

Britain

'No babies in Parliament'

Channel deaths fuel UK-France tensions

LONDON, Nov 25, (AP) - The deaths of at least 27 people in the English Channel is fueling tensions between the U.K. and France over how to stop migrants from crossing the world's busiest waterway in small boats.

Despite a pledge from British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and French President Emmanuel Macron that they would "do everything possible" to stop people smugglers from endangering lives, politicians on both sides of the channel are already blaming their counterparts for failing to prevent Wednesday's tragedy.

U.K. officials criticize France for rejecting their offer of British police and border officers to conduct joint patrols along the channel coast with French police. French authorities say Britain is stoking the crisis because it is too easy for migrants to remain in the country and work if they manage to cross the channel.

Amid the finger pointing, British lawmakers on Thursday will debate the soaring number of migrants who are crossing the channel in small boats. Macron is scheduled to discuss the issue with European Union officials.

Meanwhile, migrants are continuing to brave frigid weather in small boats and unseaworthy dinghies in hopes of getting to British shores to seek asylum or better opportunities. More than 25,000 people have made the dangerous Channel crossing so far this year, about triple the total for the whole of 2020.

"This tragedy was completely predictable, indeed it was predicted and it was completely preventable," Zoe Gardner, of the Joint Council of Welfare for Immigrants, told the BBC. "This has to be a time for our government to mark a turning point."

"We need to offer people alternatives to the smuggling boats."

Johnson said Wednesday it was clear that French operations to stop migrant boats from leaving French shores "haven't been enough," despite millions of pounds of support promised by the British government this summer meant to fund more police patrols on French beaches.

But Calais lawmaker Pierre-Henri Dumont told the BBC that more patrols "will not change anything because we have 200 to 300 kilometers (125 to 185 miles) of shore to monitor 24/7."

Blaming

"I think it's time for both our governments to stop blaming each other and to try and talk to each other and find real solutions, not a crazy solution such as having more and more people patrolling, sending the British Army to the French shore," Dumont said. "That is not acceptable and will not change anything."

On Thursday, Natalie Elphicke, a Conservative member of Britain's Parliament for Dover and Deal on the southern English coast, said it was "absolutely vital that the French police stop the boats leaving in the first place."

"Rather disappointingly, yesterday we saw the French police in footage standing by while boats got together and migrants got it them and they went off the shore in France," she told The Associated Press. "Britain has offered to help with people and resources, and I hope the French will now take up that offer and other European countries will come to France's aid."

Meanwhile, several British politicians demanded a change in parliamentary rules on Wednesday after a lawmaker was told she couldn't bring her 3-month-old baby into the House of Commons.

Labour Party legislator Stella Creasy said she had received a letter from Commons authorities after she took her infant son Pip to a debate.

She said she had previously taken both Pip and her older daughter to Parliament without problems, but had been told the rules had changed in September. Members of Parliament are now advised that they "should not take your seat in the chamber when accompanied by your child."

Creasy said the rule undermined efforts to make politics more family-friendly.

"There are barriers to getting mums involved in politics, and I think that damages our political debate," she told the BBC.

Britain's Parliament, once known for its boozy, macho culture and late-night hours, has changed in recent years. One of the building's multiple bars was converted into a nursery for the children of politicians and staff.

Lawmakers are entitled to maternity, but without the ability to have someone cover their job while they are away, most can take only a short time off.

Green Party lawmaker Caroline Lucas said the baby ban was "absurd." She said babies were "far less disruptive than many braying backbenchers."

Review

House of Commons Speaker Lindsay Hoyle said he had asked Parliament's procedure committee to review the rules, and noted that there were "differing views on this matter."

"The advice given yesterday ... correctly reflects the current rules. However, rules have to be seen in context and they change with the times," he said.

"It is extremely important that parents of babies and young children are able to participate fully in the work of this House."

Prime Minister Boris Johnson's spokesman, Max Blain, said the government wanted to see "further improvements" to make Parliament more family-friendly.

"We want to make sure that all workplaces are modern, flexible and fit for parents," he said.

"The exact way that operates is rightly a matter for the House."

Furthermore, a man who sent a bomb hoax to a U.K. coronavirus vaccine factory and similar parcels elsewhere, including a laboratory in Wuhan, China, was sentenced to more than two years in prison on Wednesday.

About 120 people had to be evacuated from a plant in Wales producing the Oxford-AstraZeneca shots in January after Anthony Collins, 54, sent a suspicious package there. The British army's bomb disposal unit was called and production of the vaccine was halted, but the batch was salvaged later after bomb experts found no explosives in the parcel.

Detective Inspector Adam Marshall said Collins "was fully aware of the impact his actions would have and chose to impede the vaccine rollout when the program was still in its infancy."

Authorities also intercepted similar packages Collins sent to Prime Minister Boris Johnson's office, a laboratory in Wuhan and a U.S. Air Force base in England.

His defense lawyer Janice Brennan said Collins had a diagnosed personality disorder and had long been obsessed with sending letters and parcels. He had developed an "obsessive interest" in COVID-19 and vaccines, she added.



The Tom Turkey float waits along Central Park West before the start of the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, Thursday, Nov 25, in New York. (AP)

Thanksgiving

'No reason to celebrate'

Macy's Thanksgiving parade returns

NEW YORK, Nov 25, (AP) - Crimped by the coronavirus pandemic last year, the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade returned Thursday in full, though with precautions.

