

Trump orders new aircraft carriers to revert to steam catapults

AFP | Washington, United States

US President Donald Trump has directed future aircraft carriers to scrap their advanced systems for launching warplanes and return to using older but “proven” catapult technologies, a move that could dramatically drive up military costs.

Trump made the announcement Thursday as part of a national security presidential memorandum to “fix critical long-term issues in Navy shipbuilding and ship repair programs and restore capacity and competition to the maritime industrial base.”

Trump bemoaned “an atrophied shipbuilding industrial base” which he said made building and repairing warships slower and more costly.



Indonesian leader vows to shut over 750 ‘unproductive’ state-owned firms

AFP | Jakarta, Indonesia

Indonesia’s president yesterday floated creating a special court to investigate “unproductive” boards reporting “made up” profits, as he pledged to close 750 state-owned enterprises by year-end.

Southeast Asia’s biggest economy has long battled corruption in its public and private sectors, despite strengthening anti-graft laws, creating special investigative commissions and nabbing several high-profile suspects.

In successive state of the nation and budget addresses, President Prabowo Subianto said Friday that Indonesia’s vast natural wealth was not sufficiently benefiting its people.

Bones of medieval kings saved from Spanish wildfire

AFP | Madrid, Spain

Firefighters raced to save a mythical 1,000-year-old monastery in north-eastern Spain yesterday as a growing wildfire prompted the hasty removal of the bones of the medieval monarchs buried there.

The blaze broke out earlier this week and on Thursday bore down on two monasteries of San Juan de la Pena, a symbol of the Aragon region, perched in mountainous, rugged terrain. The oldest monastery, linked by legend to the Holy Grail, has origins in the 10th century and holds the remains of the first kings of the medieval kingdom of Aragon.

NATO jets shoot down drone in Latvian airspace: spokesperson

NATO allies accused Russia for the airspace violations

● This was the second time that such a drone had been shot down in Latvian airspace

● Both Russia and Ukraine are relying on heavy use of drones to launch attacks in the four-year conflict.

AFP | Riga, Latvia

NATO said yesterday its fighter jets shot down a drone that entered Latvian airspace, the latest incursion along the military alliance’s eastern flank bordering Russia. The military alliance has

launched an investigation, a NATO spokesperson said, as concerns grow in Europe over unauthorised drone activity while Russia’s war in Ukraine grinds on.

This was the second time that such a drone had been shot down in Latvian airspace, the defence ministry confirmed to AFP.

The first such incursion took place in June, when a foreign drone was also shot down by NATO fighter jets.

Both Russia and Ukraine are relying on heavy use of drones to launch attacks in the four-year conflict.

It was not immediately clear

where the drone shot down over Latvia had come from.

“We can confirm that two Italian Eurofighter jets were scrambled earlier today in response to a drone over Latvian airspace. One of the Eurofighters shot down the drone,” a NATO spokesperson told AFP, adding that “two Turkish F-16 fighter jets were also scrambled”.

“All aircraft were operating under NATO command,” the spokesperson added, adding that “an investigation is ongoing” into the matter.

Earlier on Friday, Latvia’s defence ministry wrote on X that NATO “fighter jets have successfully shot down a foreign unmanned

aerial vehicle that had entered Latvia as a result of Russian electromagnetic warfare”.

Latvian foreign minister Baiba Braze wrote on X thanked Italy for “maintaining (the) integrity of NATO airspace”.

“This is... a tangible result of NATO Summit decisions in Ankara to upscale the Baltic Air Policing mission to air defence,” Lithuanian foreign minister Kestutis Budrys wrote on X, underlining that the Italian fighter jets were deployed in Siauliai, in northern Lithuania.

The EU and NATO member state of about 1.9 million inhabitants shares a border with Russia to the east.



A rafale fighter jet prepares for take off on the deck of the French aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle during the NATO military exercise

France’s Macron in hot water over jet ski picture

AFP | Paris, France

President Emmanuel Macron found himself in hot water Friday after he was pictured riding a jet ski on the Riviera, fuelling opposition claims that he is disconnected from ordinary people grappling with heatwaves and wildfires.

The 48-year-old president drew criticism after Paris Match magazine splashed a photo of Macron speeding across the Riviera on a jet ski across its cover.

