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# Southern DAILY

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## Trump Threatens Shutdown Over Wall, Immigration

Washington (CNN)President Donald Trump threatened Sunday to push the government into a shutdown ahead of the coming spending deadline in September if Congress does not fund his border wall and change the nation's immigration laws.

"I would be willing to 'shut down' government if the Democrats do not give us the votes for Border Security, which includes the Wall! Must get rid of Lottery, Catch & Release etc. and finally go to system of Immigration based on MERIT! We need great people coming into our Country!" Trump tweeted.



**Donald J. Trump**  
✓@realDonaldTrump

I would be willing to "shut down" government if the Democrats do not give us the votes for Border Security, which includes the Wall! Must get rid of Lottery, Catch & Release etc. and finally go to system of Immigration based on MERIT! We need great people coming into our Country!

8:13 AM - Jul 29, 2018

Trump's Twitter threat introduced a fresh wild card for congressional negotiators to deal with as the remaining legislative days tick down before government funding runs out -- an explosive prospect for both parties with just 100 days until the midterm elections. Trump has previously floated the possibility of a government shutdown over border security and immigration, and on Sunday he made his threat explicit, saying he would do so unless Congress funds his proposed wall, which he promised Mexico would pay for, and puts in place his preferred immigration policies.

In May, Trump suggested "closing up the country for a while" if he did not get his wall.

"They don't want the wall," Trump said. "But we're going to get the wall, even if we have to think about closing up the country for a while."

However, a disruption in federal government operations could backfire on Trump if voters blame Republicans, who control Congress, for the interruption in services.

"I would be willing to 'shut down' government if the Democrats do not give us the votes for Border Security, which includes the Wall! Must get rid of Lottery, Catch & Release etc. and finally go to system of Immigration based on MERIT! We need great people coming into our Country!" Trump said on Twitter.



Americans are divided along party lines on immigration, and 81 percent of Republicans approved Trump's handling of the issue, according to a Reuters/Ipsos poll released this month.

The Republican president has threatened a shutdown several times since taking office in 2017 in a bid to get immigration priorities in congressional spending bills, especially funding for a wall along the southern U.S. border. Trump has asked for \$25 billion to build the wall.

"I don't think it would be helpful, so let's try to avoid it," Republican Senator Ron Johnson, chairman of the Senate Homeland Security Committee, said on CBS' "Face the Nation."

Congress must agree on a spending measure to fund the government by a Sept. 30 deadline.

Although Republicans control both the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, disagreements between moderates and conservatives in the party have impeded a speedy legislative fix.

Standoffs over spending levels and immigration led to a three-day government shutdown, mostly over a weekend, in January and an



**GOP Plan to Avoid Another Shutdown: Delay the Fight over Trump's Wall.**

hours-long shutdown in February.

The House in June rejected an immigration bill favored by conservative Republicans.

The Republican president has made tougher immigration laws a centerpiece of his administration, from the first ill-fated travel ban on people from predominantly Muslim nations to the current battle raging over the separation of illegal immigrant children from their parents at the U.S.-Mexico border.



Sunday's shutdown threat from Trump also echoed a remark he made in February when he said "I'd love to see a shutdown" if the government did not agree to address immigration. Congress ultimately passed a spending bill in March that funded the government through Sep-

tember. Trump threatened at the time to veto the spending agreement, but eventually signed the bill while expressing his displeasure with Congress.

"I said to Congress, I will never sign another bill like this again," Trump said in March.

A shutdown over Trump's wall at the September deadline would mark the third lapse in appropriations this year, following a shutdown in January as Democrats battled with the Trump administration and congressional Republicans on protections for "Dreamers" as well as a brief shutdown when Republican Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky blocked a spending vote.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell announced in June that he was canceling much of the Senate's August recess, saying the chamber needed the additional time to make progress on Trump's nominees and

pass appropriations bills. And with the House out on August recess, there's not much time left before the deadline that both chambers will be in session.

Both Speaker of the House Paul Ryan and McConnell met with Trump last week to discuss funding the government.

Asked about Trump's Twitter threat, a pair of Republican lawmakers said Sunday that they didn't think the government should or would shut down this September.



"Let's hope not," Wisconsin Sen. Ron Johnson said on CBS's "Face the Nation."

