

## WORLD IN BRIEF

Associated Press

### Russia blames Israel for plane shot down by Syrian missile

MOSCOW — A Russian reconnaissance aircraft was shot down by a Syrian missile over the Mediterranean Sea, killing all 15 people on board, the Russian Defense Ministry said today. It blamed Israel for the crash, saying the plane was caught in the crossfire as four Israeli fighters attacked targets in northwestern Syria.

The Russian military said the Il-20 electronic intelligence plane was hit 22 miles offshore late Monday as it was returning to its home base nearby, and that the Israeli pilots were using the Russian aircraft as a shield.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu called his Israeli counterpart, Avigdor Lieberman, later Tuesday to say that Israel is “fully to blame” for the deaths, the ministry said.

The military said Israel did not warn it of its operation over Latakia province until one minute before the strike, which did not give the Russian plane enough time to escape.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, however, struck a reconciliatory note Tuesday, blaming the shooting down on “a chain of tragic circumstances.” He said the Russian response will focus on boosting security for its troops in Syria.

The Israeli military said in a statement Tuesday that its jets were already within Israeli airspace when the downing occurred. Israel offered condolences for the deaths of the Russian troops but said it holds the Syrian government “fully responsible.” It also blamed Iran and Hezbollah for what it described as an “unfortunate incident.”

For several years, Israel and Russia have maintained a special hotline to prevent their air forces from clashing in the skies over Syria. Israeli military officials have previously praised its effectiveness.

### Trade war escalates as China slaps tariffs on US imports

BEIJING — The U.S.-China trade war escalated further today, with China announcing retaliatory tax increases on \$60 billion worth of U.S. imports, including coffee, honey and industrial chemicals.

The increases are in response to the U.S. announcing it will impose tariffs on \$200 billion worth of Chinese-made goods starting next week. The tariffs will start at 10 percent, then rise to 25 percent on Jan. 1.

China’s Finance Ministry said its tariff increases are aimed at curbing “trade friction” and the “unilateralism and protectionism of the United States.”

The two countries have already imposed



Catherine Riggs holds her grandson, Luke Humphrey, as she listens to a briefing aboard a Coast Guard helicopter in Burgaw, N.C. The family was rescued by the crew and taken to a shelter in Wilmington.

AP Photo/Steve Helber

### Flood victims get food and water; rain spreads toward the Northeast

WILMINGTON, N.C. — Stranded by Florence’s epic floods days after the hurricane hit North Carolina, Wilmington residents lined up by the hundreds today for free food, water and tarps, while officials managed to open a second route into the surrounded city.

The death toll from the storm rose to at least 34 in three states, with 26 fatalities in North Carolina, as Florence’s remnants brought downpours to the heavily populated Northeast, triggering flooding in New Hampshire and New York state. A tornado warning was issued near Salem, Massachusetts.

Four days after Florence blew ashore and began unloading more than 2 feet of rain that paralyzed much of North Carolina, officials encouraged evacuees to stay away until conditions improve.

Items have been brought into the city by big military trucks and helicopters, which also have been used to pluck hundreds of desperate people from atop homes and other structures.

The dead include a 1-year-old boy who was swept away after his mother drove into floodwaters and lost her grip on him. Authorities in Virginia said one person was dead after an apparent tornado.

Utility crews from multiple states worked to restore power, and outages were down from a high of more than 900,000 to about 320,000 homes and businesses, nearly all in North Carolina.

import taxes on \$50 billion worth of each other’s goods. President Donald Trump threatened to add an additional \$267 billion in Chinese imports to the target list if China retaliated for the latest U.S. taxes. That would raise the total affected by U.S. penalties to \$517 billion, covering nearly everything China sells to the United States.

The American Chamber of Commerce in China warned Tuesday that Washington is underestimating Beijing’s determination

to fight back.

“The downward spiral that we have previously warned about now seems certain to materialize,” said William Zarit, the chamber’s chairman.

At the root of the trade war are U.S. complaints about China’s plans to try to overtake U.S. technological supremacy. Those plans include “Made in China 2025,” which calls for creating powerful Chinese entities to compete in robotics and other fields. The U.S. says the plans

are based on stolen technology, violate China’s market-opening commitments and might erode American industrial leadership.

American companies and trading partners including the European Union and Japan have longstanding complaints about Chinese market barriers and industrial policy. But they object to Trump’s tactics and warn the dispute could chill global economic growth and undermine international trade regulation.

### Trump declassifies documents related to FBI Russia probe

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump declassified a trove of documents related to the early days of the FBI’s Russia investigation, including a portion of a secret surveillance warrant application and former FBI Director James Comey’s text messages.

Trump made the extraordinary move Monday in response to calls from his allies in Congress who say they believe the Russia investigation was tainted by anti-Trump bias within the ranks of the FBI and the Justice Department. It also came as Trump continued his efforts to undermine special counsel Robert Mueller’s probe after the guilty plea of his former campaign chairman Paul Manafort and amid the ongoing grand jury investigation into a longtime associate, Roger Stone.

Trump’s decision will result in the release of text messages and documents involving several top Justice Department and FBI officials who Trump has repeatedly attacked over the last year.

The president tweeted today on the move, quoting a supportive congressman and adding: “Really bad things were happening, but they are now being exposed. Big stuff!”

White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders announced Trump’s decision in a written statement, saying the president had directed the Office of the Director of National Intelligence and the Justice Department to declassify the documents “at the request of a number of committees of Congress, and for reasons of transparency.” It was unclear how soon the documents would be released.

In statements Monday evening, the Justice Department and the office of Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats said they are working together to comply with Trump’s order, which triggers a declassification review by various agencies “to seek to ensure the safety of America’s national security interests.” That review is ongoing.

Democrats criticized the effort, saying the GOP lawmakers were trying to discredit the Justice Department in an effort to protect Trump from Mueller’s investigation.

Rep. Adam Schiff of California, the ranking Democrat on the House intelligence committee, called Trump’s decision a “clear abuse of power” intended to advance a “false narrative” to help in his defense from Mueller’s probe.

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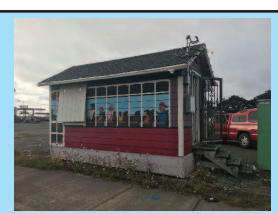
  
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