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In major shift, Trump says time for U.S. to recognize Israeli sovereignty over Golan

- U.S. President Donald Trump said on Thursday it was time to recognize Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights that Israel seized from Syria in 1967, marking a dramatic shift in U.S. policy and giving a boost to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in the middle of his re-election campaign.

The East war and annexed in 1981 in a move not recognized internationally. Netanyahu has pressed the United States to recognize its claim and raised that possibility in his first White House meeting with Trump in February 2017.

"After 52 years it is time for the United States to fully recognize Israel's Sovereignty over the Golan Heights, which is of critical strategic and security importance to the State of Israel and Regional Stability!" Trump wrote on Twitter.

Trump's move appeared to be his most overt yet to help Netanyahu, who is locked in a closely contested race in the April 9 election while also fighting allegations of corruption, which he denies.

Netanyahu arrives in Washington next week to meet with Trump and address the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, or AIPAC, lobbying group. Trump said in an interview with Fox Business Network's "Mornings with Maria" that he did not intend his move as an explicit election boost for Netanyahu.

"I hear he's doing okay. I don't know if he's doing great right now, but I hear he's doing okay. But I would imagine the other side, whoever's against him, is also in favor of what I just did," Trump said.

Trump, whose decision last year to move the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv angered Palestinians, faced some criticism for his latest move. "Neither America nor Israel, neither Trump nor Netanyahu, will change the historical fact that the Golan lands are Syrian lands and they will remain Syrian lands," Ayman Abu Jabal, a member of the Druze community in the Israeli-occupied Golan, said by phone.



FILE PHOTO: An Israeli soldier stands next to signs pointing out distances to different cities, on Mount Bental, an observation post in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights that overlooks the Syrian side of the Quneitra crossing

U.S. whiskey exports dry up as tariffs bite

(Reuters) - American whiskey exports slumped in the second half of 2018, taking a blow from higher duties by the country's trading partners following President Donald Trump's tariffs on steel and aluminum imports, an industry group said on Thursday.

Canada, China, Mexico and the European Union slapped import duties ranging from 10 percent to 25 percent on U.S. whiskey and bourbon last year, resulting in a 11 percent drop in U.S. whiskey exports in the second half, according to a report from the Distilled Spirits Council. For the first six months of 2018, whiskey exports grew 28 percent compared to the same period in 2017, partly helped by companies like Jack Daniels maker Brown-Forman Corp, fast-tracking shipments overseas, especially to Europe, before the tariffs kicked in.

Overall for the full-year 2018, whiskey exports rose 5.1 percent to \$1.18 billion, a significant drop from the 16 percent rise seen in 2017.

Exports to the European Union fell 13.4 percent in the second half of the year,

after rising 33 percent during the first six months.

The European Union, which imposed a 25 percent tariff on American whiskey, is the largest market for the liquor, accounting for nearly 60 percent of total exports, according to the Council.

Earlier in March, Brown-Forman said absorbing the costs of tariffs in key European markets was the primary reason for the decline in its third-quarter gross profit margin.

A man drinks American whiskey at a bar in Shanghai, China, April 6, 2018. Picture taken April 6, 2018. REUTERS/Aly Song

The company also said its sales would take a hit in 2019 if the tariffs were to remain in place.

"The damage to American whiskey exports is now accelerating, and this is collateral damage from ongoing global trade disputes," Distilled Spirits Council Chief Executive Officer Chris Swonger said.



A man drinks American whiskey at a bar in Shanghai, China, April 6, 2018. Picture taken April 6, 2018. REUTERS/Aly Song

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Confusion, grief as hunt for remains from Ethiopia crash halted

ADDIS ABABA (Reuters) - A child's foot. Fingers. A passport. Body parts and personal effects were still strewn across the crash site of Ethiopian Airlines Flight 302 on March 15, a witness told Reuters, five days after the disaster and the day before recovery efforts were halted.

With the site now fenced off, bereaved families are worried the remains of their loved ones may be left at the scene, compounding their anguish.

Citizens of 35 nations were aboard when the Boeing 737 MAX 8 jet nosedived into a field on March 10 six minutes after take-off from Addis Ababa, killing all 157 people onboard.

Families of those who perished complain of a lack of information about recovery efforts, which saw Ethiopian workers using metal parts of the aircraft to dig in the soil.

Religions such as Islam and Judaism require quick burials, but authorities said last week that identifying remains - many burned or in small pieces - might take six months.

"At the beginning, (the Ethiopian authorities) should have blocked off that place and sent an organized team to search, instead of just leaving it open. I'm unhappy about that. It's supposed to be easier if it's in the government's hands," said Milka Yimam, a dual Ethiopia-Israeli citizen whose 26-year-old son Sidrak died.