Johnson added that he didn't think a shutdown would be "helpful" to Republicans in the November elections, "so let's try and avoid it."

Ohio Rep. Steve Stivers, the chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee, said on ABC's "This Week" said he did not think it would come to a shutdown.

"I don't think we're going to shut down the government," Stivers said. "You know, I think we're going to make sure we keep the government open, but we're going to get better policies on immigration." (Courtesy <http://www.thefiscaltimes.com>)

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# “Clicks To Bricks”

## Amazon, Online Retailers Open Physical Shops In The Galleria



Temporary walls surround the site of a new Amazon kiosk at the Galleria on Friday, July 27, 2018 in Houston. Shopping centers like the Galleria have seen more e-commerce companies opening physical brick-and-mortar locations.

Amazon on Saturday will open a store in The Galleria, becoming the latest and largest online retailer to open a brick-and-mortar location in Houston's top-performing mall. The so-called Amazon Pop-Up shop, located on the first floor near Macy's, will offer shoppers the opportunity to test-drive smart-home devices, tablets and e-readers, and learn from Amazon employees about the Seattle-based company's online services. "We have a great website, but sometimes, people want to test our products out themselves and talk to a real human," said Cameron Janes, Amazon's vice president of Amazon Pop-Up stores. Online retailers are increasingly opening stores to capture consumers who still spend most of their money offline. Despite the rise of e-commerce, online sales account for less than 10 percent of total retail sales in the U.S. "A lot of these companies that just started on the internet have realized they can increase sales by opening these pop-up locations in malls," said Ed Wulfe, chairman and CEO of Wulfe & Co., a Houston-based retail real estate firm. Eight e-commerce retailers, including Amazon, have recently staked out physical locations at the Galleria, the largest mall in Texas. They include Eloquii, a women's fashion retailer; Sugarfina, an upscale candy shop; and Untuckit, a menswear company. A shopper walks in front of the future location of Charles Tyrwhitt at the Galleria on Friday, July 27, 2018 in Houston. Amazon, which opened its first Pop-Up store in 2014, now has 66 in 19 states, including in several Kohl's and Whole Foods Market locations. The e-commerce giant has eight Pop-Up stores in Texas,



including Baybrook Mall, The Galleria, The Woodlands Mall and Willowbrook Mall in the Houston region as well as North Star Mall in San Antonio. Other online retailers, such as menswear retailer Bonobos, bed-in-a-box company Casper and eyeglasses shop Warby Parker are opening physical stores across the country. At the same time, traditional retailers such as Walmart, Target and Best Buy are beefing up their online business. It's all a push to create "omnichannel" shopping experience to woo the most shoppers in today's competitive retail environment. "Retailers want to approach it from every possible angle to ensure they're reaching all the customers out there," Wulfe said. Simon, the nation's largest mall owner, three years ago created a business development team at its New York office dedicated solely to attracting e-commerce companies to its properties, which include the Galleria.



Sugarfina now occupies space at the Galleria on Friday, July 27, 2018 in Houston. Shopping centers like the Galleria have seen more e-commerce companies opening physical brick-and-mortar locations. Today, that team is one of the most active leasing departments in the company, said Greg Vlahos, senior vice president of leasing at Simon's Dallas office. "We're seeing a slowdown in the expansion and growth of traditional retailers we've done business with for many, many years," he said. "Mature retailers are maxed out with their store counts. The real growth in the fashion and soft-goods side of retailing is newer concepts, most of which started online." As a result, a significant portion of Simon's new retail leases today are e-tailers looking to get into brick-and-mortar retail, Vlahos said. Untuckit, which sells casual men's shirts, opened its first brick-and-mortar store in 2015. Since then, the company has grown its physical presence rapidly, opening more than three dozen locations including one at the Galleria.

