

Trump calls U.K. envoy 'very stupid'

President says the U.S. govt. will no longer deal with Ambassador Kim Darroch, who termed him 'inept'

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN
WASHINGTON

A diplomatic kerfuffle between the U.S. and the U.K. over the weekend looked like it was turning into a full-blown stand-off by Tuesday after President Donald Trump criticised British Prime Minister Theresa May, welcoming her imminent departure from Downing Street, and saying he would "no longer deal" with the British Ambassador to the U.S., Kim Darroch.

Mr. Trump's comments come after *The Mail on Sunday* published the contents of leaked diplomatic cables in which Mr. Darroch had been critical of the Trump administration and called Mr. Trump "inept" and "insecure".

"I do not know the Ambassador, but he is not liked or well thought of within the U.S. We will no longer deal with him. The good news for the wonderful United Kingdom is that they will soon have a new Prime Minister. While I thoroughly enjoyed the magnificent State Visit



Creating a stir: British Ambassador to the U.S. Kim Darroch. •AP

last month, it was the Queen who I was most impressed with!" Mr. Trump tweeted on Monday afternoon, saying Ms. May had not followed his advice on how to navigate Brexit.

Mr. Trump's reaction to the leaked cables escalated over the course of the Sunday-Tuesday period. From saying, on Sunday, that Mr. Darroch had not served the U.K. well and that "we're not big fans of that man", Mr. Trump had taken to Twitter on Tuesday morning, calling Mr. Darroch "very stupid". He also described Ms. May's Brexit deal negotiations (with the EU) as "foolish".

Ms. May had said she had

"full faith" in Mr. Darroch but did not share his views of Mr. Trump. The British Foreign Office had said the British public expected "honest, unvarnished" assessments from its diplomats. The British government has launched an investigation into the leaks.

"The wacky Ambassador that the U.K. foisted upon the United States is not someone we are thrilled with, a very stupid guy. He should speak to his country, and Prime Minister May, about their failed Brexit negotiation, and not be upset with my criticism of how badly it was handled," Mr. Trump wrote on Tuesday.

"I told @theresa_may how to do that deal, but she went her own foolish way - was unable to get it done. A disaster! I don't know the Ambassador but have been told he is a pompous fool. Tell him the USA now has the best Economy & Military anywhere in the World, by far..."

The leaks are being seen as a way to get Mr. Darroch out of Washington and replace him with someone who is a strong Brexit supporter.

Mr. Trump has also repeatedly expressed his support for the U.K.'s departure from the EU. While Mr. Darroch has Ms. May's backing, it is highly likely that his future in Washington is over, with Ms. May serving as caretaker Prime Minister and due to depart Downing Street when her successor has been named.

"There is always a purpose behind such leaks. In this case, the British Ambassador's career in Washington is essentially over...he seems to have been done in," a highly placed source in

Washington told *The Hindu*.

The incident is especially significant given the U.S.'s alliance with the U.K., one of its key allies, is often described as a "special relationship." "This diplomatic incident is also indicative of a sense of disarray and a recalibration of the foreign policy situation between the U.S. and its allies. That the British Ambassador could send such a damning report..." the source added.

Disrespectful, says Hunt
British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt, a former "Remainer" who is competing with hardline Brexit Boris Johnson to succeed Theresa May, called out Mr. Trump for being disrespectful to Ms. May and said he would let Mr. Darroch continue as Ambassador, if he becomes Britain's next Prime Minister.

"...these comments are disrespectful and wrong to our Prime Minister and my country. Your diplomats give their private opinions to @SecPompeo and so ours!" he wrote on Twitter.

Taliban, Afghan negotiators agree on road map for peace

Both sides support reducing civilian casualties to zero

MUJIB MASHAL
DOHA

The Taliban and Afghan representatives, including some government officials, agreed on Tuesday to a basic road map for negotiating the country's political future, a major step that could help propel peace efforts to end the long war, now in its 18th year.

In a joint declaration after two days of unprecedented and often emotional discussions in the Qatari capital, Doha, the two sides emphasised a need to work for reducing "civilian casualties to zero" and assuring women their fundamental rights in "political, social, economic, educational, cultural affairs".

The declaration is not binding, and at best is a starting point for when the two sides meet later for negotiations that could lead to fixed terms.

