

WORLD IN BRIEF

Associated Press

President Trump confirms he's under investigation

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump confirmed Friday he was under investigation and appeared to take aim at a senior Justice Department official, in a tweet that seemed to encapsulate his frustration with the ongoing focus on Russia's involvement in the 2016 election.

"I am being investigated for firing the FBI Director by the man who told me to fire the FBI Director! Witch Hunt," the president wrote in his tweet.

In another tweet earlier Friday, Trump writes, "After 7 months of investigations & committee hearings about my 'collusion with the Russians,' nobody has been able to show any proof. Sad!"

The Trump tweets come after the top lawyer for his transition team warned organization officials to preserve all records and other materials related to the Russia probe. An official of Trump's transition confirmed the lawyer's internal order sent Thursday.

The transition official spoke on condition of anonymity because the person was not authorized to discuss post-election decisions publicly.

Trump's tweet that he's being investigated "by the man who told me to fire the FBI Director" may refer to Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein. Rosenstein in a memo to Trump raised concerns over FBI Director James Comey. Trump cited the memo in firing Comey.

And it was Rosenstein who appointed Robert Mueller as special counsel to investigate Russian involvement in the 2016 presidential election and possible collusion with the Trump campaign.

Trump to announce plan to stop cash flow to Cuban military

WASHINGTON — Stopping short of a complete turnabout, President Donald Trump is expected to announce a revised Cuba policy aimed at stopping the flow of U.S. cash to the country's military and security services while maintaining diplomatic relations and allowing U.S. airlines and cruise ships to continue service to the island.

In a speech Friday at a Miami theater associated with Cuban exiles, Trump will cast the policy moves as fulfillment of a promise he made during last year's presidential campaign to reverse then-President Barack Obama's diplomatic re-engagement with the island after decades of estrangement.

Senior White House officials who briefed reporters Thursday on the coming announcement said Obama's overtures had enriched Cuba's military while repression increased on the island. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the policy before Trump announces it, despite the president's regular criticism of the use of anonymous sources.

The moves to be announced by Trump are only a partial reversal of Obama's policies, however. And they will saddle the U.S. government with the complicated task of policing U.S. travel to Cuba to make sure there are no transactions with the military-linked conglomerate that runs much of the Cuban economy.

By restricting individual U.S. travel to Cuba, the new policy also risks cutting off a major source of income for Cuba's private business sector, which the policy is meant to support.

Russia claims it has killed IS leader al-Baghdadi

BEIRUT — Russia claimed Friday it killed the leader of the Islamic State group in an airstrike targeting a meeting of IS leaders just outside the group's de facto capital in Syria.

The Russian Defense Ministry said Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was killed in a Russian strike in late May along with other senior group commanders.

There had been previous reports of al-Baghdadi being killed but they did not turn out to be true. The IS leader last released an audio on Nov. 3, urging his followers to keep up the fight for Mosul as they defend the city against a major offensive that began weeks earlier.

The spokesman for the U.S.-led anti-IS coalition said in a statement Friday he could not confirm the Russian claim.

The report of al-Baghdadi's death comes as IS suffers major setbacks in which they have lost wide areas of territory and both of their strongholds — Mosul in Iraq and Syria's Raqqa. Both are under attack by various groups who are fighting under the cover of airstrikes by the U.S.-led coalition.

About 4,000 more US troops to go to Afghanistan

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon will send almost 4,000 additional American forces to Afghanistan, a Trump administration official said Thursday, hoping to break a stalemate in a war that has now passed to a third U.S. commander in chief. The deployment will be the largest of American manpower under Donald Trump's young presidency.

The decision by Defense Secretary Jim Mattis could be announced as early as next week, the official said. It follows Trump's move to give Mattis the authority to set troop levels and seeks to address assertions by the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan that he doesn't have enough forces to help Afghanistan's army against a resurgent Taliban insurgency. The rising threat posed by Islamic State extremists, evidenced in a rash of deadly attacks in the capital city of Kabul, has only fueled calls for a stronger U.S. presence, as have several recent American combat deaths.