The company, founded in 2011, has plans to open 100 stores over the next five years. Simon, which has signed 12 leases with Untuckit, is working on

Eloquii sales associate Shara Campbell returns a blouse to its spot at the new Eloquii location inside the Galleria on Friday, July 27, 2018 in Houston. Campbell graduated with a finance degree from the University of Houston and facing a slow job market, opted to work for the retailer. Shopping centers like the Galleria have seen more e-commerce companies opening physical brick-and-mortar locations.



six more, Vlahos said. Most e-tailers are looking for smaller spaces and shorter leases to test out their brick-and-mortar concepts. An e-tailer opening a fashion boutique at a Simon mall typically takes a space of 800 to 1,500 square feet, and will sign a lease for one to three years, Vlahos said. "As their brick-and-mortar concept evolves, their comfort level grows to expand their footprint and sign longer-term leases," he said. Mariah Chase, the CEO of Eloquii, said she once scoffed at the idea of opening a physical location, wary of the fate befalling traditional retailers such as Sears and Toys R Us. But today, the online fashion retailer for women sizes 14 and up has five stores, including one in the Galleria. The company is set to open its sixth store next month in Miami. "Our web customers wanted Eloquii in a store," Chase said. "They told me, 'I'd love to be able to try things on, shop with my group of friends and feel the fabric.'"



A peek inside the new Quay sunglasses boutique at the Galleria on Friday, July 27, 2018 in Houston. Shopping centers like the Galleria have seen more e-commerce companies opening physical brick-and-mortar locations.

Chase and her team use both e-commerce data and multiple site visits to determine the best locations for their brick-and-mortar locations. "Where you have a large e-commerce market like Houston," Chase said, "you have to have a store footprint in that market, too." (Courtesy chron.com)

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Editor's Choice



Trump threatens government shutdown over wall, immigration. President Donald Trump threatened to push the government into shutdown ahead of the coming appropriations deadline in September if Congress does not fund his border wall and change the nation’s immigration laws. “I would be willing to ‘shut down’ government if the Democrats do not give us the votes for Border Security, which includes the Wall! Must get rid of Lottery, Catch & Release etc., and finally go to system of Immigration based on MERIT! We need great people coming into our Country!” Trump tweeted Sunday.



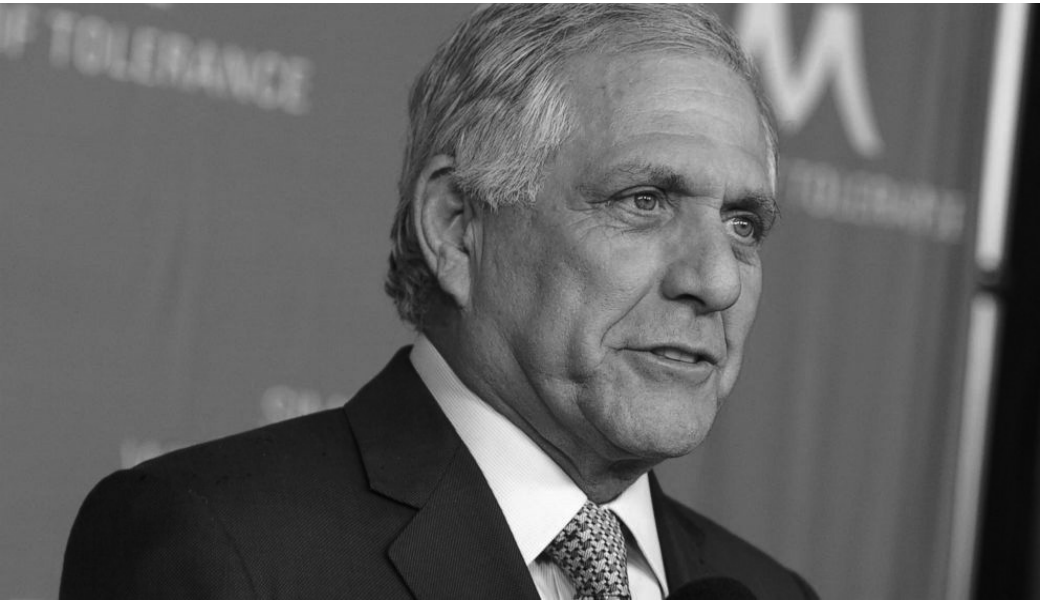
Civil rights icon Rep. John Lewis hospitalized. (CNN) Civil rights icon and Georgia congressman Rep. John Lewis has been hospitalized but is expected to be released Sunday, his spokeswoman says. Spokeswoman Brenda Jones told CNN that Lewis is under routine observation but she did not give details of the nature of his illness or where he is hospitalized. CNN affiliate WSB-TV reported that Lewis was being treated at a hospital in metro Atlanta, and the station quoted unnamed sources as saying Lewis became ill on a flight to Atlanta on Saturday. Lewis, 78, has represented Georgia’s 5th Congressional District, which includes much of the city of Atlanta, since first being elected in 1986.



