

# WORLD

## Students 'unfairly treated' over Native incident: Trump

Washington, United States

Boys from a Catholic school in Kentucky were treated unfairly in a rush to judgment, President Donald Trump said on Monday after allegations the students had mocked a Native American elder.

"Looking like Nick Sandman & Covington Catholic students were treated unfairly with early judgements proving out to be false - smeared by media," Trump tweeted.

As in many cases, Trump's tweet appeared to be triggered by Fox News, as he cited the network's Tucker Carl-



A student from Covington Catholic High School stands in front of Native American Vietnam veteran Nathan Phillips in Washington, US, in this still image from a January 18, 2019 video by Kaya Taitano. (Courtesy of Times Live)

son saying new footage showed "media" were wrong about the encounter. Footage captured on multiple phone camera videos that swept so-

cial media on Saturday showed a white Covington student standing silently with his lips taugt, extremely close to Nathan Phillips, a

Native American Vietnam war veteran, who beats a traditional drum while chanting. The student wears a red cap bearing Trump's slogan, "Make America Great Again."

The incident occurred on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial on Friday when the annual anti-abortion March for Life coincided with a rally by indigenous communities calling for their rights to be respected.

Phillips gave his reaction in a separate video. "I heard them saying, 'Build that wall, build that wall.' We're not supposed to have walls here, we never did."

Both the *Times* and the *Post* later reported that the encounter was more complicated. The African American youths were reportedly insulted both Native activists and the students.

Both the *Times* and the *Post* quoted Phillips as clarifying that he had moved towards the students. *CNN* quoted the student at the center of the initial video, Nick Sandmann -- the spelling used by major news media -- as saying that his group only used "school spirit" chants, and did not express support for a border wall or say anything racist.

## Top court allows Trump to bar transgender military recruitment

Washington, United States

The US Supreme Court yesterday authorized President Donald Trump's administration to block the recruitment of transgender military personnel pending the outcome of litigation on the sensitive issue.

The White House had asked the Supreme Court to intervene after lower courts prohibited Trump's administration from implementing controversial restrictions on transgender service. The administration said there is "too great a risk to military effectiveness and lethality" to allow transgender people to serve openly -- a policy enacted under Trump's predecessor Barack Obama.

The court decided by a narrow



Trump (file)

5-4 majority to suspend prohibitions restricting transgender service as litigation moves forward in lower courts.

Under the Obama-era policy, transgender recruits were to start being accepted by July 1, 2017. The Trump administration postponed that date to January 1, 2018, before deciding to reverse the policy entirely.

## Tourist killed by falling window from HK hotel

Hong Kong, China

A hotel employee arrested after a window she was cleaning fell onto a busy Hong Kong street and killed a tourist was released on bail yesterday as investigators try to work out what caused the fatal tragedy.

Police said a 24-year-old female tourist from the Chinese mainland was struck by the window which fell from the 16th floor of the Mira Hotel in the busy Tsim Sha Tsui shopping district. She was rushed

to hospital but doctors were unable to save her. A male friend was also struck by the window but escaped with only light injuries. Police arrested a hotel cleaner under a law against allowing objects to fall from buildings and endanger or harm the public.

The Mira Hotel made headlines in 2013 when it was chosen by whistleblower Edward Snowden as his bolthole in HK after he fled the US carrying a trove of information on government surveillance.

# Tax fraud: Ronaldo hit with hefty fine

AFP | Madrid, Spain

Cristiano Ronaldo avoided jail yesterday but was ordered by a Spanish court to pay 3.57 million euros (\$4.1 million) for committing tax fraud when he was at Real Madrid.

The court sentenced him to a two-year jail sentence that it immediately reduced to a fine of 365,000 euros, which adds on to another penalty of 3.2 million euros, the sentence read.

A court spokesman said he did not know whether this would be added on to the 18.8 million euros that Ronaldo had agreed to pay Spain's taxman under a deal reached in June with the player's lawyers.