Relatives of the victims who visited the site on Monday said it had been cordoned off and the ground leveled, apart from the impact crater. The dead included a grand-niece of consumer advocate and former U.S. presidential candidate Ralph Nader.

Excavation was halted last Saturday, ministry of transport spokesman Musie Yehyies told Reuters.

"Excavation has ended for the moment since we have got everything we think we need at the moment. The site has been enclosed and can be revisited," he said on Friday.

Global attention has mostly shifted to an investigation into the cause of the disaster, and similarities with the crash of a Lion Air 737 MAX plane in Indonesia last October that killed 189 people. Pilots of both aircraft reported control problems and crashed minutes after take-off.

The world's entire 737 MAX fleet was grounded after the Ethiopia crash, with Boeing losing about 12 percent - or \$28 billion - of its market value since the disaster.

But as headlines focus on the investigation and its financial fallout, families fear the spotlight has shifted from recovery efforts.



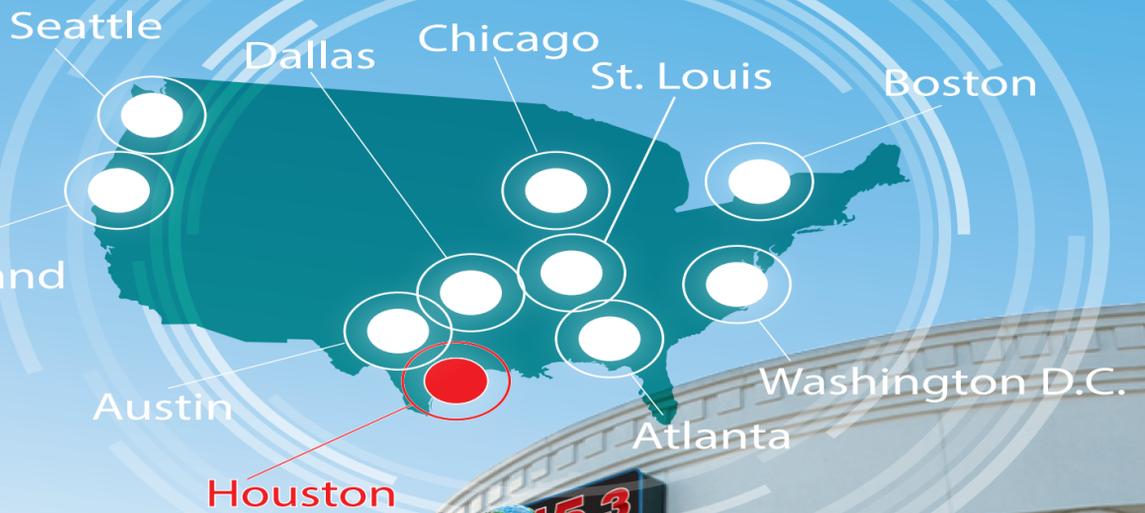
Manant and Hiral Vaidya pose with a photograph showing six members of their family who were killed in the Ethiopia Airlines crash



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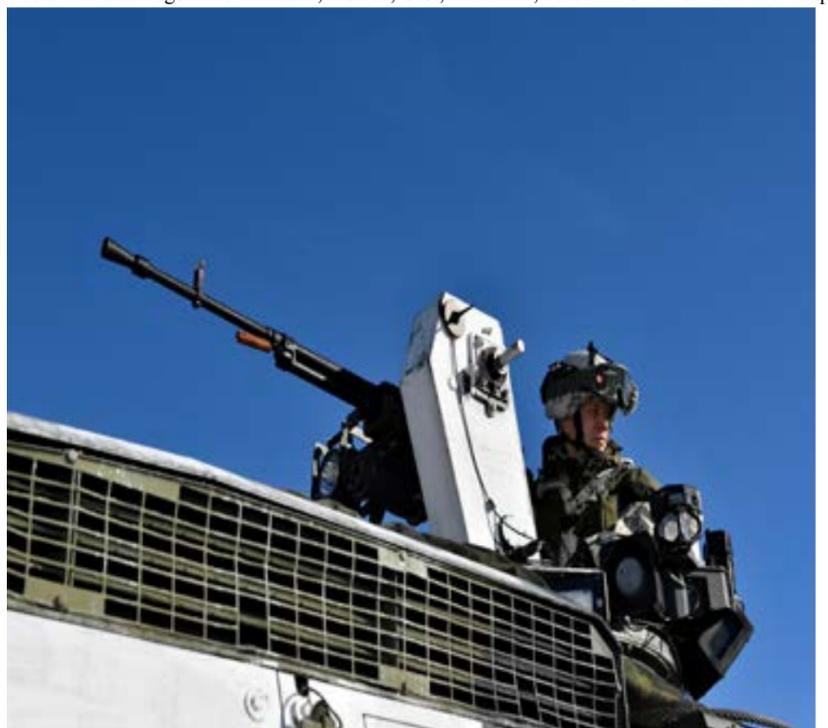
Contracted employees of the Environmental Restoration, LLC company deploy a spill containment boom around the fuel storage area following flooding of the southeast portion of the Offutt Air Force Base Nebraska