The NECCO Company has stopped making America’s oldest candies. The NECCO plant in Massachusetts shut down suddenly last week, putting the future of Mary Janes, Mighty Malts, Sky Bars and Sweethearts products in limbo after the NECCO factory closing this past week. The NECCO plant in Revere, Massachusetts, was shut suddenly Tuesday by its owner, Round Hill Investments LLC. The investment company, owned by billionaire C. Dean Metropoulos, bought NECCO out of bankruptcy in May for \$17.3 million. The news was first reported by The Boston Globe. “We are disappointed that Round Hill could not follow through on the enthusiasm it expressed when it acquired Necco barely two months ago,” said Revere Mayor Brian Arrigo in a statement. Arrigo said he was disappointed that the city received no advance word about the plant’s closing, but he was encouraged that six private food service companies have already expressed interest in interviewing the former NECCO factory workers.



Officials Investigating Pres. Nicolas Maduro In Money Laundering Plot. A Miami Herald report reveals that U.S. investigators are examining if Venezuelan president Nicolas Maduro along with other Venezuelan government officials have ties to a suspected laundering plot. The alleged operation reportedly led to the theft of around \$1.2 billion from the nation’s state-owned oil company. So far eight individuals have been named as defendants in a complaint over the suspected incident. Maduro announced on Wednesday, July 25, a monetary reform that will remove 5 zeros from the value of the Venezuelan currency. In the May 22, 2018, photo above, Venezuela’s President Nicolas Maduro greets guests after receiving from the National Electoral Council, CNE, a certificate declaring him the winner of the presidential election, during a ceremony at CNE headquarters in Caracas, Venezuela. (AP Photo)



CBS chief Les Moonves and CBS Face Allegations of Sexual Misconduct. The New Yorker magazine has published a bombshell investigation of the head of CBS Corporation that includes allegations of sexual misconduct. The article by Ronan Farrow alleges that CBS chairman and CEO Leslie Moonves engaged in inappropriate sexual behavior, including unwanted kissing and touching that occurred over 20 years ago. Representatives for Moonves did not immediately respond to ABC News’ requests for comment Friday afternoon. The media company’s stock fell by more than 5 percent Friday afternoon amid news of the impending investigation and the allegations.



At least 3 dead, 7 injured in New Orleans shooting. (CNN) A manhunt is underway for two suspects accused of killing three people and injuring seven others in New Orleans, the city’s police chief said. The suspects, who police say were wearing hoodies, fired a long rifle and a handgun Saturday night into a crowd outside a business three miles from the French Quarter. Police Chief Michael Harrison said the suspects approached the victims from behind and fired multiple rounds “indiscriminately.” “This is an extremely tragic incident,” he told reporters. Two men and a woman died at the scene, and several others were injured. The injured -- five men and two women -- were taken to several hospitals in the area, police said. One victim was in critical condition Sunday morning.



Trump Administration Moves To Roll Back Obama-Era Labor Department Rule. The Trump administration is taking steps to roll back an Obama-era Labor Department safety rule. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) issued a notice Friday proposing to roll back the rule that requires companies with 250 workers or more to submit detailed logs on workplace injuries. Officials say the original rule violates workers privacy as the information could be subject to Freedom of Information Act requests. The proposed changes will protect employee information and reduce the burden on employers. A worker (pictured above) cuts a piece from a steel coil at the Novolipetsk Steel PAO steel mill in Farrell, Pennsylvania, U.S., March 9, 2018. ( Photo/REUTERS)



Carr Fire Kills 5 People, Burns 80,000 Acres Near Redding, California. Five people are now confirmed dead, as the Carr fire continues to rage in Northern California. Earlier Saturday, a California family confirmed two young children and their great grandmother died from the fire. As of now, 500 structures have been destroyed and 80, acres have been charred from the Carr Fire, which is only 5% contained. Fire officials said high temperatures, and large amounts of dried brush are stoking the flames and causing massive amounts of smoke, making containment efforts difficult. Authorities also estimated around 38,000 people have been evacuated as of Friday. Meantime, authorities have released the name of the firefighter killed in the devastating fire. According to officials, Jeremy Stoke, a fire inspector with the Redding Fire Department, died fighting the deadly blaze Friday. The Carr Fire (pictured above) burns along Highway 299 in Redding, Calif., on Thursday, July 26, 2018. (AP Photo/Noah Berger)