Wearing a life vest that showcased his toned arms, Macron cut a sporty figure as he vacationed at the Bregancon Fort, the presidential retreat, during France’s August summer break.

“Last summer at the controls,” Paris Match said on its cover, referring to Macron’s departure from the Elysee palace next year when his second and final term



The cover of French magazine “Paris Match” depicting France’s President Emmanuel Macron on a jet ski during his holiday near the Presidential residence in Bregancon, south-eastern France

ends.

The magazine also featured photographs of Macron engaging in water sports such as foil surfing, during a summer marked by successive heatwaves

and deadly fires in France.

A member of Macron’s entourage said that the photos were not authorised.

“There have been unauthorised photos of the president

every year for the past nine years,” the aide said.

The images drew gripes from the left-wing opposition.

Greens leader Marine Tondelier said the French people were enduring an “apocalyptic summer” while “our president treats himself to a promotional feature about his vacation.”

She contrasted the magazine’s photo with the “deaths caused by five heatwaves, a drought, and historic wildfires.”

Socialist leader Olivier Faure suggested Macron was sending the wrong message.

“During a heatwave, while France is burning and when many French people could not afford to go on vacation, the president is having fun on a jet ski in Bregancon,” he said.

Communist Senator Pierre Ouzoulas called the photos “inappropriate”.

China slams ‘groundless’ espionage claims by New Zealand spy agency

AFP | Wellington, New Zealand

China’s embassy in Wellington condemned yesterday “groundless” claims by New Zealand’s spy agency that Beijing had stepped up espionage activities on its soil.

An annual report by New Zealand’s Security Intelligence Service warned this week that China was conducting espionage against the country “at scale”.

In response, a spokesperson

for Beijing’s embassy in Wellington accused the spy agency of being part of a wave of “attacks, slander and vilification” against China.

“Its false allegations against China either smear normal exchanges and cooperation as so-called espionage or interference, or are entirely groundless and fabricated out of thin air,” the spokesperson said.

“It also reflects the reluctance of certain forces, both

within and outside New Zealand, to see the sound development of China-New Zealand relations.” The statement comes just a few weeks after the embassy raised an official complaint in response to Foreign Minister Winston Peters’ telling a Chinese-born lawmaker to “go back to your own country”.

On Friday the embassy accused unnamed forces in New Zealand of “serving as a pawn for anti-China forces”.

BETTER YOU KNOW

New Zealand may seem like a quiet, isolated country – but it has two intelligence agencies working behind the scenes: the NZSIS and the GCSB.”

UK paramedics called to second train derailment in 2 days

AFP | London, United Kingdom

UK police reported Friday that a train had derailed in eastern England, the second such incident in two days after three railway carriages overturned in the southeast the previous day.

British Transport Police said it was responding to an incident in Wickford in the Essex region after the “rear carriages ... derailed in an upright position”.

“We’re responding alongside paramedics and the fire service. There are currently no reported injuries,” it added.

Train operator Greater Anglia said it was experiencing disruption of trains running on the line between London and Essex in the east. A busy commuter train between London and southeast England veered off the tracks near the town of Lewes on Thursday.



Indian firm to make fighter jet engines with Rolls-Royce

AFP | Mumbai, India

India’s Reliance Industries and Britain’s Rolls-Royce announced yesterday plans to jointly design and manufacture engines for the south Asian country’s multirole indigenous fighter jet programme.

Reliance Industries Limited, India’s largest private sector company, has been expanding into defence production in military aerospace and advanced munitions to support Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s “Make in India” initiative.

Rolls-Royce builds engines for commercial use by the world’s biggest aircraft manufacturers Airbus and Boeing, as well as for fighter jets.

Hurricane poised to hit Hawaii as El Nino stirs Pacific

Los Angeles, United States

A strengthening tropical storm named Lala is set to hit Hawaii’s Big Island with hurricane force on Saturday, bringing dangerous winds, rainfall and surf as the state’s governor declared a state of emergency.

The tropical cyclone was about 420 miles (680 kilometers) southeast of Hilo on the archipelago’s largest island, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) said in its latest advisory, packing winds of 60 miles per hour.