



**Divided UK, uncertain election could put the brakes on Brexit**

CHICAGO WOMEN WORRIED ABOUT VIOLENCE JOIN UP WITH GUN CLUBS



VERMONT: President Donald Trump speaks during the commissioning ceremony of the aircraft carrier USS Gerald R Ford (CVN 78) at Naval Station Norfolk. — AP

## TRUMP ASSERTS 'COMPLETE POWER' FOR PARDON PRESIDENT HAS URGED AUTHORITIES TO PROSECUTE LEAKERS

**WASHINGTON:** President Donald Trump said Saturday that he has "complete power" to issue pardons, an assertion that comes amid investigations into Russian interference in last year's presidential election. It was one of many topics that appeared to occupy the president's mind as the day broke.

On a day when most people are ready to forget about the issues that nagged them during the week, Trump revved up. In an early morning flurry of 10 tweets, he commented about pardons, former presidential rival Hillary Clinton, son Don Jr, health care, the USS Gerald Ford, the attorney general and other issues. Trump said in one of his 10 messages: "While all agree the US President has the complete power to pardon, why think of that when only crime so far is LEAKS against

us. FAKE NEWS." The Washington Post recently reported that Trump has inquired about the authority he has as president to pardon aides, relatives or even himself in connection with the widening investigation into Russian interference in the election and whether any Trump associates were involved. The president has long criticized leaks of information about the investigation, and has urged authorities to prosecute leakers. Trump maintains that no crimes have been committed.

One of Trump's attorneys, Jay Sekulow, said the president has not discussed the issue of pardons with his outside legal team. Sekulow reiterated that point Saturday evening. Speaking to reporters at the site of the Western Conservative Summit in Denver, he said that Trump's private legal team is "not researching it

because it's not an issue." "I don't know where this came from. There is nothing to pardon," said Sekulow, who added that "what's going on in Washington is an attack on the president."

Next week, Trump's eldest son, Donald Trump Jr.; his son-in-law and White House adviser, Jared Kushner; and Paul Manafort, his former campaign chairman, are scheduled to appear before Senate committees investigating Russian meddling.

Trump defended his son in one of the tweets, saying he "openly gave his e-mails to the media & authorities whereas Crooked Hillary Clinton deleted (& acid washed) her 33,000 e-mails!" Trump's namesake has become a focus of the investigation after it was revealed that he, Kushner and Manafort met with Russian representatives at Trump Tower in June 2016. Trump

Jr. later released email exchanges concerning the meeting on Twitter, after learning that The New York Times was about to publish them.

The FBI investigated Clinton for using a private email server as secretary of state. She turned over thousands of pages of emails to the government, but deleted thousands of others that she said were personal or unrelated to her work as the nation's top diplomat.

Trump also complained Saturday about a Washington Post report that the Russian ambassador to the US said he discussed election-related issues with Jeff Sessions when the men met during the 2016 presidential race. Sessions, now the attorney general, at the time was a U.S. senator and foreign policy adviser to Trump. Trump tweeted: "A new INTELLIGENCE LEAK from the Amazon Washington Post, this

time against AG Jeff Sessions. These illegal leaks, like Comey's, must stop!"

The Post on Friday cited anonymous US officials who described US intelligence intercepts of Ambassador Sergey Kislyak's descriptions of his meetings with Sessions. The Justice Department said Sessions stands by his previous assertion that he never had conversations with Russian officials about any type of interference with the election.

Trump also said "Republican Senators must step up to the plate and, after 7 years, vote to Repeal and Replace" the Obama-era health care law. An effort to advance legislation collapsed in the Senate earlier this week after several Republicans said they wouldn't vote for the bill. Trump ended the tweet with "Tax Reform and Infrastructure. WIN!" — AP

## BOSNIA'S WARTIME 'MISTRESSES OF LIFE AND DEATH'

**SARAJEVO:** She may once have been known as "the mistress of life and death", but in the court trying her for war crimes Azra Basic hardly stands out. Basic is among around a dozen women charged or convicted of crimes committed during Bosnia's inter-ethnic war in the 1990s which claimed nearly 100,000 lives.

