

## World News Roundup



Fireworks explode overhead at the US Capitol and the Washington Monument on Independence Day, July 4, in Washington, DC. Americans celebrated the nation's 242nd year of independence. (Inset): President Donald Trump, accompanied by First Lady Melania Trump, places his hand over his heart during the playing of the national anthem during an afternoon picnic for military families on the South Lawn of the White House, in Washington. (AFP)

## July Fourth

## Lives on the line: Trump

## 'Military keeping US safe, strong, proud'

WASHINGTON, July 5, (Agencies): President Donald Trump on Wednesday praised the US military for keeping America "safe, strong, proud, mighty and free" and used the Independence Day holiday to thank them for being willing to put their lives on the line in defense of the nation.

"Two hundred and 42 years ago on July 4, 1776, America's founders adopted the Declaration of independence and changed the course of human history," said Trump, addressing hundreds of military families attending a White House picnic from a balcony overlooking the South Lawn of the White House.

"But our freedom exists only because there are brave Americans willing to give their lives, to defend it and defend our great country," added Trump, who was accompanied by his wife, Melania. "America's liberty has been earned through the blood, sweat and sacrifice of American patriots."

Trump and the first lady later returned to the balcony toward the end of a nationally televised concert from the South Lawn and stayed for the annual fireworks show on the National Mall. Trump pumped both fists several times at the end of the show before he went back inside the White House.

Trump was not expected on Wednesday to interview candidates for the Supreme Court, taking a holiday respite from the intense process. He has spoken with seven candidates, according to the White House, and will announce his choice for a successor to retiring Justice Anthony Kennedy on Monday.

Before greeting guests on the lawn during the picnic, Trump praised service members and their families as "truly unbelievable people."

"Thank you for keeping America safe, strong, proud, mighty and free," he said.

The White House invited some 1,500 military families to the picnic, according to the first lady's office, with 5,500 more invited for the fireworks. Several Cabinet secretaries attended the picnic, including embattled Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt.

Entertainers appearing at the 90-minute concert that was televised by the Hallmark Channel included singer-songwriter Sara Evans, pianist Lola Astanova and former "American Idol" finalists Jonny Brenns and Jax.

Meanwhile, Americans celebrated their nation's 242nd anniversary of independence on Wednesday, with concerts, parades and a voracious display of hot dog-eating prowess in New York, as many cities and towns held fireworks displays after sundown.

But the holiday was marked by a widely televised protest at the Statue of Liberty against ICE, or Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

A woman scaled the statue's pedestal, where she sat for four hours until police brought her down. Police said it was unclear if she was part of the protest against ICE and charges were pending.

Also, two people died and several others were injured Tuesday evening in Rock Island Illinois after a large tree branch fell on them, police reported in local media.

At the White House, President Donald Trump hosted a picnic for military families on the South Lawn during the afternoon, a few hours before fireworks lit up the National Mall.



Trump



This still image taken from video Courtesy of PIX11 News in New York, shows police talking to a woman who climbed to the base of the Statue of Liberty in New York on July 4. According to media reports, Liberty Island has been evacuated and ferries to the site have been halted, while law enforcement attempt to get the woman down from the statue. (AFP)



Drouin



Trudeau

## North America

**Liberty climber due in court:** A New York woman was due to be arraigned in federal court on Thursday, a day after she scaled the stone pedestal of the Statue of Liberty to protest US immigration policy.

Therese Patricia Okoumou, 45, of Staten Island, was charged with trespassing, disorderly conduct and interference with governmental administration, the Wall Street Journal reported. She was being held by the Federal Bureau of Prisons.

Okoumou was scheduled to appear before a federal magistrate for an arraignment hearing, a spokesman for the US attorney's office in Manhattan said.

On Wednesday, Okoumou climbed the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty and began a three-hour standoff that led to the evacuation of the landmark on the Fourth of July holiday, celebrating US independence.

An activist group called Rise and Resist said on Facebook that Okoumou was part of a Fourth of July protest at the base of the statue against immigration policy. (RTRS)

**Boat strayed into Canadian waters:** A US border patrol boat strayed into Canadian territorial waters while chasing "illegal immigrants" off the coast of Maine and Nova Scotia, Canadian fishermen said Wednesday.

Laurence Cook, chair of the Grand Manan Fishermen's Association, said on Facebook that a US border patrol launch out of Maine attempted to stop a Canadian fishing vessel in Canadian waters.

Grand Manan is a Canadian island in the Gulf of Maine, right off the coast that hosts the border between the United States and Canada.

Cook said the incident took place on June

## Justice

## 3 judges top list to replace retiring Kennedy

## Trump closes in on SC pick

WASHINGTON, July 5, (AP): President Donald Trump is closing in on his next Supreme Court nominee, with three federal judges leading the competition to replace retiring Justice Anthony Kennedy.