But even if the declaration might not immediately de-



Zalmay Khalilzad, the U.S. special envoy leading the talks with the Taliban. •AP

escalate the violence in Afghanistan, it does help push forward a peace process between U.S. diplomats and the Taliban that has been making strides in negotiations, but which has been struggling to overcome the Taliban's refusal to meet with Afghan government officials.

Timeline for pullout
The Taliban has said direct negotiations with the Afghans would start only after the U.S. announces a time-

line for the withdrawal of its troops from Afghanistan.

U.S. negotiators are in the middle of the seventh round of talks with the Taliban over the withdrawal of troops in return for a commitment from the insurgents that Afghan soil would not again be used to launch terrorist attacks against the U.S. and its allies. Those talks, also held in Doha, paused for the two days of the "intra-Afghan dialogue," and are expected to resume on Tuesday.

In a sign that U.S. officials saw progress on the Afghan-Taliban discussions as crucial to moving all the pieces of a comprehensive peace deal forward, Zalmay Khalilzad, the U.S. special envoy leading the negotiations with the Taliban, was a regular presence on the margins of the intra-Afghan discussions. He attended both the opening and closing sessions and appeared to chat with participants during some of the breaks. NY TIMES

'Indian tariffs not acceptable'

It has long had a field day putting tariffs on U.S. items: Trump

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump on Tuesday launched a fresh attack on India for imposing tariffs on American products and said it was "no longer acceptable", days after he held talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and agreed to sort out the trilateral issues.

Mr. Trump, championing his 'America First' policy, has been a vocal critic of India for levying "tremendous

ly high" duties on U.S. products.

"India has long had a field day putting Tariffs on American products. No longer acceptable!" Mr. Trump tweeted on Tuesday.

Trump's terse comment within a fortnight after his meeting with Prime Minister Modi on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in Osaka on June 28 where the two leaders aired their concerns over the bilateral trade disputes and agreed for a meeting of

their Commerce Ministers to sort out the issues.

Later this week, U.S. Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross and Energy Secretary Rick Perry are scheduled to address a major India centric conference in Washington.

India has raised tariffs on 28 items, including almond, pulses and walnut, exported from the U.S. in retaliation to America's withdrawal of preferential access for Indian products.

Pakistan economy needs bold reforms: IMF

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON

Pakistan's economy is at a "critical juncture" where it needs an ambitious and bold set of reforms, the IMF has said, days after the global lender agreed to give a \$6 billion bailout package to the cash-strapped country.

"Pakistan is facing significant economic challenges on the back of large fiscal and financial needs and weak and unbalanced growth," David Lipton, First Deputy Managing Director

and Acting Chair of the IMF Executive Board, said.

A decisive fiscal consolidation is key to reducing the large public debt and building resilience, and the adoption of the fiscal year 2020 budget is an important initial step, Mr. Lipton said. Achieving the fiscal objectives will require a multi-year revenue mobilisation strategy to broaden the tax base and raise tax revenue in a well-balanced and equitable manner, he added.

Taiwan set to get U.S. weapons

China urges Washington to revoke \$2.2 billion arms sale

REUTERS
WASHINGTON

The U.S. State Department has approved the possible sale to Taiwan of M1A2T Abrams tanks, Stinger missiles and related equipment at an estimated value of \$2.2 billion, the Pentagon said on Monday, despite Chinese criticism of the deal.

China's Foreign Ministry expressed anger about the sale and urged the United States to revoke it. The timing is especially sensitive as

Washington and Beijing are seeking to resolve a bitter trade war.

The Pentagon's Defense Security Cooperation Agency said in a statement the sale of the weapons requested by Taiwan, including 108 General Dynamics Corp M1A2T Abrams tanks and 250 Stinger missiles, would not alter the basic military balance in the region.

DSCA notified Congress on Monday of the possible arms sale, which it said

could also include mounted machine guns, ammunition, Hercules armoured vehicles for recovering inoperative tanks, heavy equipment transporters and related support.

The U.S. has no formal ties with the self-ruled and democratic Taiwan but is bound by law to help provide it with the means to defend itself. The United States is the main arms supplier to Taiwan, which China deems a wayward province.