Compared to the several hundred men convicted by local and international courts for crimes committed during the 1992-1995 war, the number of women is not many. But several ex-prisoners have already testified in court to Basic's brutal torture of detainees since the trial opened in February. One witness at Basic's trial recalled in testimony Friday the glimmer of hope he felt on April 26, 1992.

Dusan Nedic said he saw a woman called Azra enter a detention facility in the northern town of Derвента, where he was being held by ethnic Croats. She spoke with other detainees, he recalled. "For me it was a glimmer of hope," said Nedic. "I told myself that a 'woman should not be aggressive as men.'" But he was wrong. "She started to beat the detainees, she was jumping on them while they were on the floor," the 55-year-old shoe factory worker said.

Looking at her in court, it is difficult to link Basic with the brutal violence, including one murder, of which she is accused. A short, silent, bespectacled woman, she avoids eye contact when in court. When in 2011 the authorities finally caught up with her after the war, she

was working in a food factory in the United States. Basic has pleaded not guilty to war crimes against civilians and prisoners of war at the start of her trial, including a charge that she killed a prisoner. "This person was not me," she told the court on Friday, her voice trembling. "I swear before God and that's all," she added, as Slavisa Djuras, the son of Blagoje Djuras, the man she allegedly killed, looked on.

### 'Better' than men

Biljana Plavsic, now aged 86, remains the most famous woman war criminal from the former Yugoslavia. The former Bosnian Serb vice-president Biljana Plavsic is also the only one tried before the UN war crimes court in The Hague. She was sentenced to 11 years in jail in 2003 after pleading guilty to crimes against humanity for her leading role in a campaign of persecution against Croats and Muslims during Bosnia's war.

"Women are just as capable of committing crimes," prominent Croatian writer Slavenka Drakulic, told AFP. That much is clear from her essay on war criminals in the former Yugoslavia titled "They Would Never hurt a Fly". "A woman in such a position has to be 'better' than men," Drakulic wrote in an essay on Plavsic. "In the given circumstances it meant taking more radical views." Drakulic recalled the scientific-racist rhetoric used by Plavsic during Bosnia's war, the kind of ideas

the Nazis would not have rejected.

Plavsic, a former biology professor, labeled Bosnian Muslims a "genetic mistake on the Serbian body". Bosnia's war crimes prosecutors say more cases against women suspects are in the pipeline. According to local media, some 40 women are being investigated for war

crimes. Visnja Acimovic, a 45-year-old Bosnian Serb who now lives in neighboring Serbia, is one of them. She is accused of having taken part in the 1992 executions of 37 Muslims in the eastern Bosnian town of Vlasenica, most of them between 15 and 20 years old. She denied the charges before a Belgrade court in

January, and Serbia will not extradite its citizens for trial in Bosnia. They do not trust Bosnian justice, her lawyer Krsto Bobot said. But not everyone enjoys such protection.

### 'Notably cruel'

In March, Switzerland extradited Elfeta Veseli, a former member of Bosnian Muslim forces, back to Bosnia. She is accused of the 1992 murder of a 12-year-old Serb in eastern Bosnia. As his family had fled, the boy returned for a forgotten dog and paid for it with his life. Veseli's trial has yet to start. But as well as Basic, the United States has also extradited Rasema Handanovic, 44.

She had lied about her past as a former member of a special Bosnian Muslim unit. In 2012 she pleaded guilty to the execution of three civilians and three ethnic Croat prisoners of war in the central Bosnian town of Trusina. "The order was to do the work at Trusina, so that no one remained alive," she told the court. She was jailed for five and a half years. "Each of these women had her own personal reason that could explain her sadistic outburst that targeted men in particular," said Bosnian psychologist Ismet Dizdarevic. While there were fewer women war criminals they were notably cruel "to prove their power among men," he told AFP. Most of war crimes committed by women took place in a detention context. — AFP



SARAJEVO: This handout picture taken on November 22, 2016 and released by Bosnia and Herzegovina Prosecutor Office, shows Azra Basic (58), (L), while being processed by a law officer after her arrival at Sarajevo International airport. — AFP