

World News Roundup

Crime

'Don't be too nice'

AG and Trump talk need to fight 'gang'

SAN SALVADOR, El Salvador, July 29, (AP): Attorney General **Jeff Sessions** is eager to use his aggressive work against the MS-13 street gang to help mend his tattered relationship with President Donald Trump. "I hope so," he said Friday, trying to turn the corner from a week of sour performance reviews from his boss.

"It's one of many issues that we share deep commitments about," he told The Associated Press from a private room in the headquarters of El Salvador's national police force, where he had met law enforcement officials to talk about quashing the violent transnational gang.

That common concern about MS-13 was on display Friday as Trump spoke about the gang in Long Island, where MS-13 violence has resurfaced with a vengeance, and as Sessions toured a gang stronghold, motoring around El Salvador's graffiti-laced streets alongside rifle-wielding police officers who had tried to clear the neighborhood of gangsters before he arrived. MS-13 has roots both in Central America and Los Angeles.

But in his speech vowing to crush MS-13, Trump never mentioned Sessions.

"These are animals," Trump told law enforcement officials and relatives of crime victims in Brentwood, in Suffolk County, New York, where MS-13 has been blamed for a string of gruesome murders, including the killing of four young men in April.

The president battered Sessions for days with a series of tweets calling him weak and ineffective, his discontent centered on Sessions' decision months ago to recuse himself from the investigation into Trump campaign ties to Russia. Sessions said Thursday he won't resign unless Trump asks him to and spoke loyally of the president while saying he was right to take himself out of that investigation after acknowledging he had met the Russian ambassador during the campaign.

Message

Though thousands of miles apart, Trump and Sessions seemed aligned in their message against MS-13. The gang has become a focal point in the national immigration debate, although it is in some respects a homegrown organization and it is unclear how many of its members are in the US illegally.

"It is in a very expansive mode and we need to slam the door on that," Sessions said in the AP interview. "We need to stop them in their tracks and focus on this dangerous group."

The intense focus on gang violence is a departure for a Justice Department that has viewed as more urgent the prevention of cyberattacks from foreign criminals, international bribery and the threat of homegrown violent extremism.

But alarm about the gang has grown as it has preyed on largely suburban, immigrant communities. Several top officials in Sessions' office have experience prosecuting the gang in Baltimore, Alexandria, Virginia, and other cities.

MS-13, or the Mara Salvatrucha, is believed by federal prosecutors to have more than 10,000 members in the US, a mix of immigrants from Central America and US-born members. The gang originated in Los Angeles in the 1980s then entrenched itself in Central America when its leaders were deported.

MS-13 and rival groups in El Salvador now control entire towns, rape girls and young women, kill competitors and massacre students, bus drivers and merchants who refuse to pay extortion.

One purpose of Sessions' trip was to learn more about how the gang's activities in El Salvador affect crime in the US. Officials believe major gang leaders are using cellphones from Salvadoran prisons to instruct members who have crossed into the US illegally to kill rivals and extort immigrants.

Zach Terwilliger, who prosecuted gangs in the Eastern District of Virginia before taking a position in the deputy attorney general's office, found that to be true in some of his cases.

"We have to coordinate our intelligence," Terwilliger said. "I don't think you can understand MS-13 violence and the way they conduct themselves in the US unless you come down here." He and leaders of the department's criminal division traveled with Sessions.

Support

During his two-day trip, his first visit to El Salvador, the attorney general wandered through a crowded jail where members of rival gangs wearing white T-shirts sat side-by-side in large cells, their backs facing the curious onlookers. He met members of a transnational anti-gang task force and pledged his support for El Salvador's Attorney General Douglas Melendez, congratulating him on charges laid over the last two days against more than 700 gang members, many of them from MS-13.

Sessions recalled early conversations he had with Trump about the gang. "He saw the violent murders in Islip, New York, and he's asked about it personally," Sessions said. Trump then crafted an executive order in the first weeks of his presidency, directing the Justice Department to go after transnational gangs, and Sessions was eager to make it a priority.

Talking tough on illegal immigration and violent crime, President Donald Trump appeared Friday to advocate rougher treatment of people in police custody, speaking dismissively of the police practice of shielding the heads of handcuffed suspects as they are being placed in patrol cars.