After strong interest for several years, international buyers appear to be souring on the U.S. housing market. The dollar volume of U.S. home sales to international buyers between April 2017 and March 2018 dropped 21 percent compared with the year-ago period, according to the National Association of Realtors. Of the \$121 billion in sales to international buyers, those currently living in the U.S. purchased \$67.9 billion in properties, while nonresident foreigners purchased \$53 billion, both marking a drop from the previous year. Foreign buyers accounted for 8 percent of the \$1.6 trillion in existing home sales, a drop from 10 percent the previous year.



“The decline is partly coming off high levels of the prior year, but also surely from the strong rhetoric coming out of Washington against foreigners,” said Lawrence Yun, chief economist for the Realtors. “There has been a large drop-off in foreign students attending U.S. universities already. Chinese [buyers], in particular, purchase homes for their kids while attending college.” China still leads the pack for international buyers, as it has for six straight years, accounting for 15 percent of international sales. Chinese buyers also purchased the most expensive homes, with a median price of \$439,100. Canada came in second, with a 10 percent share of international sales, but the Canadians’ dollar volume dropped by 45 percent compared to the previous year. Not only are Canadians buying fewer U.S. properties, they are buying cheaper U.S. properties. The median price for Canadian buyers was \$292,000. “The market here is softer, and I imagine that’s why there are perhaps less Canadian buyers,” said Elli Davis, a real estate agent

# International Buyers Are Dropping Out Of The U.S. Housing Market

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor



European model forecast highs for the next five days.  
(weathermodels.com modified by CWG)

based in Toronto. “That does surprise me, though, as I still know lots of people buying mostly in Florida!”



**A real estate agent readies a house for viewing in Venice, Calif.**  
Buyers from China, Canada, India, Mexico and the United Kingdom accounted for nearly half of the dollar volume of sales to international buyers. Canadian buyers had been the market leaders by far during the U.S. recession. They dropped back significantly as U.S. home prices recovered, Chinese buying increased and U.S. investor purchases climbed. “Inventory shortages continue to drive up prices and sustained job creation and

historically low interest rates mean that foreign buyers are now competing with domestic residents for the same, limited supply of homes,” Yun said. High prices could certainly be a deterrent for buyers in Southern California. Chinese buyers have been very strong in the single-family market there, as they plan for their children to attend area universities. Irvine, especially, saw huge demand from Chinese buyers, particularly in newly built communities, with larger, multigenerational homes that they favor. For international investors who are looking for condominiums in large cities as an investment, the supply theory doesn’t really hold. “I don’t think it’s the supply issue because these buyers are buying in the higher end and there is more supply there, particularly in the gateway cities like Miami and New York,” said Sam Khater, chief economist at Freddie Mac. “It could be just that their appetite for U.S. real estate is waning.” (Courtesy <https://www.cnbc.com/>)

## NAR Reports A Decrease In International Home Sales



The housing market’s low supply and high prices have been affecting residents across the nation for a while, but now experts are starting to see these trends harm international home purchases in the U.S. According to a news report, international sales from April 2017 to March 2018 dropped 21 percent. In that 12 month time frame, international sales totaled \$121 billion. “After a surge in 2017, we saw a decrease in foreign activity in the housing market in the latest year, bringing us closer to the levels seen in 2016,” said the National Association of Realtors economist Lawrence Yun. Yun attributed the decrease to low inventory and high housing prices. In May of 2018, the U.S. saw the highest jump in housing prices since 2014. Experts predict the costs will only continue to rise, possibly over 5 percent, by next May. In the past, international buyers have purchased more expensive homes than the average home price. The average existing median home price was \$249,300, but the average international sale was \$292,000. As of now, the housing market’s inventory is increasing, but not enough to take away from the competition for homes on the market. June saw a 5.2 percent increase in existing home inventory, but the amount of home sales that month still dropped.