Trump's top contenders for the vacancy at this time are federal appeals judges Amy Coney Barrett, Brett Kavanaugh and Raymond Kethledge, said a person familiar with Trump's thinking who was not authorized to speak publicly.

Working closely with a White House team and consulting with lawmakers and outside advisers, Trump has spent the week deliberating on the choice. He conducted interviews on Monday and Tuesday and has spoken to seven possible candidates. He has not yet publicly indicated that he has narrowed the list and could still consider others in the mix.

With customary fanfare, Trump plans to announce his selection Monday night, kicking off a contentious nomination process as Republicans seek to shift the court to the right and Democrats strive to block the effort.

Vice President Mike Pence has also met with some of the contenders for the Supreme Court vacancy created by Justice Anthony Kennedy's retirement, The Associated Press has learned.

The meetings took place in recent days, according to a person familiar with the search process. The person did not specify which candidates Pence met with and spoke on condition of anonymity Wednesday to describe the private search process.

Trump is choosing his nominee from a list of 25 candidates vetted by conservative groups. Other contenders that have received serious interest include federal appeals judges Amul Thapar, Thomas Hardiman and Joan LarSen.

The president spoke by phone with Republican Sen Mike Lee of Utah on Monday. He's the only lawmaker on Trump's list.

## Decision

Trump's choice to replace Kennedy — a swing vote on the nine-member court — has the potential to remake the court for a generation as part of precedent-shattering decisions on abortion, health care, gay marriage and other issues. Recognizing the stakes, many Democrats have lined up in opposition to any Trump pick, and Republican lawmakers and activists are seeking to shape the president's decision.

Sen Rand Paul, R-Ky., has told colleagues he may not vote for Kavanaugh if the judge is nominated, citing Kavanaugh's role during the Bush admin-

istration on cases involving executive privilege and the disclosure of documents to Congress, said a person familiar with Paul's conversations who spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity.

Some conservatives have pointed to Kethledge as a potential justice in the mold of Neil Gorsuch, Trump's first Supreme Court nominee last year. Both Kethledge and Gorsuch once served Kennedy as law clerks, as did Kavanaugh. Kethledge, a Michigan Law graduate, would add academic diversity to a court steeped in the Ivy League.

Since Trump said his short list includes at least two women, speculation has focused on Barrett, a former law clerk to Justice Antonin Scalia and a longtime Notre Dame Law School professor who serves on the 7th US Circuit Court of Appeals. Conservative groups rallied around Barrett after her confirmation hearing last year featured questioning from Democrats over how her Roman Catholic faith would affect her decisions.

On Wednesday, Sen Susan Collins, a moderate Republican from Maine, reiterated that she could not vote for a nominee with a "demonstrated hostility" to Roe v. Wade, the landmark 1973 Supreme Court decision that established a woman's right to an abortion.

24 near Machias Seal Island, a tiny and rocky outcrop a dozen miles (kilometers) south of Grand Manan with rich lobster grounds, and whose sovereignty is disputed by Washington, although the Canadian Coast Guard maintains a lighthouse there.

According to Cook, the Canadian fishing captain, Nick Brown, informed the US vessel that "he was a Canadian vessel legally fishing in Canadian waters."

Ties between Canada and the United States have been strained since President

Donald Trump slapped tariffs on Canadian steel and aluminum, citing US national security, with Trump calling Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau "very dishonest" and "weak" after a spat at the G7 meeting in Quebec last month. (AFP)

**Firefighters make progress:** Firefighters in Northern California have made progress on a stubborn blaze west of Sacramento, allowing some residents to return to

their homes after they were evacuated.

The so-called County Fire has consumed 86,000 acres (35,000 hectares) of grass, brush and dense scrub oak as of late on Wednesday, an increase of about 5 percent from earlier in the day, California Fire said.

Some residents were allowed to return home after being evacuated while the fire threatened some 1,500 homes, Cal Fire said in a statement on Wednesday.

A force of almost 3,500 firefighters widened its containment lines around to 27 percent up from 25 percent earlier in the day, the agency said.

Firefighters have been challenged by strong wind gusts, steep inaccessible terrain and dry vegetation as they have fought the unrelenting wildfire that began on Saturday (RTRS)

**Heat wave kills 33 in Canada:** A heat wave in Quebec has killed at least 19 people in the past week as high summer temperatures scorched eastern Canada, health officials said Wednesday.

Eighteen of the dead were reported in the eastern province's capital Montreal, said regional public health director Mylene Drouin.

The Tribune newspaper said five of the deaths occurred in the past 48 hours in the Eastern Townships, a rural area just east of the city. And late Wednesday two more deaths blamed on the heat were recorded in a Montreal suburb, Radio Canada reported.

"My thoughts are with the loved ones of those who have died in Quebec during this heat wave," Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said on Twitter. (AFP)



A plane drops fire retardant on homes in the area of Basalt, Colo., on July 4, during the Lake Christine Fire. (AP)