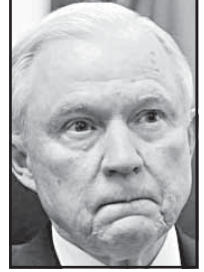
"Don't be too nice," Trump told law enforcement officers in Suffolk County, New York, during a visit to highlight his administration's efforts to crack down on the street gang known as MS-13. The violent international group has terrorized communities on Long Island and in other parts of the country.

The president urged Congress to find money to pay for 10,000 Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers "so that we can eliminate MS-13."

Trump said his administration is removing these gang members from the United States but said, "We'd like to get them out a lot faster and when you see ... these thugs being thrown into the back of the paddy wagon, you just see them thrown in, rough, I said, 'Please don't be too nice.'"

Trump then spoke dismissively of the practice by which arresting officers shield the heads of handcuffed suspects as they are placed in police cars.

"I said, 'You could take the hand away, OK,'" he said, drawing applause from many in the audience, which included federal and law enforcement personnel from the New York-New Jersey area.



Sessions



US President Donald Trump delivers remarks on law enforcement at Suffolk Community College in Ronkonkoma, New York on July 28. (AFP)



A woman takes part in a protest against US President Donald Trump in Brentwood, New York on July 28. (AFP)



Creighton



Obama

America

'FAA must reconsider decision': An appeals court panel said Friday in Washington that federal officials must reconsider their decision not to regulate the size of airline seats as a safety issue.

One of the judges called it "the Case of the Incredible Shrinking Airline Seat."

The Flyers Rights passenger group challenged the Federal Aviation Administration in court after the agency rejected its request to write rules governing seat size and the distance between rows of seats. On Friday, a three-judge panel for the federal appeals court in Washington said the FAA had relied on outdated or irrelevant tests and studies before deciding that seat spacing was a matter of comfort, not safety.

The judges sent the issue back to the FAA. They said the agency must come up with a better-reasoned response to the group's safety concerns.

"We applaud the court's decision, and the path to larger seats has suddenly become a bit wider," said **Kendall Creighton**, a spokeswoman for Flyers Rights.

The passenger group says small seats that are bunched too close together slow down emergency evacuations and raise the danger of travelers developing vein clots.

FAA spokesman Ian Gregor said the agency was considering the ruling and its next steps. He said the FAA considers the spacing between seat rows when testing to make sure that airliners can be evacuated safely.

The airline industry has long opposed the regulation of seat size. Its main U.S. trade group, Airlines for America, declined to comment on the ruling.

Airlines have steadily reduced the space between rows to squeeze in extra seats and make more money. On discount carrier Spirit Airlines, the distance between the headrest of one seat and that of the seat in front of it — a distance called "pitch" — is 28 inches (71 centimeters), which, after accounting for the seat itself, leaves little legroom for the average passenger.

This year, news leaked that American Airlines planned to order new Boeing 737 jets with just 29 inches (74 centimeters) of pitch in the last three rows to make room for an extra row of premium-priced seats toward the front of the plane.

American Airlines CEO Doug Parker said Friday that after objections from customers and flight attendants, the airline backed off. Those rows will have 30 inches (76 centimeters) of pitch — still a tighter fit than the airline's current planes.

Flyers Rights said that the average seat has gotten narrower too — from 18.5 inches (47 centimeters) a decade ago to about 17 inches (43 centimeters). The group got the judges' attention.

"This is the Case of the Incredible Shrinking Airline Seat," Judge Patricia Millett wrote in her ruling. "As many have no doubt noticed, aircraft seats and the

HealthCare

Obama's healthcare law still needs some patchwork

McCain first saves, then kills 'bill'

WASHINGTON, July 29, (AP): John McCain seemed poised to be the savior of the GOP health bill when he returned to the Capitol despite a brain cancer diagnosis.

He turned out to be the executioner. The longtime Arizona senator stunned pretty much everyone Friday by turning on his party and his president and joining two other GOP senators in voting "no" on the Republicans' final effort to repeal "Obamacare."

That killed the bill. And it also dealt what looks like a death blow to the Republican Party's years of promises to get rid of Barack Obama's health law, pledges that helped the GOP win control of the House, the Senate and the White House.

It was a moment burning with drama, irony and contradictions, playing out live on a tense Senate floor.