## Not So Local Real Estate



For the international buyers who are purchasing homes in the U.S., most buy from China. For the sixth year straight, buyers from China make up \$30.4 billion in international sales. The other countries that topped international sales were Canada, India, Mexico and the United Kingdom. When it comes to where international buyers are most likely to purchase property, a lot of the international buying takes place in Florida with 19 percent of international purchases. California follows closely behind with 14 percent and Texas a little lower with 9 percent. International buyers are most likely to purchase a single-family home — about 66 percent of foreign buyers purchase a single-family home, while 14 percent buy a condo and 13 percent buy a townhouse. As for what this means for the real estate industry, Realtors are unsure. According to a NAR survey, only 23 percent of members worked with an international client in the last year. That number dropped 29 percent from last year. Almost half of the survey respondents, 44 percent, said they don’t know what the future of international sales will look like, which Yun said was likely due to uncertainty surrounding future trade and immigration policy. (Courtesy [houstonagent.com](http://houstonagent.com))



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London (CNN) Julian Assange walked into the Ecuadorian Embassy in London on June 19, 2012 to claim political asylum. He has been there ever since -- a total of 2,230 days -- rarely seeing daylight. But multiple sources say his situation is now untenable and he may soon leave, whether he wants to or not. The question is: what will happen to Assange and when he does walk out of his bolt-hole around the corner from Harrods? The recent indictments issued by US Special Counsel Robert Mueller imply that Assange and WikiLeaks were a conduit for Russian intelligence in distributing hacked Democratic Party emails in 2016.

According to the indictment document, "The conspirators (...) discussed the release of the stolen documents and the timing of those releases with Organisation 1 to heighten their impact."

CNN has established that Organization 1 is WikiLeaks, which published the emails in July 2016.

Assange has always maintained that he did not receive them from the Russian government. He told Fox News in January 2017: "Our source is not the Russian government, and it is not a state party."

A member of Assange's legal team, Jennifer Robinson, told CNN this week: "WikiLeaks has made very clear they were not engaged in any way with the Russian state with respect to that publication. There is no connection between WikiLeaks and any of those who have been indicted."



His lawyers argue that all Assange did was publish the hacked emails, as did other media, after being in contact with a hacker called Guccifer 2.0. The Special Counsel alleges that Guccifer 2.0 was a cover for Russian intelligence, saying in the indictment that on July 14th [2016], Guccifer 2.0 sent WikiLeaks an encrypted attachment that contained "instructions on how to access an online archive of stolen DNC documents." Whether a sealed indictment awaits Assange in relation to the Russian hacking investigation is unknown. But according to US officials, charges have been drawn up relating to previous WikiLeaks disclosures of classified US documents.

Assange would face arrest if/when he leaves

# Assange Has Been Granted Ecuadorian Citizenship Julian Assange Looks For Deal To End His 'Diplomatic Isolation'

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

the embassy because he skipped bail in 2012 -- when Swedish authorities were seeking his extradition to face accusations of rape. Last year Sweden suspended the investigation, but Assange's lawyers fear his arrest would be swiftly followed by a US extradition request. Assange maintains his innocence. "For us protecting him from US extradition is absolutely paramount, and the most important and fundamental principle that must be respected," Robinson told CNN this week.

**BREAKING: WikiLeaks Founder Julian Assange Granted Ecuadorian Citizenship** (CNN) Ecuador has granted citizenship to WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, Ecuador's Foreign Minister Maria Fernanda Espinosa announced Thursday, July 26, 2018. Speaking at a news conference in Quito, Espinosa said Assange was granted naturalization on December 12.

She called the measure "one more ring of protection" for Assange, who has been holed up at the Ecuadorian Embassy in London since 2012 in an effort to avoid a Swedish arrest warrant on rape allegations -- a charge he has always denied. Sweden dropped the charges in May 2017, but Assange remains the subject of a UK arrest warrant.

Assange, 46, has previously expressed concern that if he leaves the Ecuadorian embassy in London he could end up being extradited to the US, where he fears facing the death penalty over allegations of revealing government secrets through WikiLeaks. Espinosa said that in December, the Ecuadorian government requested diplomatic status for Assange, pointing out that his Ecuadorian naturalization reinforces his status as "protected."

But the UK rebuffed the request. "The Government of Ecuador recently requested diplomatic status for Mr. Assange here in the UK. The UK did not grant that request, nor are we in talks with Ecuador on this matter. Ecuador knows that the way to resolve this issue is for Julian Assange to leave the embassy to face justice," the UK Foreign Office said in a statement.