Acting Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan, seated between National Security adviser John Bolton and U.S. President Donald Trump, listens during meeting with the leaders of The Bahamas, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica and Saint Lucia at Mar-a-Lago in Palm Beach, Florida, U.S., March 22, 2019. REUTERS/Kevin Lamarque



The fuel storage area is surrounded with flooding water at the Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska, U.S., March 18, 2019. Picture taken on March 18, 2019. Courtesy Delanie Stafford/U.S. Air Force/Handout via REUTERS ATTENTION EDITORS - THIS IMAGE HAS BEEN SUPPLIED BY A THIRD PARTY.



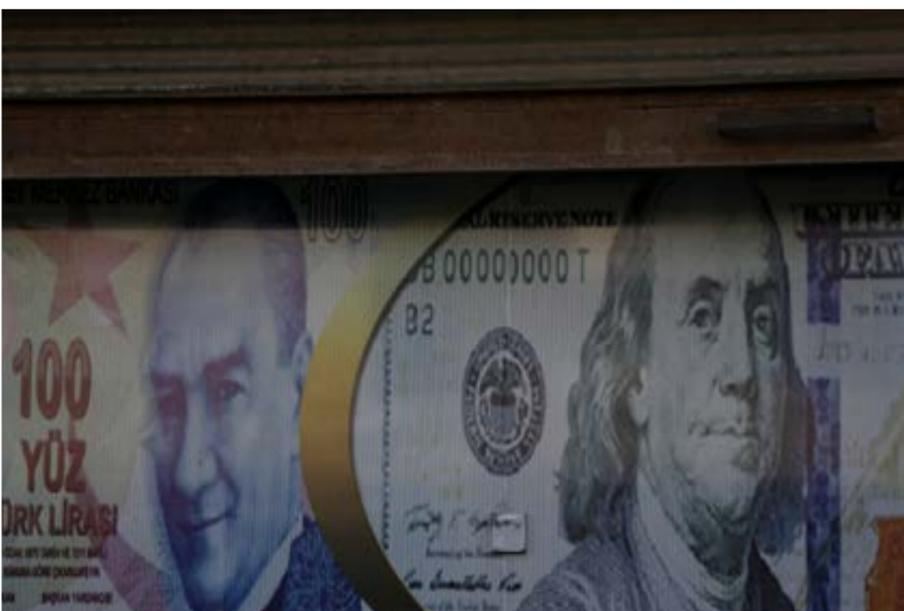
A Finnish machine gunner is pictured during the Northern Wind exercise conducted by Swedish Army in cooperation with allied armies, in the north-eastern part of Sweden, March 22, 2019. TT News Agency/Naina Helen Jaama via REUTERS ATTENTION EDITORS - THIS IMAGE W



A protester participates in march to celebrate the World Water Day in San Salvador



REFILE - ADDING INFORMATION Performers participate in march to celebrate the World Water Day in San Salvador, El Salvador March 22, 2019. The sign reads, "If you takes away the water, we will set you on fire". REUTERS/Jose Cabezas



FILE PHOTO: Posters of U.S. dollar and Turkish lira are seen on a currency exchange shop in the city of Azaz



The Russian Navy's large landing ship Orsk sails in the Bosphorus, on its way to the Mediterranean Sea, in Istanbul

The fourth Asian American to run for the office of president of the United States has tossed his hat into the already crowded field of Democrats vying for the party's nomination in 2020.

Andrew Yang's candidacy began on November 6, 2017. His campaign was initially called a "longshot" by many in the media, such as Fox News and Vox. He is running on the slogan "Humanity First."

In a press release on April 19, 2018, Andrew Yang announced that he would be personally giving one resident of New Hampshire \$1,000/month in 2019 to show the effectiveness of his Universal Basic Income policy, the "Freedom Dividend." He announced that he will be doing the same thing in Iowa in 2019.

On August 10, 2018, Yang was a keynote speaker at the largest Democratic fundraiser in Iowa, the Iowa Democratic Wing Ding. In 2018, he made seven trips to Iowa and six trips to New Hampshire, the first two states to vote in the primaries.