Eighty years old and in the twilight of a remarkable career, McCain lived up to his reputation as a maverick. When he walked into the well of the Senate around 1:30 am and gave a thumbs-down to the legislation, there were audible gasps. Democrats briefly broke into cheers, while Minority Leader Chuck Schumer quickly waved his arm to quiet.

Majority Leader Mitch McConnell stood stone-faced, his arms crossed. McCain had just saved the signature legislative achievement of the man who beat him for the presidency in 2008, a law the senator himself had vigorously campaigned against while seeking a sixth Senate term last year.

Friday afternoon, McCain's office announced he was returning to Arizona to begin radiation and chemotherapy treatments for his brain tumor.

After so many years as a senator, with so little left to lose, McCain had taken a stand for the Senate he used to inhabit, the one where he made deals across the aisle with the likes of Ted Kennedy, not the riven, stalemated Congress of today.

"We have seen the world's greatest deliberative body succumb to partisan rancor and gridlock," McCain said in a statement. "The vote last night presents the Senate with an opportunity to

start fresh. It is now time to return to regular order with input from all of our members — Republicans and Democrats — and bring a bill to the floor of the Senate for amendment and debate."

President Donald Trump tweeted his disapproval of McCain's "no" vote, as well as those of fellow GOP Sens. Susan Collins of Maine and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska whose opposition had been expected. But a president who once mocked McCain's years as a prisoner of war in Vietnam did not have much sway with the senator when it counted.

"John McCain is blessed with an internal gyroscope of right and wrong," said Schumer, who negotiated a sweeping immigration bill with McCain several years ago and has been talking with him frequently of late. "He gets angry, for sure, but when push comes to shove and there are brass tacks, that internal gyroscope of right and wrong guides him."

Huddled

Vice-President Mike Pence lobbied McCain right up to the end. The two men huddled on the Senate floor for about a half hour before the vote.

As their conversation ended, McCain and Pence smiled and patted each other on the back, and McCain walked across the floor to talk with Schumer. About a dozen Democrats gathered around him. McCain held out his hands, looked upward and mouthed an expletive. His face looked exasperated.

And then, as Democratic Sen. Chris Murphy of Connecticut described it later in a post on the website Medium, "Time seems to stand still."

The roll was called, and Collins and Murkowski both voted no. With Democrats unanimously opposed, McConnell could lose only two Republicans in the 52-48 Senate.

Finally McCain came to the front, raised his arm to get the attention of the tally clerk, gestured no, and walked away past the glowering McConnell. With that one moment, seven years of urgent GOP promises were dead, likely never to be revived.

McConnell's remarks in the immediate aftermath were a bitter rebuke.

spacing between them have been getting smaller and smaller, while American passengers have been growing in size."

The issue could wind up in Congress. Some lawmakers have proposed legislation

to regulate seat size. (AP)

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'Savings program' gets the ax: A savings program put into place under President



Interim City Manager Elaine Hart speaks about removing Ford Explorers off the streets, on July 28, in Austin Texas. The Austin Police Department on Friday pulled nearly 400 Ford Explorer SUVs from its patrol fleet over worries about exhaust fumes inside the vehicles. The move comes as US auto safety regulators investigate complaints of exhaust fume problems in more than 1.3 million Explorers from the 2011 through 2017 model years. (AP)

Barack Obama and designed to get more people to put away money for retirement is being killed by the Treasury Department, which said it is too costly to maintain.

The program, called myRA, was launched about two years ago for those who don't have access to a 401(k) or another retirement plan from their employer. The myRA accounts had no fees or minimum deposit, and were meant to appeal to low-income workers.

"Unfortunately, there has been very little demand for the program," said U.S. Treasurer Jovita Carranza, in a release Friday in New York. "The cost to taxpayers cannot be justified by the assets in the program."

The Treasury Department said myRA savers had put away about \$34 million since late 2015, and that the program cost taxpayers nearly \$70 million. It would have cost \$10 million a year to continue the program, the Treasury said. About 30,000 accounts were opened, and 10,000 have no money in them. The average account holder has about \$1,500 in their account, the Treasury said.

Participants received emails Friday requesting a stop on automatic deposits made to any myRA account. The Treasury advised those with an account to transfer money to another retirement account, known as a Roth IRA, at a bank or brokerage firm. The accounts can also be cashed out, but those that do may have to pay tax penalties. The Treasury said it doesn't have a deadline yet for when the accounts need to be closed. Accounts with a zero balance will be closed starting in September. (AP)