Balloons, floats, marching bands, clowns and performers - and, of course, Santa Claus - once again began wending Thursday morning through 2 1/2 miles (4 kilometers) of Manhattan streets, instead of being confined to one block or sometimes pre-taped last year.

Spectators, shut out in 2020, lined the route again. High school and college marching bands from around the country were invited back to the lineup; most of last year's performers were locally based to cut down on travel. The giant balloons, tethered to vehicles last year, got their costumed handlers back.

"Last year was obviously symbolic. It wasn't everything we would have liked to see in a parade, but they kept it going," Mayor Bill de Blasio said at a news briefing Wednesday. "This year, the parade's back at full strength."

"It's going to be a great sign of our rebirth," he added.

The Thanksgiving parade is the latest U.S. holiday event to make a comeback as vaccines, familiarity and sheer frustration made officials and some of the public more comfortable with big gatherings amid the ongoing pandemic.

Still, safety measures continued. Parade staffers and volunteers had to be vaccinated against COVID-19 and wear

masks, though some singers and performers were allowed to shed them. There was no inoculation requirement for spectators, but Macy's and the city encouraged them to cover their faces. A popular pre-parade spectacle - the inflation of the giant balloons - was limited to vaccinated viewers.

The Thanksgiving event also came days after an SUV driver plowed through a Christmas parade in suburban Milwaukee, killing six people and injuring over 60. Authorities said the driver, who has been charged with intentional homicide, was speeding away from police after a domestic dispute.

Threat

De Blasio said Wednesday there was no credible, specific threat to the Thanksgiving parade, but the New York Police Department's security measures would be extensive, as usual.

"I'm very confident in what the NYPD has prepared to keep everyone safe," he said.

Thousands of police officers were assigned to the parade route, from streets to rooftops. Cars were blocked from the parade route with sand-filled garbage trucks, other heavy vehicles and approximately 360,000 pounds (163,000 kilograms) of concrete barriers.

Bomb-detecting dogs, bomb squad officers, heavy-weapon teams, radiation and chemical sensors and over 300 extra cameras also were dispatched to the parade route, NYPD Chief of Counterter-

rorism Martine Materasso said.

Inside the barricades, the parade features about 8,000 participants, four dozen balloons of varying sizes and two dozen floats.

Meanwhile, members of Native American tribes from around New England are gathering in the seaside town where the Pilgrims settled - not to give thanks, but to mourn Indigenous people worldwide who've suffered centuries of racism and mistreatment.

Thursday's solemn National Day of Mourning observance in downtown Plymouth, Massachusetts, will recall the disease and oppression that European settlers brought to North America.

"We Native people have no reason to celebrate the arrival of the Pilgrims," said Kisha James, a member of the Aquinnah Wampanoag and Oglala Lakota tribes and the granddaughter of Wamsutta Frank James, the event's founder.

"We want to educate people so that they understand the stories we all learned in school about the first Thanksgiving are nothing but lies. Wampanoag and other Indigenous people have certainly not lived happily ever after since the arrival of the Pilgrims," James said.

"To us, Thanksgiving is a day of mourning, because we remember the millions of our ancestors who were murdered by uninformed European colonists such as the Pilgrims. Today, we and many Indigenous people around the country say, 'No Thanks, No Giving.'"



Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, is seen Wednesday, Nov. 17, on Capitol Hill in Washington. (AP)

America

Polyp in colon was benign: The polyp removed from President Joe Biden's colon last week was a benign, slow-growing but potentially pre-cancerous lesion that required no further action, his doctor said in a follow-up memo.

The specimen, a tubular adenoma, was similar to one removed from Biden in 2008. Dr. Kevin C. O'Connor, physician to the president, wrote in a memo released Wednesday by the White House. Routine surveillance, which normally calls for another colonoscopy in seven to 10 years, was recommended, he wrote.

The Mayo Clinic defines a colon polyp as a small clump of cells that forms on the lining of the colon. Most colon polyps are harmless, according to Mayo's website, but some colon polyps can develop into colon cancer over time. (AP)

Shut down military fuel tanks: Citing threats to Honolulu's drinking water, the Sierra Club of Hawaii and other groups on Wednesday called on President Joe Biden and military leaders to shut down tanks that provide an important fuel reserve for U.S. forces in the Pacific.

"Enough is enough. We've lost all faith in the local Navy command," said Wayne Tanaaka, the director of the Sierra Club of Hawaii, at a rally and news conference.

The military built 20 fuel tanks, each the equivalent of 25 stories tall, during World War II near Pearl Harbor on top of an aquifer that

supplies drinking water to one-quarter of Honolulu. (AP)

Chicago mother fatally shot: A Chicago woman was shot to death on Wednesday, just steps away from a memorial to her 14-year-old

son who was fatally shot over the weekend on the same sidewalk where his mother was found.

Delisa Tucker was shot in the chest on the same street where Kevin Tinker was killed on Sunday, the Chicago Sun-Times reported.

Chicago Police have not said if they believe the two shootings are connected and nobody

has been arrested in either shooting. But the death of the 31-year-old Tucker, who lost her son over the weekend and her brother to gun violence two years ago, left the Roseland community on the city's South Side where she lived distraught about the shootings just days apart. (AP)

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