The bulk of the additional troops will train and advise Afghan forces, according to the administration official, who wasn't authorized to discuss details of the decision publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity. A smaller number would be assigned to counterterrorism operations against the Taliban and IS, the official said.

Asked for comment, a Pentagon spokesman, Navy Capt. Jeff Davis, said, "No decisions have been made."

Daulat Waziri, spokesman for Afghanistan's defense ministry was reluctant to comment on specifics Friday but said the Afghan government supports the U.S. decision to send more troops. "The United States knows we are in the fight against terrorism," he said. "We want to finish this war in Afghanistan with the help of the NATO alliance."

Rule gives Oregonians non-gender option on driver's license

SALEM — In a move hailed by LGBT rights groups, Oregon became the first state in the US on Thursday to allow residents to mark their gender as "not specified" on applications for driver's



AP Photo/Evan Vucci
President Donald Trump walks from Marine One to board Air Force One Friday for a trip to Miami to deliver a speech on Cuba policy. Trump's revised policy will only be a partial reversal of former President Barack Obama's policies.

licenses, learner's permits and identity cards.

Under the new rule approved by the Oregon Transportation Commission, Oregonians who select the new option will have an X appear instead of M or F on those cards. The rule, which takes effect on July 3, is a first for the U.S., David House, spokesman for Oregon's Driver and Motor Vehicles Division, or DMV, told The Associated Press.

"It's fitting that this is before us during Pride Week in Oregon and Pride Month around the country," said Commissioner Sean O'Hollaren. "It's something that we should do because it's the right thing to do."

The DMV said the new rule, which the commission passed unanimously, came about after a Multnomah County judge in June 2016 allowed Jamie Shupe, a Portland resident, to legally change to "non-binary" gender.

"There's a little more truth and justice in the world today," said Hayley Gorenberg, deputy legal director of Lambda Legal, the oldest and largest national legal organization that advocates for the civil rights of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender people.

Scalise has more surgery as authorities track shooter's path

WASHINGTON — Still in critical condition and undergoing repeated surgery, GOP House Whip Steve Scalise "will be in the hospital for some time," according to the facility where he is recovering from a gunshot. His House colleagues paid tribute to him at their annual charity baseball game, while law enforcement tracked the path the shooter traveled to his ballfield carnage.

Investigators studying Wednesday's attack at a suburban Virginia park said shooter James Hodgkinson had obtained his rifle and handgun from licensed firearms dealers. Capitol Police said they had "no evidence to suggest that the purchases were not lawful."

Hodgkinson, a Belleville, Illinois, home inspector who had been living out of his van near the park, had a social media page filled with criticism of Republicans and the Trump administration. He died after officers in Scalise's security detail fired back at him.

The FBI said it was investigating the shooter's "activities and social media impressions" in the months leading up to the attack. Authorities also were going over a cellphone, computer and camera taken from Hodgkinson's white van, which was parked near the ballfield.

So far, investigators have not linked Hodgkinson to any radical groups, said a law enforcement official who spoke on condition of anonymity because the official was not authorized to discuss the investigation publicly.

Escaped Georgia prison inmates recaptured in Tennessee

SHELBYVILLE, Tenn. — Two escaped inmates sought in the killings of two guards on a Georgia prison bus were captured after a chase and being held at gunpoint by a rural Tennessee homeowner whose vehicle they were trying to steal, authorities said.

Donnie Rowe and Ricky Dubose were apprehended Thursday in the rural community of Christiansa, Tennessee, ending a multi-state manhunt that began Tuesday morning.

"True bravery is what's caused us to stand before you tonight to talk about a successful capture instead of a tragic incident," Tennessee Bureau of Investigation Director Mark Gwyn said at a news conference. "So I'm totally grateful to everyone involved."

