



Cows stand on a snow-covered meadow near Unterthuringen in Germany yesterday. — AP

## EMIRATES TRIMS US FLIGHTS...

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Emirates' hub at Dubai International Airport, the world's third busiest, is a major transit point for travelers who were affected by President Donald Trump's executive orders temporarily halting entry to citizens of six countries. The latest travel ban suspended new visas for people from Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen, and froze the nation's refugee program. Like an earlier ban that also included Iraqi citizens, it has been blocked from taking effect by the courts.

Emirates said the reductions will affect five of its 12 US destinations, starting next month. It called the move "a commercial decision in response to weakened travel demand" in the three months since Trump took office. "The recent actions taken by the US government relating to the issuance of entry visas, heightened security vetting, and restrictions on electronic devices in aircraft cabins, have had a direct impact on consumer interest and demand for air travel into the US," the carrier said in a statement.

Emirates did not provide financial data for its US operations but said it had seen "healthy growth and performance" there until the start of the year. In the three months Trump has been in office, however, there has been what it called "a significant deterioration in the booking profiles on all our US routes, across all travel segments." "Emirates has therefore responded as any profit-oriented enterprise would, and we will redeploy capacity to serve demand on other routes on our global network," it said.

The cuts will reduce the number of US-bound flights from Dubai to 101, down from 126 currently. Twice daily Emirates flights to Boston, Los Angeles and Seattle will be reduced to once a day. Daily flights to Fort Lauderdale and Orlando will be pared down to five per week. Like its smaller Gulf rivals Qatar Airways and Abu Dhabi-based Etihad Airways, Emirates has ramped up its US presence in recent years and recently launched a new service to Newark via Athens.

Several big U.S. carriers have bristled at the Gulf airlines' US push, accusing them of flooding the market with capacity while receiving billions of dollars of unfair government subsidies. The Gulf airlines deny the allegations. Delta Air Lines and United Airlines both stopped flying to Dubai last year, leaving Emirates the only carrier to offer direct US flights to what has become the world's busiest airport for international traffic. — AP

## US WEIGHS MORE MILITARY AID FOR SAUDIS OVER...

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The US and Saudi Arabia have been security allies since 1944. The retired four-star Marine general earlier met King Salman at Al-Yamama Palace in Riyadh, where he told the monarch: "It's good to be back." Mattis commanded troops during the 2003 invasion of Iraq. He arrived in the kingdom on Tuesday afternoon to listen to Saudi leaders and learn "what are their priorities," an American defense official said.

As he met Deputy Crown Prince and Defense Minister Mohammed bin Salman, Mattis appeared to allude to deteriorated relations during the Obama administration, which spearheaded a seven-nation nuclear deal with Iran that deeply upset the Saudis. "We can overcome any past frustrations," Mattis said while US journalists were in the room. "It is in our interest to see a strong Saudi Arabia," Mattis said at the start of talks, pointing to the country's "military security services and secret services". He said the

US would "reinforce Saudi Arabia's resistance to Iran's mischief" and suggested the possibility of President Donald Trump visiting Saudi Arabia. "We are not leaving this region," Mattis said.

Prince Mohammed told Mattis that Saudi Arabia and the United States are working to counter challenges in the region, including "the malign activities of Iran" and to bring stability "to the most important straits". Trump's Yemen focus has so far been on a major escalation of attacks against militants from Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. But after talks with Prince Mohammed, Mattis warned of Iranian efforts to create a Yemeni militia "in the image" of Lebanon's Hezbollah. Pentagon officials believe members of the Quds Force, the foreign operations wing of Iran's Revolutionary Guards, are in Yemen to help the Houthis. Hezbollah, a powerful political movement in Lebanon, is fighting alongside government forces in Syria and has been declared a "terrorist organization" by Riyadh. — Agencies

## PANEL FINALIZES SPORTS LAW

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IOC and world football body FIFA, in addition to several international sports organizations, suspended Kuwaiti sports in Oct 2015 over alleged government interference in sports, which contradicts international sports charters. The world sports organizations cited changes introduced to the Kuwaiti sports law between 2012 and 2015 that gave the government the right to interfere in sports' internal affairs.

Former youth minister Sheikh Salman Hmoud Al-Sabah had rejected the demands by world sports federations and considered them as an interference in Kuwait's internal affairs. He even dissolved the board of directors of Kuwait Olympic Committee and several other federations, escalating tensions with international sports organizations. The situation changed following November's snap polls in which the opposition won half

of the 50 seats. A majority of the opposition lawmakers urged the former minister to respond positively to international sports bodies' demands to secure lifting the sanctions. The minister refused and he was grilled and forced to resign after a large number of MPs said they would support a no-confidence motion against him.

MP Omar Al-Tabtabaei said yesterday that he and a number of lawmakers have submitted a law proposing regulations on rents in the private housing sector in order to prevent rent from eating up most of the citizens' salaries. Tabtabaei said the proposal concerns rents in the private housing sector and not in investment or commercial housing (apartment buildings). He said the proposal aims to check the increase in rent, which forces many citizens to pay half of their salaries in rent while waiting for many years for a government house. Tabtabaei said they also submitted another proposal to establish a new city with all services to provide an efficient solution to the housing problem.

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