Ronaldo, who last year joined Italian champions Juventus, returned to Madrid for a brief court appearance which lasted around 40 minutes as the deal was officially presented to the judge.

"I am very well," the five-time Ballon d'Or winner told the crowd of reporters gathered outside of the court in north-

eastern Madrid as he left the hearing. He signed a few autographs before leaving in a black van.

The presiding judge refused the player's request to appear by video or to enter the building by car to avoid the spotlight.

Ronaldo, 33, smiled broadly as he arrived at the court dressed in black trousers, a black turtleneck and dark sunglasses, holding hands with his girlfriend Georgina Rodriguez.

He had played for Juventus on Monday night, missing

ing a penalty as the Italian league leaders eased past bottom club Chievo 3-0.

Madrid prosecutors opened a probe into Ronaldo in June 2017 and he was questioned in July that same year.



Cristiano Ronaldo leaves with his Spanish girlfriend Georgina Rodriguez after attending a court hearing

## Trump vows no surrender on 32nd day of shutdown

Washington, United States

President Donald Trump had a message yesterday for Democrats counting on him to relent in the Washington arm wrestle blocking funds to swaths of the government for a record 32 days: "No Cave!"

Trump's defiant tweet again blamed congressional Democrats for the chaos, insisting he will not lift his shutdown on federal government funding unless they approve his \$5.7 billion plan for more walls along the US-Mexican border.

"Without a Wall our Country can never have Border or National Security... The Dems know this but want to play political games. Must finally be done correctly," Trump tweeted. Trump triggered a partial government shutdown on December 22 -- refusing to sign off on funding everything from FBI salaries to national park services -- as a way of pressuring the Democratic majority in the House of Representatives to back the wall project.

## Drunk tries to divert Russian plane, forcing emergency landing



A picture taken from a video published by RT shows the drunk passenger being taken away

AFP | Moscow, Russia

A drunk passenger on a Russian domestic flight demanded the plane change course, reportedly to fly to Afghanistan, forcing an emergency landing in Siberia on Tuesday.

The Aeroflot plane, travelling from Surgut in western Siberia to Moscow, landed in the nearby city Khanty-Mansiysk instead.

Russia's Investigative Committee said the man -- who was not identified -- was "in a state of inebriation".

He was detained after the aircraft landed in Khanty-Mansiysk, some 2,600 kilometres (1,600 miles) east of Moscow.

A criminal probe was opened into the incident, investigators said.

"Threatening that he had a weapon, he tried to break into the cockpit during the flight and demanded to change the course of the aircraft," investigators said in a statement.

"The aircraft commander made the decision to make a forced landing in Khanty-Mansiysk," the statement said.

Russian state media published a video apparently shot by a passenger showing the man being detained by several armed masked men inside the plane.

The pilot is heard thanking passengers -- who appeared calm -- for their "understanding in the situation" to the sound of applause.

## WhatsApp limits message forwarding

San Francisco, United States

Facebook-owned mobile messaging platform WhatsApp announced Monday it was restricting how many times any given message can be forwarded in an effort to boost privacy and security.

In July, WhatsApp rolled out safeguards in India that included limiting the number of users to whom a message can be forwarded. It also ran newspaper ads to raise awareness

about fake news. That decision followed threats by the Indian government to take action after crazed mobs butchered more than 20 people accused of child kidnapping and other crimes in viral, widely-circulated WhatsApp messages.

WhatsApp said its latest move to extend the restrictions to all users came after a six-month review of user feedback.

"The forward limit significantly reduced forwarded mes-

sages around the world," read a company statement about a test run of the forwarding limit.

"Starting today, all users on the latest versions of WhatsApp can now forward to only five chats at once, which will help keep WhatsApp focused on private messaging with close contacts."

Previously, users could forward any given message

up to 20 times on the app. "We'll continue to listen to user feedback about their experience, and over time, look for new ways of addressing viral content," the WhatsApp statement read.

