016. Trump ultimately secured the

Republican nomination for president just weeks later in July 2016. On Thursday, the president branded Cohen a "weak person" and emphasized that the property deal was ultimately dropped.

"He is lying about a project that everybody knew about," Trump told reporters at the White House before heading to Argentina for what is sure to be a tense twoday summit of world leaders.



LANDMARK **JOURNEY**

A South Korean train moves into North Korea through demilitarized zone separating the two Koreas in Paju, yesterday. The train crossed into North Korea for the first time in a decade -- packed with engineers on a mission to upgrade the North's dilapidated rail tracks and create a linked, cross-border network. PHOTO: AFP

G20 welcomes Saudi prince

Despite Khashoggi killing, Prince Salman gets warm reception

"The Saudi Arabians need to ensure that their investigation is AFP, Buenos Aires a full investigation, that it's credible, that it's transparent, and World leaders welcomed Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince that people can have confidence in the outcome of it, and that Mohammed bin Salman yesterday at the G20 summit,

showing he was no pariah less than two months after the Macron told reporters before meeting the prince that he will "no doubt" mention the death of Khashoggi, a US-The 33-year-old heir apparent was seen chatting with US based contributor to The Washington Post who was killed

those responsible are held to account," May told Sky News.

when he visited the Saudi consulate in Istanbul. The killing has sparked

widespread outrage but Western powers have pledged to maintain close relations with Saudi Arabia, a top oil producer and buyer of US weapons.

Trump, in an exclamationheavy statement before the summit, said it did not matter whether Prince Mohammed

knew about Khashoggi's death and that Saudi Arabia was important for business and for its hostility to Iran.

The US Senate nonetheless moved this week to end support for the Saudi-led war against rebels in Yemen amid outrage over attacks on civilian sites including a school bus and hospitals.

Israel strikes Iranian target in Syria

AFP, Beirut

Israel struck several positions south of Damascus, a war monitor said Friday, in the first strikes since Syrian air defences were upgraded following the accidental downing of a Russian plane in September. Damascus claimed its air

defence systems shot down all "hostile targets" late Thursday. Israel did not confirm carrying out raids but denied any losses.

According to the Syria Observatory for Human Rights, the strikes hit two positions in the south of Damascus province, including an area believed to be

missile hit the area of Harfa,

where there is a Syrian

military base, it said.

an Iranian weapons depot as refugees. near the capital. Another

year.

HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN CENTRAL AFRICA 1.5m children need

emergency aid: UN

AFP, Geneva

Two-thirds of all children in Central African Republic need emergency aid, the UN said yesterday, sounding an alarm about the impoverished country's worsening "neglected" crisis. Some 1.5 million children nationwide are in need of humanitar

ian assistance, an increase of 300,000 compared with 2016, the United Nations children's agency UNICEF said in a new report. The agency's top representative in the country, Christine

Muhigana, told reporters in Geneva that the situation in CAR is "probably even worse" than during the country's sectarian conflict of 2013. That year, longtime leader Francois Bozize, a Christian, was overthrown by a predominantly Muslim rebel alliance called

the Seleka. Much of the country, roughly the size of France, is now controlled by rival militia groups.

"What we are trying to do under these extraordinary circumstances is to keep children alive," Muhigana said.

children are either internally displaced or have fled the country Responding to those in need has also become increasingly

Beyond those in need of aid, UNICEF said that one in four

difficult as attacks on aid workers in CAR have quadrupled this

A jailbreak in western Indonesia has left 90

90 inmates flee in

AFP, Banda Aceh

Indonesia jailbreak

Hong Kong bus crash

Five people were killed and

32 injured when a coach

carrying Cathay Pacific staff

to Hong Kong's airport

collided with a taxi yester-

day, police said. The taxi

driver, two men and two

women coach passengers

were killed, according to

kills 5; 32 injured

AFP, Hong Kong

police.

inmates on the run after they escaped by breaking down fences when they were supposed to be at a prayer gathering, an official said yesterday. Out of 726 inmates, 113 ran away. But authorities recaptured 23.Police have launched a massive hunt for the escapees and heightened security at the prison.

world's 2nd biggest REUTERS, Kinshasa

Congo Ebola outbreak

firmed.

(NOVEMBER 30)

Wilde died in poverty in Paris. His works included the play "The Importance of Being Earnest" and the novel "The Picture of Dorian Gray".

Finland in the "WinterWar".

1995 - Bill Clinton became the first US

YEMEN WAR

peace talks

by the end of the year.

for next week in Sweden.

the brink of starvation.

he said, pointing in part to Saudi Arabia's concerns over continued rocket attacks by the Huthis. The United Nations has

intervention began in 2015. The US Senate moved Wednesday to cut off US

The step marked an

tious crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman.

MUELLER MOVES

killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi and the Saudi-led offensive in Yemen, where millions are on the brink of starvation in what the United Nations calls the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

Theresa May also said she would meet Prince Mohammed. She said she would press the crown prince both on the