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Fire devastates Notre-Dame Cathedral, centuries-old Parisian landmark



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Trump calls Muslim lawmaker Ilhan Omar 'out of control' in latest attack

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. President Donald Trump attacked Democratic U.S. Representative Ilhan Omar as an "out of control" purveyor of "hate" speech on Monday before leaving for a visit to the state the Muslim-American represents in Congress.

Writing on Twitter, Trump blasted both Omar and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi for defending Omar after he tweeted a video on Friday suggesting Omar had been dismissive of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

"Before Nancy, who has lost all control of Congress and is getting nothing done, decides to defend her leader, Rep. Omar, she should look at the anti-Semitic, anti-Israel and ungrateful U.S. HATE statements Omar has made," Trump said. "She is out of control, except for her control of Nancy!"

Omar's and Pelosi's offices had no comment on Monday.

The Minnesota congresswoman said on Sunday evening that she had experienced "an increase in direct threats on my life - many directly referencing or replying to the president's video."

"Violent rhetoric and all forms of hate speech have no place in our society, much less from our country's Commander in Chief. We are all Americans. This is endangering lives. It has to stop," Omar wrote in a tweeted statement.

Marc Lotter, an adviser to Trump's 2020 re-election campaign, denied Trump was inciting violence.

"I don't think it is the president who's putting her in danger. I think it's her ill-thought-out words that she used to describe the greatest terror attack on the history of United States soil," Lotter told CNN on Monday. The video tweeted by Trump spliced news footage of 9/11 with a clip from a speech Omar gave last month in which she said "some people did something" in reference to the attacks.

Lawmakers from Trump's Republican Party have accused Omar of minimizing the Sept. 11 attacks, while critics of the president say he took Omar's words out of context in order to stoke anti-Muslim sentiment.



FILE PHOTO: Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-MN) participates in a news conference outside the U.S. Capitol in Washington, U.S., April 10, 2019. REUTERS/Jim Bourg/File Photo

Notre-Dame Cathedral burns: five facts

(Reuters) - Notre-Dame Cathedral went up in flames on Monday in a roaring blaze that devastated the Parisian landmark, a searing loss for the city and for France. Here are five facts on the Gothic masterpiece that celebrated its 850th jubilee in 2013:

- The first stone of the Notre-Dame de Paris ("Our Lady of Paris") cathedral was laid in 1163 in the reign of Louis VII, as the medieval city of Paris was growing in population and importance, both as a political and economic center of the kingdom of France.

- Construction would continue for much of the next century, with major restoration and additions made in the 17th and 18th century. The stonework and stained glass of the edifice recreate images and lessons from the Bible.

- Dominating the structure are its two 13th century bell towers. The so-called "bourdon", the largest bell, goes by the name of "Emmanuel".

- The 387 steps up to the towers take visitors past the gallery of chimeras, mythical creatures typically composed of more than one animal. The most famous of these, the "Stryge" gargoyle sits atop the cathedral watching Paris with its head resting in its hands.

- Victor Hugo used the cathedral as a setting for his 1831 novel, "The Hunchback of Notre-Dame". Quasimodo, the main character, is feared by Parisians because of his deformity but finds sanctuary in the cathedral and is employed as a bell-ringer. Quasimodo has been portrayed by Hollywood actors including Charles Laughton and also in an animated Disney adaptation.



Smoke billows from Notre Dame Cathedral after a fire broke out, in Paris, France April 15, 2019. REUTERS/Charles Platiau



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Fire devastates Notre-Dame Cathedral, centuries-old Parisian landmark:

PARIS (Reuters) - Notre-Dame Cathedral went up in flames on Monday in a roaring blaze that devastated the Parisian landmark, a searing loss for the city and for France.

Flames that began in the early evening burst through the roof of the centuries-old cathedral and engulfed the spire, which collapsed, quickly followed by the entire roof.

Trump voices horror at Notre Dame cathedral blaze in Paris

Trump voices horror at Notre Dame cathedral blaze in Paris

A huge plume of smoke wafted across the city and ash fell over a large area. Parisians watched on, many of them lost for words.

"Like all our compatriots, I am sad this evening to see this part of all of us burn," President Emmanuel Macron tweeted.

"Basically the whole rooftop is gone. I see no hope for the building," said witness Jacek Poltorak, watching the fire from a fifth-floor balcony two blocks from the southern facade of the cathedral, one of France's most visited places.

Firefighters tried to contain the blaze with water hoses and cleared the area around Notre-Dame, which sits on an island in the River Seine and marks the very center of Paris.

