

'Crush on Charles'

Trump hails British 'friends' as king visits

● The 79-year-old president joked about how his late mother, who was born in Scotland, "had a crush on Charles," who is now 77.

● "Time and again, our two countries have always found ways to come together," Charles is expected to say.

● Trump said that the two countries had a "special relationship, and we hope it will always remain that way."

AFP | Washington, United States

President Donald Trump said yesterday that the United States has no closer friend than Britain, as he welcomed King Charles III to the White House on a state visit shadowed by tensions over the Iran war.

Speaking after a pomp-filled welcome on the South Lawn featuring a 21-gun salute, Trump's tone was a world away from his recent jibes at British Prime Minister Keir Starmer for failing to join in against Tehran.

"In the centuries since we won our independence, Americans have had no closer friends than the British," said Trump, referring to the fact that the royal visit marks



US President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump welcome Britain's King Charles III and Queen Camilla during an arrival ceremony on the South Lawn of the White House in Washington, DC.

the 250th anniversary of the US colonies declaring their freedom from British rule.

Using a phrase prized by British governments since Winston Churchill first used it after

Trump said that the two countries had a "special relationship, and we hope it will always remain that way."

Trump also praised the British military, saying that "nobody fought better together" with the United States -- despite recently deriding Britain's two aircraft carriers as "toys."

Afterward, four US jets roared over the White House in a noisy flypast as Trump, Charles, Queen Camilla and First Lady Melania Trump watched.

On the second day of the four-day royal visit, Charles will later address the US Congress and is expected to call in his speech

for "reconciliation and renewal" amid the recent strains in ties.

'Crush on Charles'

Republican Trump has repeatedly lambasted Britain's Starmer over his Iran war opposition, alongside the country's immigration and energy policies.

But Trump -- a long-term fan of the British royals who received his own state visit last year -- appeared in a jovial mood on a rainy Washington morning as quipped: "What a beautiful British day this is."

The 79-year-old president even joked about how his late mother, who was born in Scot-

land, "had a crush on Charles," who is now 77.

Cannons rang out while a military band played the British and US national anthems, before Charles shook hands with top Trump administration officials and inspected troops on the lawn with the president.

A band of soldiers dressed in uniforms from the US Revolutionary War then marched past, playing fife and drums.

Trump then held talks with Charles in the Oval Office. But the meeting was held behind closed doors -- an unusual step for the usually garrulous US president, reflecting the sensi-

tivity of the visit.

"It was a really good meeting. He's a fantastic person. They're incredible people and it's a real honor," Trump told reporters afterward.

In the evening the royal couple will return to the White House for a grand state dinner.

Tight security

Security has been tight for the trip, which comes just days after an alleged assassination attempt against Trump at a Washington press gala. Countersniper teams could be seen on the roof of the White House.

Melania Trump told reporters she was "very well" when asked how she was doing after the shooting.

The first day of the trip featured a more informal welcome, with the Trumps treating Charles and Camilla to tea and cakes before showing them the White House beehives.

But the second day will feature Charles's most public-facing moment, when he becomes the first British monarch to address Congress since his mother, late queen Elizabeth, in 1991.

With tensions still high over Iran, Charles is expected to appeal to Trump in guarded terms, saying that defending common democratic ideals is "crucial for liberty and equality."

"Time and again, our two countries have always found ways to come together," he is expected to say.

But in an unwelcome distraction, Britain's new ambassador to Washington, Christian Turner, was quoted by the Financial Times as telling students during a recent visit that America's special relationship is "probably Israel."

German bid to rescue 'Timmy' the whale passes key hurdle

AFP | Insel Poel, Germany

German rescuers on Tuesday hauled a stranded humpback whale into a special boat due to carry it to deeper waters, in the latest attempt to free the cetacean whose ordeal has captured hearts in Germany for weeks.

The whale, dubbed "Timmy" by German media, and its struggle for survival have gripped the country since it beached on a sandbank near the city of Luebeck, far from its natural habitat in late March.

The latest rescue effort -- financed by two entrepreneurs -- involves transporting the sea mammal in a barge, which has a water-filled hold and is usually used to carry other boats, from Germany's Baltic Sea coast to deeper waters.

Starting earlier Tuesday, rescuers attached straps to the whale and heaved the creature down a channel that had been specially dug in the sand to allow it to reach the barge, close to the island of Poel.

After some distance, the whale, with rescuers swimming alongside it, sped up and then swam into the barge, sparking



People are seen close to a stranded humpback whale, guiding the animal to a special barge intended to bring it to the North Sea, in the Wismarer Bucht bay of the Baltic Sea off the island of Poel, northern Germany, close to the village of Faehrdorf-Hof

cheers of delight from the rescue team and others watching from the shore.

"I can't even say how happy I am," Karin Walter-Mommert, one of the entrepreneurs financ-

ing the rescue bid, told the Bild daily.

"You could see that the whale fought and wanted to live. Knowing he's now in the barge is simply wonderful and shows that the

fight for Timmy was worth it."

'Journey northwards' The plan is now for the barge to be transported to the North Sea, and hopefully for the whale

to be released if it is strong enough.

A piece of green netting will be used to close the entrance to the barge so the mammal does not swim out.

Till Backhaus, environment minister for the state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, told reporters that "this evening, when the sea calms down, he will set off on his journey northwards".

"We have worked here day and night, and in the end we have saved this animal," he told reporters.

Backhaus had earlier given the green light for the mission to proceed after vets said the whale was fit to be transported.

The animal was first spotted stuck on a sandbank on March 23 before freeing itself and then becoming stuck again several times.

Several attempts were initially made to free the sea mammal, including by digging channels for

it to swim down, but all failed.

At the start of April, officials gave up on the animal, saying they believed it could not be saved.

But this triggered an outcry and authorities were persuaded to let the entrepreneurs come up with a rescue plan.

Some scientists have strongly criticised the decision to allow further rescue bids, believing they will be too risky for the whale and estimating the chances of success as low.



The humpback whale is famous for its complex songs, which can travel hundreds of kilometres underwater and are shared and changed by entire populations over time.