

Defense

Pentagon budget boost

Senate poised to pass \$700 bln 'defense' bill

WASHINGTON, Sept 18, (AP) - The Senate was poised to pass a defense policy bill that pumps \$700 billion into the Pentagon budget, expands US missile defenses in response to North Korea's growing hostility and refuses to allow excess military bases to be closed.

The legislation was expected to be approved on Monday by a wide margin in another burst of bipartisanship amid President Donald Trump's push for cooperation with congressional Democrats. The 1,215-page measure defies a number of White House objections, but Trump hasn't threatened to veto the measure. The bill helps him honor a pledge to boost military spending by tens of billions of dollars.

Sen **John McCain**, the Armed Services Committee chairman battling an aggressive type of brain cancer, has guided the bill toward passage over the last week as he railed against Washington gridlock and political gamesmanship. But McCain, R-Ariz., couldn't quell disputes among his colleagues over several contentious amendments that so far have been blocked from votes and failed to be added to the bill.

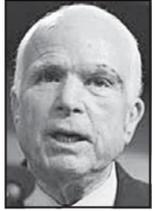
Among them is a proposal by Sens. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., and Susan Collins, R-Maine, that would have protected transgender service members from being kicked out of the armed forces. Another amendment, from Sen Mike Lee, R-Utah, would prevent the government from detaining indefinitely US citizens apprehended on American soil who are suspected of supporting a terrorist group.

Approved by the Armed Services Committee by a vote of 27-0 in late June, the Senate bill would provide \$640 billion for core Pentagon operations, such as buying weapons and paying troops, and another \$60 billion for wartime missions in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and elsewhere. Trump's budget request sought \$603 billion for basic functions and \$65 billion for overseas missions.

With North Korea's nuclear program a clear threat to the US and its allies, the bill would provide \$8.5 billion to strengthen US missile and defense systems. That's \$630 million more than the Trump administration sought for those programs, according to a committee analysis.

North Korea last week conducted its longest-ever test flight of a ballistic missile, firing an intermediate-range weapon over US ally Japan into the northern Pacific Ocean. The launch signaled both defiance of its rivals and a significant technological advance.

The legislation requires the Defense Department to deploy up to 14 additional ground-based interceptors at Fort Greely, Alaska, that will expand to 58 the number of interceptors designed to destroy incoming warheads.



McCain



French-Moroccan activist Latifa Ibn Ziaten, mother of French service member Imad Ibn Ziaten killed March 11, 2012 by Islamist militant Mohamed Merah in Toulouse, France, is pictured on a rooftop in New York on Sept 17, 2017. Latifa Ibn Ziaten, who launched the Imad Ibn Ziaten youth association for peace in

April 2012 in order to help young people in deprived areas, and to promote secularism and interreligious dialogue, will receive the award of 'Tolerance' from the UNESCO on Sept 18. A documentary movie on her cause 'Latifa, un coeur au combat' will come to the screens on Oct 4, 2017. (AFP)



Bharara



Williams

America

**Bharara launching podcast:** Former federal prosecutor and outspoken White House critic **Preet Bharara** is launching a podcast.

Bharara was fired in March by President Donald Trump from his post as the US attorney for parts of New York City, including Manhattan. He has been vocal on Twitter and elsewhere since his dismissal. Bharara tells USA Today that he won't put "anything off limits" in "Stay Tuned With Preet," a podcast that launches Wednesday.

Bharara tells the newspaper he will address his firing by Trump in one of the first episodes "so people will understand the context from which I'm speaking."

Bharara has said Trump originally asked

**Protest**

**We are in control: Police**

**Over 80 arrested in St Louis protest**

ST LOUIS, Sept 18, (RTRS): More than 80 people were arrested on Sunday night as protests in St Louis over the acquittal of a white policeman who had shot a black man turned violent for a third night running.

Police in riot gear used pepper spray and arrested the demonstrators who had defied orders to disperse following a larger, peaceful protest.

After nightfall, a small group remained and the scene turned to one of disorder, following the pattern of Friday

day and Saturday. Protesters smashed windows and attempted to block a ramp to an interstate highway, police and witnesses said.

Officers tackled some protesters who defied police orders and used pepper spray before starting the mass arrests.

At a late-night news conference, Mayor Lyda Krewson noted that "the vast majority of protesters are non-violent," and blamed the trouble on "a group of agitators."

Acting police commissioner Lawrence O'Toole struck a hard stance, saying: "We're in control, this is our city and we're going to protect it."

The protests in St Louis followed the acquittal on Friday of former police officer Jason Stockley, 36, of first-degree murder in the 2011 shooting death of Anthony Lamar Smith, 24.

The violence evoked memories of the riots following the 2014 shooting of a black teenager by a white officer in nearby Ferguson, Missouri.

him to stay on in the post, but he was let go with other Obama administration holdovers in March. (AP)

**US Navy fires 2 commanders:** The US Navy dismissed two senior officers on

Monday after a series of collisions involving Seventh Fleet warships in Asia, citing a loss of confidence in their ability to command.

Rear Admiral **Charles Williams**, commander of Task Force 70, and Captain Jeffrey Bennett, commander of Destroyer Squadron 15, were fired by Seventh Fleet

commander Vice-Admiral Phil Sawyer, the Navy said. In August, Sawyer replaced fleet commander Vice-Admiral Joseph Aucoin, who was fired after the accidents.

"Both reliefs were due to a loss of confidence in their ability to command," the Navy statement said. (RTRS)

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