Buildings around were evacuated.

Nobody was injured, junior interior minister Laurent Nunez said at the scene, adding: "It's too early to determine the causes of the fire." France 2 television reported that police were treating it as an accident.

"Everything is collapsing," a police officer near the scene said as the entire roof of the cathedral

continued to burn.

Macron canceled an address to the nation that he had been due to give later on Monday evening. A presidential official said Macron was to go to the scene of the blaze.

The cathedral, which dates back to the 12th century, features in Victor Hugo's classic novel "The Hunchback of Notre-Dame". It is a UNESCO World Heritage site that attracts millions of tourists every year.

The Gothic cathedral is famed for its many carved stone gargoyles, stunning stained glass windows and the flying buttresses that hold up its walls.

"There are a lot of art works inside...it's a real tragedy," Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo told reporters at the scene.

The cathedral was in the midst of renovations, with some sections under scaffolding and bronze statues were removed last week for works.

The wood and lead spire was built during a restoration in the mid-19th century, according to the cathedral's website.



People watch from a bridge as the Notre Dame Cathedral burns in Paris, France April 15, 2019. REUTERS/Benoit Tessier

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Editor's Choice



U.S. first lady Melania Trump visits Fort Bragg to meet with U.S. troops and their families in Fayetteville, North Carolina



U.S. first lady Melania Trump visits Fort Bragg to meet with U.S. troops and their families in Fayetteville, North Carolina



A man argues with members of the police as climate change activists demonstrate during a Extinction Rebellion protest at the Waterloo Bridge in London, Britain April 15, 2019. REUTERS/Henry Nicholls



The Notre Dame Cathedral spire collapses during a fire in Paris, France April 15, 2019 in this still image taken from social media video.



Extinction Rebellion protest in London



Police detain a protester as climate change activists demonstrate during a Extinction Rebellion protest at the Waterloo Bridge in London, Britain April 15, 2019. REUTERS/Henry Nicholls



Venezuelans Hildemaro Ortiz and Ixora Sanguino cook outside of an abandoned bus in the border city of Pacaraima



American Joan Benoit Samuelson, female winner of the 1979 Boston Marathon, after crossing the finish line on Boylston Street during the 123rd Boston Marathon in Boston

58,000 Non-U.S. Citizens May Have Voted In At Least One Election In Texas, Election Official Says

Texas election officials said Friday that tens of thousands of people whose U.S. citizenship could not be confirmed cast ballots in one or more election in the state during the past 22 years.

Texas Secretary of State David Whitley said a year-long evaluation found about 95,000 people described as “non-U.S. citizens” who are registered to vote in Texas. About 58,000 of them voted in Texas elections between 1996 and 2018, Whitley said.

“Integrity and efficiency of elections in Texas require accuracy of our state’s voter rolls, and my office is committed to using all available tools under the law to maintain an accurate list of registered voters,” Whitley said.

These voters were found as state workers updated voter registration lists, comparing data with the Texas Department of Public Safety, to make sure those who cast ballots were eligible to do so, Whitley said.

No information was available Friday afternoon on where those voters live or voted in Texas.

Voter fraud has been a longtime concern for Texas lawmakers, who have said that was part of the reason they passed a law requiring voters to show a photo ID when voting.

Some civil rights officials weighed in Friday, acknowledging that the numbers are alarming.

But they question whether the list includes duplications and factors in that about 50,000 Texas residents become naturalized citizens every year.

“Unfortunately, the state has opted to over zealously pursue election prosecutions and ruin the lives of Texans for minor mistakes while ignoring the substantial issue of our outdated and archaic election system that actually stops eligible voters from casting a ballot that counts,” said Beth Stevens, voting rights legal director with the Texas Civil Rights Project.



ELECTION FRAUD

In a prepared statement, the Secretary of State’s Office said it has forwarded information about the non-citizen voters to the



In a jailhouse interview with the Star-Telegram, Rosa Ortega said she has lost custody of her children and will likely be deported when her eight-year sentence is up.

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

Texas Attorney General’s Office, which investigates and prosecutes cases of voter fraud.

“Every single instance of illegal voting threatens democracy in our state and deprives individual Texans of their voice,” Attorney General Ken Paxton said in a prepared statement. “My Election Fraud Unit stands ready to investigate and prosecute crimes against the democratic process when needed.”

“Nothing is more vital to preserving our Constitution than the integrity of our voting process, and my office will do everything within its abilities to solidify trust in every election in the state of Texas.”

