

News in brief

Chinese coast guard rescues 13 Philippine sailors in disputed waters



members of a cargo ship that capsized in the West Philippine Sea before dawn yesterday. The Chinese Embassy in Manila said a total of 21 Filipinos were on board the ship “capsized 55 nautical miles northwest of China’s Huangyan Dao”, Beijing’s name for the disputed Scarborough Shoal. This area is about 261 kilometers off the coast of the northern Philippines. The fish-rich Scarborough Shoal is a flashpoint of sometimes violent standoffs between the Philippines and China, which both claim the shoal and its waters as part of their territory. The Chinese Embassy said the CCG dispatched two vessels for the ongoing rescue operations.

Rescuers dig into deep mud searching for at least six missing people yesterday after a landslide from an extinct volcano crashed into a popular campsite in northern New Zealand. Police said a 15-year-old was the youngest person unaccounted for after a chunk of Mount Maunganui ploughed into holidaymakers Thursday, smashing a shower block, camper vans and caravans. Battered vehicles were carted away after being pulled out of the mud.



Chilean authorities announced Thursday the arrest of a fourth person suspected of causing deadly wildfires that have ravaged the south of the country. The massive fires in recent days have killed at least 21 people and affected some 20,000 others. Firefighters were still battling 19 fires Thursday in the hardest-hit regions of Araucania, Nuble and Biobio.



CURIOSER & CURIOSER

White House X account alters protester photo to add tears



The doctored photo shared by the White House on X
AFP | London

The White House’s X account on Thursday posted a doctored photo of a protester arrested in Minnesota, showing her face contorted with tears without disclosing that the photorealistic image had been altered.

The edited photo of Neki-ma Levy Armstrong -- among three people arrested for allegedly disturbing a church service while protesting an immigration crackdown -- illustrates how President Donald Trump’s administration is increasingly using deepfakes or AI imagery to make political arguments.

On Thursday morning, Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem posted an image on X showing Armstrong’s arrest, her face calm and expressionless.

About 30 minutes later, the White House posted the same image on the platform, but altered to show Armstrong sobbing, her mouth open, forehead wrinkled, and tears streaming down her face.

A caption superimposed on

the image read “ARRESTED,” labeling Armstrong a “far-left agitator.”

The White House post offered no disclaimer that the image had been edited, and it was not immediately clear whether the alteration was done using an AI tool or other photo editing software.

When reached for comment, the White House redirected AFP to a post on X by White House Deputy Communications Director Kaelan Dorr, who tacitly acknowledged that the image had been modified.

“YET AGAIN to the people who feel the need to reflexively defend perpetrators of heinous crimes in our country I share with you this message,” Dorr wrote on X, resharing the White House post featuring Armstrong’s altered photo.

“Enforcement of the law will continue. The memes will continue. Thank you for your attention to this matter.”

Underneath the White House post, several users questioned why the image had been altered to make Armstrong appear to be crying.

UK says Trump ‘wrong’ on NATO role in Afghanistan

British officials denounce Trump’s claim that allies “stayed back” from front lines

- UK says Trump “wrong to diminish” NATO
- 457 British soldiers died in Afghanistan
- Families and politicians express anger

AFP | London

Britain said Donald Trump was “wrong to diminish” the role of NATO troops in Afghanistan, as a claim by the US president that they did not fight on the front line sparked outrage.

In an interview with Fox News aired on Thursday, Trump appeared unaware that 457 British soldiers died during the conflict in the South Asian country following the September 11 attacks on the United States.

“They’ll say they sent some troops to Afghanistan,” Trump told the US outlet, referring to NATO allies.

“And they did, they stayed a little back, a little off the front lines,” he added.

Trump also repeated his suggestion that NATO would not come to the aid of the United States if asked to do so.

In fact, following the 9/11 attacks, the UK and a number of other allies joined the US from 2001 in Afghanistan after it invoked NATO’s collective security clause.

As well as British forces, troops from other NATO ally countries including Canada, France, Germany, Italy and Denmark and others also died.

“Their sacrifice and that of other NATO forces was made in the service of collective security



US President Donald Trump speaks to reporters while in flight on Air Force One

and in response to an attack on our ally,” Prime Minister Keir Starmer’s official spokesman said.

“We are incredibly proud of our armed forces and their service and sacrifice will never be forgotten,” he added.

‘Heroes’

Care Minister Stephen Kinnock earlier said he expected Starmer would bring the issue up with Trump.

“I think he will, I’m sure, be raising this issue with the president... He’s incredibly proud of our armed forces, and he will make that clear to the president,” he told LBC Radio.

“It just doesn’t really add up what he said, because the fact of the matter is the only time that Article 5 has been invoked was to go to the aid of the United States after 9/11,” he added in an

YOU
KNOW WHAT

Of the 457 British personnel who died in Afghanistan, 405 were killed specifically during hostile military action, directly contradicting the claim that allied forces remained safely behind the front lines

interview with Sky News.
Defence Minister John Healey said NATO’s Article 5 has only

been triggered once.

“The UK and NATO allies answered the US call. And more than 450 British personnel lost their lives in Afghanistan,” he said.

The troops who died were “heroes who gave their lives in service of our nation”, he added.

Lucy Aldridge, whose son William died aged 18 in Afghanistan, told The Mirror newspaper that Trump’s remarks were “extremely upsetting”.

Emily Thornberry, chair of parliament’s Foreign Affairs Committee, denounced them as “so much more than a mistake”.

“It’s an absolute insult. It’s an insult to 457 families who lost someone in Afghanistan. How dare he say we weren’t on the front line?” the Labour Party politician said on the BBC’s Question Time programme on Thursday evening.

Rights group says it has confirmed over 5,000 killed during Iran protests

AFP | Paris

A US-based rights group said yesterday it has confirmed the deaths of more than 5,000 people during protests that swept Iran, adding that the vast majority were protesters targeted by security forces.

NGOs tracking the toll from the crackdown on the biggest protests in Iran in years have said their task has been impeded by the now two-week internet shutdown, warning that confirmed figures are likely to be far lower than the actual toll.

The US-based Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA) said it had confirmed that 5,002 people had been killed, including 4,714 protesters, 42 minors, 207 members of the security forces and 39 bystanders.



A cobbler repairs shoes against the backdrop of government buildings that were burnt during recent public protests

But the group added it was still investigating another 9,787 possible fatalities.

At least 26,852 people have been arrested, it said.

Giving their first official toll from the protests, Iranian authorities on Wednesday said 3,117 people were killed.

The statement from Iran’s foundation for martyrs and veterans sought to draw a distinction between “martyrs”, who it said were members of security forces or innocent bystanders, and what it described as “rioters” backed by the United States.

Of its toll of 3,117, it said 2,427 people were “martyrs”.

HRANA said that by issuing their own toll, the authorities had “attempted to solidify the government’s official narrative regarding the killings”.