

WORLD IN BRIEF

Associated Press

'Obamacare' repeal reeling after Senate defeat

WASHINGTON — Dealing a serious blow to President Donald Trump's agenda, the Senate early Friday rejected a measure to repeal parts of former President Barack Obama's health care law after a night of high suspense in the U.S. Capitol.

Unable to pass even a so-called "skinny repeal," it was unclear if Senate Republicans could advance any health bill despite seven years of promises to repeal "Obamacare."

"This is clearly a disappointing moment," said Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky. "I regret that our efforts were not enough, this time."

"It's time to move on," he said. The vote was 49-51 with three Republicans joining all Democrats in voting 'no.'

McConnell put the health bill on hold and announced that the Senate would move onto other legislation next week.

White House tensions catch fire with Scaramucci interviews

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump's new communications director exploded the smoldering tensions at the White House into a full-fledged conflagration Thursday, angrily daring Trump's chief of staff to deny he's a "leaker" and exposing West Wing backstabbing in language more suitable to a mobster movie than a seat of presidential stability.

In a pull-no-punches, impromptu CNN interview that he said was authorized by the president, Anthony Scaramucci went after chief of staff Reince Priebus in graphic terms. "The fish stinks from the head down," he said. "I can tell you two fish that don't stink, and that's me and the president."

Not even a week into his new job, Scaramucci accused unidentified senior officials of trying to sabotage him and committing a felony by leaking information. But the personal financial information that he said someone had "leaked" about him had simply been obtained through a public records request.

Then in an interview published by The New Yorker late Thursday, an angry Scaramucci used an expletive to accuse Priebus of being a "f----- paranoid schizophrenic" and White House chief strategist Steve Bannon of trying to burnish his own reputation.

He also threatened to fire White House staffers who leaked about a dinner he had with the president.

North Korea fires missile which lands in sea off Japan

TOKYO — North Korea fired a ballistic missile Friday night which landed in the ocean off Japan, Japanese officials said.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe called a meeting of Japan's National Security Council.

"I have received information that North Korea once again conducted a missile firing," he said. "We will immediately analyze information and do our utmost to protect the safety of the Japanese people."

There was no immediate announcement of the type of missile. On July 4, North Korea test-launched its first intercontinental ballistic missile.

Japanese government spokesman Yoshihide Suga said the missile launched Friday flew for about 45 minutes and landed off the Japanese coast in waters between Japan and the Korean Peninsula.



AP Photo/Cliff Owen

U.S. Sen. John McCain, front left, is pursued by reporters after the Arizona Republican cast a 'no' vote Friday on a measure to repeal parts of former President Barack Obama's health care law.

Japanese public broadcaster NHK said the coast guard issued safety warnings to aircraft and ships.

South Korea and the United States also confirmed the launch.

Pakistani court disqualifies PM on allegation of corruption

ISLAMABAD — A five-judge panel of Pakistan's Supreme Court on Friday disqualified thrice-elected Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif from holding office over allegations of corruption against him and his family.

The court in a unanimous decision said Sharif was disqualified for not remaining "truthful and honest" after considering evidence against him. It also ruled Sharif could no longer serve as a member of the National Assembly, a powerful lower house of the parliament.

General elections are to be held in Pakistan next year and the Supreme Court ruling ensures he won't be in the running.

The court asked the Election Commission of Pakistan to issue notification of Sharif's removal. But Sharif quickly stepped down, saying he did it to show his respect for the country's judiciary.

The court also directed the country's anti-corruption body to file corruption charges against Sharif, his two sons and daughter in the next six weeks for concealing their assets.

Russia orders cut in US diplomats in reaction to sanctions

MOSCOW — Russia's Foreign Ministry has ordered a reduction in the number of U.S. diplomats in Russia and said it was closing down a U.S. recreation retreat in response to fresh sanctions against Russia.

The Senate on Friday approved a new package of stiff financial sanctions against Russia, Iran and North Korea and sent it to President Donald Trump to sign. The legislation bars Trump from easing or waiving the penalties on Russia unless Congress agrees.

The Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement on Friday that

in response it has ordered the U.S. Embassy in Russia to reduce the number of its diplomats by Sept. 1. Russia will also close down the embassy's recreational retreat on the outskirts of Moscow as well as warehouse facilities.

'Big hunt' for Russian hackers, but no obvious election link

MOSCOW — Pyotr Levashov appeared to be just another comfortable member of Russia's rising middle-class — an IT entrepreneur with a taste for upmarket restaurants, Thai massages and foreign travel.

Then police raided his vacation rental in Barcelona, marching him out in handcuffs to face charges of being one of the world's most notorious spam lords.

Levashov's April 7 arrest was one in a series of American-initiated operations over the past year to seize alleged Russian cybercriminals outside their homeland, which has no extradition agreement with the United States.

They come at a fraught moment in relations between Moscow and Washington, where politicians are grappling with the allegation that Kremlin hackers intervened in the U.S. election to help President Donald Trump. Through their lawyers, several defendants have suggested their arrests are linked to the election turmoil. Experts say that's possible, though an Associated Press review of the cases found no firm evidence to back the claim.

"There is a big hunt underway," said Andrei Soldatov, an expert on the Russian security services and co-author of "Red Web," a book about Russian attempts to control the internet. He said the recent burst of arrests made it look like the United States was "trying to understand what's going on with a very complicated world of Russian hacking and a very complicated relationship between Russian hackers and Russian secret services."

Thousands of North Korean laborers in US-allied Gulf nations

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — As pressure on North Korea grows over its nuclear weapons program, America's most valued Arab allies host thousands of its laborers whose wages help Pyongyang evade sanctions and build the missiles now threatening the U.S. and its Asian partners, officials and analysts say.

From state-run restaurants to construction sites, North Korean workers in Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates face conditions akin to forced labor while being spied on by planted intelligence officers, eating little food and suffering physical abuse, authorities say. Hundreds more North Korean workers may be coming to the UAE, home to a crucial military base, while laborers remain in the other countries.

North Korean laborers even have worked on an expansion of a military base in the UAE home to U.S. forces fighting the Islamic State group, two officials familiar with Pyongyang's tactics told The Associated Press. A UAE company also was accused by the U.S. of trying to buy nearly \$100 million of North Korean arms, while the nation previously purchased ballistic missiles from the North.

Emirati officials, who are now relying on South Korean expertise to build the first nuclear power plant on the Arabian Peninsula, did not respond to requests for comment.

"To put it fairly simply — an isolated country like North Korea is always seeking hard currency," said Giorgio Cafiero, the CEO of the Washington-based political risk consultancy Gulf State Analytics. "The Gulf is a place that the North Koreans see as a very reliable place to make the money."

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