Illegally voting is a second-degree felony, punishable by two to 20 years in prison.

The Attorney General’s Office notes that state law lets non-citizens receive driver’s licenses

by showing “proof of lawful presence” to the DPS.

“However, only citizens are eligible to vote,” according to a statement from the Attorney General’s Office.

ELECTION ADVISORY

Whitley, the secretary of state, issued an advisory about the voter registration list to Texas officials Friday afternoon.

He said election workers reviewed the statewide voter registration database, and compared the information to a DPS-provided list in order to identify possible non-U.S. citizens who are registered to vote.

They reviewed names, social security numbers, DPS-issued driver license or personal identification card numbers and dates of birth.

The list of those believed to be non-U.S. citizens who voted has gone to the attorney general’s office. And from now on, the Secretary of State’s Office plans to review

data shared by DPS on a monthly basis to confirm the citizenship of Texas voters.

“Identifying ineligible registrations and removing them from the voter rolls is the first step toward restoring integrity to our electoral process,” James Dickey, chairman of the Republican Party of Texas, said in a prepared statement Friday afternoon. “We can not afford voter fraud in 2020 and must stop this abuse now. It is a crime and it is damaging to our republic.”

ROSA MARIA ORTEGA

Ortega, who has a green card and isn’t a U.S. citizen, was convicted on two counts of illegal voting and sentenced to prison in February 2017. She was released on an appeal bond the next month.

Illegally voting is a second-degree felony, punishable by two to 20 years in prison. But Paxton’s office noted that she could be

eligible for parole in less than a year.

Officials have said she likely faces deportation after serving her sentence.

Documents show that Ortega was brought to the United States as a baby and received a green card when she was a child, which does not mean she’s a United States citizen. An investigation began after the state received reports that she had voted illegally.

Court records show that there have been some letters written to state District Judge Robb Catalano, who oversaw the original trial, by the general public on Ortega’s behalf.

Isaiah Marron of Washington wrote noting that it is important to “preserve integrity in American voting systems.”

“However, regarding the case of Rosa Ortega, there is no good reason for an 8-year sentence,” Marron’s letter stated. “Surely the mercy of God calls us to a far more reasonable, fitting response.”



“Prosecutors showed the jury proof that Ortega illegally registered to vote in 2002 and voted in four elections in Dallas County,” a statement from Paxton’s office stated. “The prosecutors established that when Ortega moved from Dallas County to Tarrant County in 2014, and correctly indicated she was not a U.S. citizen on her voting registration form, the county informed her in writing that she was ineligible to vote.

Ortega, 39, could still file a petition for discretionary review with the Court of Criminal Appeals. It is not known whether she’ll be allowed to remain free on an appeal bond should she seek the review.

In 2017, a Grand Prairie mother of four, Rosa Maria Ortega, made national news when she was sentenced to eight years in prison for illegally voting. Ortega, who has a green card and isn’t a U.S. citizen, lost an appeal to the 2nd Court of Appeals late last year. It is uncertain if she plans to appeal that verdict.

Ortega, who was released from jail on an appeal bond a month after her 2017 conviction, could not be reached for comment Wednesday. (Courtesy <https://www.star-telegram.com>)



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Trump Administration Announces Its Big 5G Push: Largest-Ever Spectrum Auction And A 20.4B Fund

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

President Trump and his top telecom regulator announced plans last Friday to unleash the largest-ever swath of radio frequencies in the U.S. and a \$20 billion fund to help wireless companies to keep pace with global rivals — specifically China — in the 5G race.

Trump along with FCC chair Ajit Pai, announced a major push towards 5G deployment as part of the "5G Fast Plan" initiative towards a "comprehensive strategy to Facilitate America's Superiority in 5G Technology". The event on Friday involved two announcements:

— Big auction: FCC will begin its third 5G spectrum auction on December 10, 2019, which will be the largest spectrum auction in American history to date for commercial use. It will consist of 3,400 megahertz in three different spectrum bands. Since November 2018, the FCC has auctioned 1,550 megahertz of spectrum for use by commercial wireless providers.

— Big money: Pai also announced plans to create the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund, which will inject \$20.4 billion into high-speed broadband networks in rural America over the next decade.