The Washington Post listed Yang as one of the many candidates for president in 2020. In December 2018, Andrew Yang was included in the first polling by CNN of caucus voters in Iowa. 5% of respondents viewed him favorably, 12% viewed him unfavorably and 83% were not sure who he was. 28% of respondents said they could see supporting him. 0% of respondents named him as their first-choice while 1% as their second-choice candidate for the Democratic nomination.



Initially viewed by many in the media as a longshot candidate with little chance of gaining significant traction, Yang's campaign began to increase in visibility in early 2019, as Yang appeared on noted outlets such as The Joe Rogan Experience and Tucker Carlson Tonight. Several media sources have also attributed Yang's rise in notability to his large group of online supporters, who informally refer to themselves as the "Yang Gang" and have made a large number of memes about Yang and his campaign.

According to the media, Yang has a large

If Nominated, Yang Would Become The First Asian American To Become Any Major Party's Presidential Candidate. If Elected, He Would Become The First Asian American President

Andrew Yang Announces Presidential Candidacy



Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

following on /pol/, a forum on 4chan that is notorious for its alt-right politics.[19] Yang himself has denounced any support from the alt-right.

On March 11, Yang announced on Twitter that he has surpassed the fundraising threshold of 65,000 donors, which qualifies him to participate in the first Democratic primary debate in June 2019 (subject to verification).

Policies

Yang's platform is based around three major concepts: Universal Basic Income, Medicare for All, and "Human-Centered Capitalism." 77 policies are listed on his campaign site.

Climate change

Yang supports a Green New Deal and favors a reduction in carbon emissions with an emphasis on climate engineering. In

addition to revitalizing the Environmental Protection Agency, his platform calls for a Global Geoengineering Institute to form inter-governmental partnerships. Yang is a proponent of a carbon tax and bringing the United States back into the Paris Climate Agreement.

Andrew Yang with his wife Evelyn and their two children.



Corruption and bureaucracy

In a New York Times article about his campaign, several of Yang's policies about

corruption and the federal bureaucracy are detailed, such as the creation of a "Department of the Attention Economy" that would focus on regulating the addictive nature of social media, the hiring of a White House Psychologist, making Tax Day a national holiday, and, to stem corruption, increasing the salaries of federal regulators but limiting their private work after they leave public service.

Economics

Yang's signature policy is a \$1,000/month "Freedom Dividend" to all U.S. citizens over the age of 18, which is a form of Universal Basic Income, as well as other responses to hypothetical future mass unemployment from technological automation. His website states that "Every U.S. citizen over the age of 18 would receive \$1,000 a month, regardless of income or

employment status, free and clear." It does not give a cutoff date. On the topic of whether the dividend should include the wealthiest citizens, Yang stated "You want to universalize it so it's seen as a true right of citizenship, instead of a transfer from rich to poor."

Yang has emphasized the need for a value added tax to combat tax avoidance by American technology companies. Yang has condemned the deregulation of Wall Street and called for a ban on robo-calls. He also supports regulating social media as a public utility with a new cabinet position leading what he calls the Department of the Attention Economy. One of Yang's ideas is a new type of credit system designed to incentivize traditionally unpaid caregiving contributions. Yang has criticized several commonly cited economic metrics as misleading, for instance preferring labor force participation rate to unemployment rate. On the topic of GDP, he has proposed that median income and life expectancy can more accurately measure the health of an economy.



Healthcare

Support for single-payer healthcare has increasingly been cited as a core promise of Yang's campaign on the same level as the Freedom Dividend. Yang believes that such an approach will make holistic and preventative care more feasible and his platform includes a number of such proposals including free marriage counseling. He has stated that part of the doctor shortage can be attributed to inadequate investment in patient care technology.

Yang says he opposes circumcision and that history will show the inactivist movement to have been right. However, he would not try to ban the procedure. He also said he thinks the decision should ultimately be up to the parents, including for cultural or religious reasons.

Historical significance

Yang is at least the fourth Asian American to run for President of the United States, after Hiram Fong, Patsy Mink, and Bobby Jindal. If nominated, he would become the first Asian American to serve as any major party's presidential candidate, and if elected, he would become the first Asian American president. (Courtesy Wikipedia)

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Gap, Victoria's Secret, J.C. Penney, Tesla and Abercrombie & Fitch. What do these companies have in common? They're all closing stores this year.

Already, 4,810 store closures have been announced by retailers in 2019, according to Coresight Research. And it's only March. Last year, Coresight tracked 5,524 store closures, down more than 30 percent from a record 8,139 closures announced in 2017.

