

Trump expands fast-track deportation authority

By ELLIOT SPAGAT
Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — The Trump administration announced Monday that it will vastly expand the authority of immigration officers to deport migrants without allowing them to first appear before judges, its second major policy shift on immigration in eight days.

Starting Tuesday, fast-track deportations can apply to anyone in the country illegally for less than two years. Previously, those deportations were largely limited to people arrested almost immediately after crossing the Mexican border.

Kevin McAleenan, the acting Homeland Security secretary, portrayed the nationwide extension of “expedited removal” authority as another effort to address an “ongoing crisis on the southern border” by freeing up beds in detention facilities and reducing a backlog of more than 900,000 cases in immigration courts.

U.S. authorities do not have space to detain “the vast majority” of people arrested on the Mexican border, leading to the release of hundreds of thousands with notices to appear in court, McAleenan said. Homeland Security officials with the new deportation power will deport migrants in the country illegally more quickly than the Justice Department’s immigration courts, where cases can take years to resolve.

The American Civil Liberties Union and American Immigration Council said they would sue to block the policy.

“Under this unlawful plan, immigrants



AP Photo/Gregory Bull

ICE officers detain a man in Escondido, Calif.

who have lived here for years would be deported with less due process than people get in traffic court,” said Omar Jawdat, director of the ACLU’s Immigrants’ Rights Project.

“Expedited removal” gives enforcement agencies broad authority to deport people without allowing them to appear before an immigration judge with limited exceptions, including if they express fear of returning home and pass an initial screening interview for asylum.

The powers were created under a 1996 law but went largely unnoticed until 2004, when Homeland Security said it would be enforced for people who are arrested within two weeks of entering the U.S. by land and caught within 100 miles of the border.

The fast-track deportations have become a major piece of U.S. immigration enforcement over the last decade. Critics have said it grants too much power to immigration agents and U.S. Customs and Border Protection officials.

Iran says it arrested 17 Iranians allegedly recruited by the CIA

By AYA BATRAWY
and NASSER KARIMI
Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Iran on Monday announced the arrest of 17 Iranians accused of spying on the country’s nuclear and military sites for the CIA and said some of them have been sentenced to death. President Donald Trump called it “another lie” from Iran.

The arrests happened over the past months, an Iranian intelligence official said at a news conference in Tehran. He said those taken into custody worked on “sensitive sites” in military and nuclear installations. He did not say how many were given death sentences.

The announcement came amid weeks of rising tensions between Washington and Tehran over Trump’s decision to pull the United States out of Iran’s nuclear agreement with world powers last year and impose sweeping sanctions on the country.

The official said the 17 were recruited by the CIA and had “sophisticated training” but did not succeed in their sabotage missions. Their spying missions included collecting information at the facilities where they worked and installing monitoring devices, he said.

He said some were staff members at the targeted facilities, and the rest were working as consultant and contractors. The official said the CIA had promised them U.S. visas or jobs in America.

“That’s totally a false story. That’s another lie,” Trump said at the White House.

Trump also said Iran has “disrespected” the United States, adding: “If they want to

make a deal, frankly it’s getting harder for me to want to make a deal with Iran because they’ve behaved very badly. They’re saying bad things.”

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, a former CIA director, declined to address specifics of the arrests but said: “The Iranian regime has a long history of lying.”

“I think everyone should take with a grain of salt everything that the Islamic Republic of Iran asserts today,” he said.

With tensions rising recently, the U.S. has increased its military presence in the region and is sending at least 500 U.S. soldiers to Saudi Arabia, Iran’s rival.

Last month, U.S. officials said American military cyberforces struck Iranian Revolutionary Guard computers, disabling systems that controlled its rocket and missile launchers. The cyberattack came after Trump backed away from an airstrike in response to Iran’s downing of a U.S. surveillance drone.

The Iranian official did not give his name but was identified as the director of the counterespionage department of Iran’s Intelligence Ministry. It is rare in Iran for intelligence officials to appear before media, or for any official to give a news conference without identifying himself.

The official said some of the agents recruited by the CIA had turned and are now working with his department against the United States.

He also handed out a CD with video of what Iran said was a foreign female spy working for the CIA. The disc also included the names of several U.S. Embassy staff members in Turkey, India, Zimbabwe and Austria who Iran said were in touch with the recruited Iranian spies.

Trump seeks Pakistan’s help to end Afghan war

By DEB RIECHMANN
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump claimed Monday he could end the nearly two-decade old war in Afghanistan in a matter of days, but it would kill millions of people and wipe the country “off the face of the earth.”

The president made the statement at the White House as he praised Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan and sought his help in negotiating a peace deal in neighboring Afghanistan.

“I could win that war in a week. I just don’t want to kill 10 million people,” Trump told reporters in the Oval Office. “If I wanted to win that war, Afghanistan would be wiped off the face of the earth. It would be gone. It would be over, literally, in 10 days.”

Warming up to Khan marked a turnaround for Trump, who has been sharply critical of Pakistan and now hopes Khan’s government will use its influence with the Taliban to advance a peace deal and help the U.S. withdraw from the nearly two-decade old war.

The war began when the U.S. went after al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden and his Taliban supporters in Afghanistan following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Sitting alongside Khan, Trump said he wanted a peaceful resolution. “So we’re working with Pakistan and others to extricate ourselves.”

The pleasantries in the Oval Office were an abrupt change from when Trump cut millions of dollars in aid to Pakistan, saying the only thing it offered the United States was “lies” and “deceit.”

Khan has bashed Trump too, but now

says Pakistan is also eager to work to end the war. The U.S. wants Pakistan to use its leverage to get the Taliban to agree to a ceasefire, negotiate with the Afghan government and stop harboring militant groups.

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., who sat in on the meeting, said, “Peace with honor and dignity in Afghanistan is only possible with the complete buy-in of Pakistan.”

“If the Taliban are denied sanctuary in Pakistan, this war will end quickly and on our terms,” Graham said, adding that he thinks Pakistan’s leaders are ready for change. “It is my hope that we can negotiate a free trade agreement between the United States and Pakistan, which would be of mutual economic benefit and an incentive to maintain stability in the region.”

U.S. envoy Zalmay Khalilzad has been holding talks with the Taliban for months, but so far the militant group has refused to talk directly to the Afghan government. There has been no let-up in terrorist attacks during the U.S.-Taliban talks.

“It’s the closest we’ve been to a peace deal,” Khan told Trump. “And I hope in the coming days we will be able to urge the Taliban to speak to the Afghan government and come to a political solution.”

Trump’s casual comments about wiping Afghanistan off the map will likely unsettle Afghans, who have fought against the Taliban alongside their U.S. and NATO partners for years. Afghans also are wary of Pakistan’s involvement in their country’s future. For years, the Afghans have accused Pakistan of creating instability in their country by giving militants a safe place from which to stage attacks across the two countries long, porous border.

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