Earlier in the day, police in nearby Shelbyville had responded to a call about a home invasion, where a couple had been held captive, Georgia Bureau of Investigation spokeswoman Nelly Miles said.

The suspects fled in the couple's vehicle and fired on sheriff's deputies chasing them on Interstate 24 about 50 miles (80 kilometers) southeast of Nashville, Tennessee Highway Patrol spokesman Lt. Bill Miller said. Rutherford County Sheriff Michael Fitzhugh said his deputies did not return fire and none of them was injured.

N. Korea portraits: Ordinary lives, ever in leader's shadow

PYONGYANG, North Korea — When asked what's important to them, North Koreans might talk about working hard, or doing well at sports, or having a big family. But leader Kim Jong Un is never far from the conversation.

Pyongyang subway officer Ri Ok Gyong says she wants "to serve people because Marshal Kim Jong Un loves his people and so must I."

Professional long-distance runner Pak Chol says, "I want to

please leader Kim Jong Un through my sporting successes."

Ri Ok Ran and her husband, Kang Sung Jin, say they want "to have many children so that they can serve in the army and defend and uphold our leader and country, for many years into the future."

AP photographer Wong Maye-E tries to get her North Korean subjects to open up as much as is possible in an authoritarian country with no tolerance for dissent and great distrust of foreigners. She has taken dozens of portraits of North Koreans over the past three years, often after breaking the ice by taking photos with an instant camera and sharing them.

At impasse, Cosby jury goes back to work on verdict

NORRISTOWN, Pa. — A new round of deliberations is raising the prospects that Bill Cosby's sexual assault trial will end with a verdict instead of a hung jury.

Jurors who have appeared stressed and even angry seemed more upbeat as they left court outside Philadelphia Thursday night than on previous nights, despite enduring another marathon session.

The sequestered jurors had deliberated about 30 hours before telling Judge Steven O'Neill earlier Thursday that they couldn't reach a unanimous decision on any of the counts against the 79-year-old comedian. The judge told them to try again for a verdict.

As the jurors left for the day, O'Neill heaped praise on them, thanking them for their dedication and the sacrifice they've made being 300 miles (482 kilometers) from home in the Pittsburgh area.

"I want to reiterate how proud I am of each and every one of you," O'Neill said as he sent the jury back to the hotel. "I thank you from the bottom of my heart for everything that you've done."

Grief turns to anger in neighborhood near tower fire

LONDON — Relatives of those missing after a high-rise tower blaze in London are searching frantically for their loved ones, as the police commander in charge of the investigation says he hopes the death toll will not rise to three figures.

Firefighters searching the smoldering ruin in west London have recovered six bodies from the 24-story Grenfell Tower, while 11 others have been located but cannot yet be removed from the gutted structure.

Families searching for their loved ones have blanketed the area near the tower with posters searching for answers, and sorrow is quickly turning to anger over whether recent building works were properly done.

Meanwhile, Metropolitan Police commander Stuart Cundy responded to speculation that the number of dead could exceed 100, saying: "From a personal perspective, I really hope it isn't."

Amazon buying Whole Foods in bold move into brick and mortar

NEW YORK — Amazon is buying Whole Foods in a deal valued at about \$13.7 billion, a stunning move into brick-and-mortar retail that sets the stage for more radical store experimentation and intensified competition with grocery rivals.

The deal unites the online juggernaut with the grocery store chain that fell behind as the organic and natural foods it helped popularize expanded to more locations and shoppers found "good enough" alternatives.

Amazon already offers grocery-delivery services in five markets, but the Whole Foods purchase would let it expand to many more. Amazon also offers grocery shipments elsewhere, but that's tough with perishable foods.

The deal has the possibility to be "transformative," Moody's lead retail analyst Charlie O'Shea said in a note, "not just for food retail, but for retail in general."

The "implications ripple far beyond the food segment, where dominant players like Walmart, Kroger, Costco, and Target now have to look over their shoulders at the Amazon train coming down the tracks," O'Shea said.

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