Adding to the noise, Amazon said this week it will shut all 87 of its pop-up shops inside Whole Foods, Kohl's and malls across the country. But the company has vowed to invest more in its book stores and other bricks-and-mortar concepts, including its cashierless convenience store called Amazon Go.

Here below are some of the largest retailers that have announced store closures so far this year.

Gap



An Old Navy and GAP stores in Times Square, March 1, 2019 in New York City. (Photo Getty Images)

Gap Inc. is planning to shut 230 of its namesake brand's stores over the next two years. This fiscal year, Gap said it expects to close about 50 company-owned stores, net of any new openings or repositioning. The apparel retailer recently announced its plans to split its business into two publicly traded companies, one that includes Gap, Banana Republic, Intermix and its women's and men's athleisure brands Athleta and Hill City, and another with just Old Navy.

Victoria's Secret



Gap, Tesla and Victoria's Secret Among Almost 5,000 U.S. Store Closings In 2019



A Charlotte Russe store displays liquidation signs in the window near Herald Square, March 7, 2019 in New York City. (Photo/Getty Images)

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

Victoria's Secret store in New York. (Photo Reuters)

L Brands' Victoria's Secret is planning to shut 53 stores this year, as the lingerie retailer struggles to appeal to women with its outdated bra and underwear merchandise. On average, the company has been closing roughly 15 stores each year. Meantime, up-and-coming lingerie brands like Adore Me and Lively are opening up stores, taking the market share that Victoria's Secret leaves behind.

Abercrombie & Fitch



Abercrombie & Fitch store in San Francisco. (Photo/Getty Images)

Teen apparel retailer Abercrombie & Fitch Co. said it plans to close up to 40 stores during fiscal 2019, after closing 29 locations last year. The company has, meanwhile, been working toward reducing the

size of its stores and remodeling existing locations. Abercrombie also said it plans to open additional stores this year, to make up for the closures, after opening 22 stores in 2018.

Tesla



Tesla Store in the Dadeland Mall (Photo/Getty Images)

Tesla said last month it plans to shift all of its sales online and close most of its stores as a result. It said a small number of Tesla stores will remain open as "galleries, showcases and Tesla information centers," where customers can learn about the company's products and buy Tesla merchandise. Tesla had been opening up shop in malls across the country to operate more than 100 stores and showrooms

nationwide, with others overseas. **Charlotte Russe**



Charlotte Russe Fashions (Photo/Charlotte Russe)

Teen apparel retailer Charlotte Russe is liquidating and closing all of its stores, after filing for bankruptcy protection about a month ago. At the time, it was only planning to shut 94 stores. But now, the company will be closing its more than 500 locations across the country, after a liquidator won the auction for its business in bankruptcy court. Many of its stores are found within shopping malls.

Payless ShoeSource



A Payless Shoe Source store in San Francisco. (Photo/Getty Images)

Payless ShoeSource filed for bankruptcy in February and has started the process of shutting all 2,500 of its stores across North America. Payless struggled with a heavy debt load and also said in court documents it faced "unanticipated" delays from its suppliers in recent years that forced it to sell inventory at deep discounts.

Gymboree



A Gymboree store in San Francisco, California. (Photo Getty Images)

When kids clothing company Gymboree filed for bankruptcy protection in January, it said it would close all 800 of its Gymboree and Crazy 8 stores. It's since sold the rights associated with both Gymboree and its Crazy 8 brand to Children's Place,

while Gap has acquired Gymboree's Janie and Jack brand's intellectual property, its website, customer data and other assets.

Family Dollar



A Family Dollar store in Belleville, New Jersey. (Photo/Getty Images)

Discount chain Dollar Tree said this week it plans to close 390 Family Dollar stores this year while it renovates 1,000 other locations. After buying Family Dollar in 2015, Dollar Tree has been left with the task of improving the appearance of those stores, many of which are run down. It's also been trying to cut costs.

Chico's



A Chico's store in New York City. (Photo/CNBC)

Women's clothing retailer Chico's said on its earnings call earlier this month it will shut between 60 to 80 stores in fiscal 2019. The company overall intends to close at least 250 stores in the U.S. over the next three years. It joins a list of apparel companies that are struggling to stay afloat today, as more sales move online and shoppers are lured to fast-fashion brands like Zara and H&M.

J.C. Penney



A JC Penney store in New York City. (Photo/CNBC)

Department store chain J.C. Penney said it plans to close just 18 department stores, in addition to nine home and furniture shops, in 2019. The company has already hinted there will be additional closures to come in 2020 and beyond, as it works to whittle away at its massive real estate footprint. (Courtesy <https://www.cnbc.com>)

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