Hong Kong leader says bill is dead, but protesters unmoved

A lie, say activists; threaten more mass rallies

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
HONG KONG

Hong Kong's embattled pro-Beijing leader on Tuesday said a China extradition bill that sparked unprecedented political unrest "is dead" - but protesters immediately dismissed her comments, threatening more mass rallies.

Chief Executive Carrie Lam admitted that her administration's attempt to introduce the bill, which would have allowed extraditions to mainland China, was a "complete failure", saying that her government would not seek to reactivate it in Parliament. "There is no such plan. The bill is dead," Ms. Lam said.

But she once again refused to buckle to demands to completely withdraw the bill from the legislative agenda, provoking outcry from the anti-government camp.



Carrie Lam

Ms. Lam's words about the bill are "another ridiculous lie" tweeted leading democracy activist Joshua Wong, who was recently released from jail for his role in protests in 2014. "The bill still exists in the 'legislative programme' until July next year."

The Civil Human Rights Front - which has organised some of the mass rallies - said it would announce fresh protests in coming days.

'Deep-seated problems'
With calls mounting for her resignation, Ms. Lam has made few public appearances in recent weeks. But on Tuesday she resurfaced,

agreeing to meet student protesters and adding that she recognised the swirling economic, political and social challenges facing the city. "I come to the conclusion that there are some fundamental and deep-seated problems in Hong Kong society," she said.

Ms. Lam has been under pressure to appoint an independent judge as head of a public commission of inquiry into the police response to the protests. But she rejected those calls again on Tuesday, backing an existing police complaints body to investigate claims of excessive force.

Meanwhile, Beijing has thrown its full support behind Ms. Lam, calling on the police to pursue anyone involved in the Parliament storming and other clashes. "The Central government expressed support, respect and understanding," Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang told reporters in Beijing when asked about Ms. Lam's latest statement.

Billionaire Democrat joins 2020 race

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

Billionaire environmental activist Tom Steyer is joining the race for the Democratic presidential nomination, reversing his decision to focus instead on pressing the case to impeach incumbent Donald Trump.

"My name's Tom Steyer and I'm running for President," the 62-year-old former hedge fund manager said on Tuesday. Denouncing a "rigged system" that benefits Americans at the top, Mr. Steyer said his campaign was "trying to make democracy work by pushing power down to the people."

Mr. Steyer's announcement makes him the 24th candidate pursuing the Democratic 2020 presidential nomination, a sprawling field that includes heavyweights like former U.S. Vice-President Joe Biden and Senators Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren and Kamala Harris.

'Trump can't block Twitter critics'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

A federal appeals court ruled on Tuesday that U.S. President Donald Trump cannot legally block users on Twitter based on their political differences with him, affirming a lower court decision.

The three-judge panel agreed with last year's ruling by a federal judge that Mr. Trump was using "viewpoint discrimination" in violation of the constitutional rights of people with opposing views.

The Second Circuit Appeals Court sidestepped the question of the President's free speech rights under the Constitution's First Amendment on a privately owned Internet platform, but af-



Donald Trump

firmed that Mr. Trump had effectively created a public forum for official White House business.

'Official purposes'
"The First Amendment does not permit a public official who utilizes a social media account for all manner of official purposes to exclude persons from an otherwise open online dialogue be-

cause they expressed views with which the official disagrees," the judges wrote in a 29-page opinion.

The ruling comes in response to a lawsuit filed by a group of Twitter users and the Knight First Amendment Institute at Columbia University, alleging that Mr. Trump improperly blocked comments from his political opponents. Plaintiffs, including a University of Maryland professor, a Texas police officer and a New York comic, said they were blocked from the @realDonaldTrump account after posting tweets critical of his policies.

Mr. Trump's legal response is that he is not acting in his official capacity when he blocks users, but the court disagreed.

IN BRIEF



Perot, billionaire who sought presidency, dead

WASHINGTON
Ross Perot, the self-made billionaire and computer industry giant whose two runs for president as an outsider shook up American politics, died on Tuesday at 89, his family said. AFP

U.K. MPs vote to extend abortion in N. Ireland

LONDON
Britain's House of Commons voted on Tuesday to extend same-sex marriage and abortion rights to Northern Ireland, unless devolved government is restored in Belfast by October 21. AFP