America's 5G push is in full swing and will be "private-sector driven and private-sector led," said President Trump. Friday's announcement comes in the face of rising competition from China and other nations. South Korea became the first country to deploy 5G network nationwide. "Whichever country succeeds at deploying 5G early and on a massive scale will reap dividends and shape the global economy for years, analysts say," the Washington Post reports. Why it matters: Proponents maintain that a significant economic advantage will be won by the first country to broadly deploy 5G networks, which will deliver wireless speeds 100 times faster than today's mobile



internet. The U.S.'s lead in building current 4G technologies led to smartphone ubiquity and apps like Uber and Spotify. The next generation is expected to power self-driving cars and smart cities.

Fears that China has the edge in the global 5G race sparked some (including Karl Rove, Newt Gingrich and Trump campaign manager Brad Parscale) to call for a government-directed national network, similar to China's own approach.



President Trump and FCC Chairman Ajit Pai (center) announced a major push towards 5G deployment during a special event held in the White House, April 12, 2019.

•The White House disagrees. "The Trump Administration is supportive of a private sector, free enterprise approach," per a White House official. "We believe the U.S. is winning the race to 5G with record deployments in cities across the United States."

•So does the Federal Communications Commission, which oversees the nation's communications networks.

"I draw the lesson from the development of the wireless industry over the past three decades, including U.S. leadership in 4G. The market, not the government, is the best way to drive innovation and investment. That's the general approach we've taken and it's proven to be successful."

5G networks with speeds at least 100 times faster than the current 4G networks will cut delays and allow for innovations in a number of fields.

The government, however, will not nationalize the 5G network, an idea mulled for more than a year by the Trump administration.

At the White House event, President Donald Trump said "In the United States our approach is private-sector driven and private-sector led. The government doesn't have to spend lots of money."



— FCC Chairman Ajit Pai

Details: President Trump and FCC Chairman Ajit Pai made two important announcements on Friday:

1. Airwaves: The FCC will auction off three big slices of millimeter-wave airwaves that are crucial to connecting new devices at high speeds.

•The auction, slated to begin December 10, 2019, will offer the wireless industry the biggest-ever chunk of airwaves the FCC has ever auctioned off for commercial use.

2. Funding: The agency will announce a "Rural Digital Opportunity Fund" to spend \$20.4 billion over 10 years in rural broadband.

•The investment will be made in the form of subsidies available to eligible companies through a competitive auction to build out fiber lines in unserved areas.

•Fiber-optic infrastructure is expensive to install, but it's essential to carrying wireless network traffic back to the core of the internet.

Pai spoke on a call with reporters ahead of the White House event with Trump and rural residents who could benefit from faster networks to tout the administration's efforts to boost next-generation 5G wireless networks and funding for rural broadband.



FCC Steps Up 5G Push With First High-Band Spectrum Auction

Since November, the FCC has auctioned 1,550 megahertz of spectrum to be used by commercial wireless providers for 5G connectivity. The third 5G spectrum auction will be the largest, with the FCC selling 3,400 megahertz in three different spectrum bands.

The FCC voted on Friday to seek comments on bidding procedures for the next auction. Democratic FCC Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel said the auction is a good step but the commission must also pivot "to mid-

band" spectrum "or risk falling behind other countries."

The initiatives are part of the FCC's "5G Fast Plan" to position the U.S. ahead of competitors.

•The auction that were announced on Friday will be the third airwave auction in as many years, collectively releasing nearly 5 gigahertz of airwaves for 5G use. (That's more airwaves than are currently in use by all mobile users combined, Pai said.)

•The FCC also capped fees and permitting requirements by cities, to speed up the deployment of the millions of antennas needed to deploy 5G connectivity. (Several cities have sued to stop those restrictions.)



Yet, the U.S. is hampered in other areas. No American company manufactures 5G network equipment, leaving the U.S. to rely on foreign-owned Nokia, Ericsson and Samsung. China is poised to dominate that market with Huawei, its fast-growing telecom firm that has been shunned by the Trump administration out of fears of espionage.

•Dominating the equipment market could give China extra influence in setting future standards as the technology evolves.

•The wireless industry is aggressively pushing the FCC to free up more "mid-band" airwaves that can carry signals over further distances. This will be important for serving less urban areas.

The bigger picture: Wireless companies including Verizon and AT&T are in the early stages of 5G roll-outs, with limited services in handful of markets so far and 92 deployments planned by the end of the year. But widespread deployment will happen over the course of a decade, requiring a steady pipeline of spectrum and fiber projects.

•"Virtually every sector of the economy is dependent on wireless technologies," Pai said, including areas like ports, mines, manufacturing and agriculture. "To advance the ball, these critical building blocks are absolutely essential." (Courtesy Axios.com)

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