## EXCLUSIVE!!



Ecuador's president Lenin Moreno traveled to London on Friday for the ostensible purpose of speaking at the 2018 Global Disability Summit (Moreno has been using a wheelchair since being shot in a 1998 robbery attempt). The concealed actual purpose of the president's trip is to meet with British officials to finalize an agreement under which Ecuador will withdraw its asylum protection of Julian Assange, in place since 2012; eject him from the Ecuadorian Embassy in London; and then hand over the WikiLeaks founder to British authorities.

In a briefing Tuesday, Espinosa said Ecuador will continue to pursue a dialogue with the UK to eventually remove Assange from the embassy. She added that Ecuador was exploring the possibility of third-country mediation. "We will continue to protect Julian Assange while his physical and psychological integrity are at risk," Espinosa said. "We are a country that defends human rights and additionally, a country that respects international law."

A 2016 United Nations report concluded that the WikiLeaks founder had been arbitrarily detained by Sweden and the United Kingdom. Awssange's legal team has called on UK and Swedish authorities to end his "deprivation of liberty, respect his physical integrity and freedom of movement, and afford him the right to compensation."

WikiLeaks @wikileaks Statement by Mr Assange's legal team responding to yesterday's news: "The UN ruling, issued almost two years ago, is crystal clear in its language, Mr Assange is unlawfully and arbitrarily detained by the UK authorities and must be released."

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"The UN ruling, issued almost two years ago, is crystal clear in its language, Mr Assange is unlawfully and arbitrarily detained by the UK authorities and must be released," Assange's legal team said on Twitter.

"We believe Julian Assange's situation, from a human perspective, is not sustainable. A person cannot live in these conditions forever. And we are very respectfully looking with the United Kingdom to find mechanisms that lead to a solution," Espinosa added.

"There should never be a situation where a publisher is sent to the US to face prosecution for that activity, so we will, if forced, fight his extradition in the British Courts." The Ecuadorian government wants the case resolved. Ecuador's recently elected president, Lenin Moreno said in Madrid Friday that his government was in dialogue with the UK and wanted a solution that guaranteed Assange's life would not be in danger. He described Assange's long confinement as "against human rights."

Downing Street confirmed discussions were "ongoing."

Moreno has previously described Assange as an "inherited problem" (his predecessor Rafael Correa granted Assange asylum.) But in a statement last week, the Ecuadorian Foreign Ministry said it saw no immediate or long-term solution to the situation.

Complicating the situation is the fact that Assange was granted Ecuadorian citizenship last December.

Assange's situation is also a dilemma for the British government, aware that he inspires both passionate support and visceral animosity.



Julian Assange speaks to the media from the balcony of the Embassy of Ecuador, where he has been living since June 19, 2012.

Foreign Office Minister Alan Duncan told the House of Commons last month: "We would like the assurance that if he were to step out of the embassy he will be treated humanely and properly. The first priority would be to look after his health, which we think is deteriorating."

manely and properly. The first priority would be to look after his health, which we think is deteriorating."

On that issue, Assange's lawyers and Ecuadorian officials agree. Robinson says "the situation is untenable. His health is being irreparably damaged...This case cannot go on much longer."

Assange's isolation deepened in March. His access to the internet and phone was cut off -- in part because Ecuadorian officials said he had violated an agreement not to comment about the internal affairs of other countries. Assange has been, for example, a vocal supporter of the Catalan independence campaign in Spain.

The former consul at the embassy, Fidel Narvaez, says he saw Assange two weeks ago. "He is a very strong man but remember he lives in a small flat, without natural light, just with artificial light," Narvaez told CNN.

Narvaez doesn't believe Assange is about to give up. "He is made for a big fight and I think he faces difficult and adverse situations with strength."

He also maintains that Assange has the right to live in Ecuador, if the British government allows him to leave the country.

On their own admission, Assange's legal team are in the dark about any negotiations that might be going on about Assange's future.



The irony is that Assange fears extradition to a country whose

President proclaimed himself a big fan of WikiLeaks when running for office. Donald Trump mentioned WikiLeaks' hacking of Hillary Clinton's emails more than 100 times in the last month of the 2016 election campaign. At one point he said: "I'll tell you this Wikileaks stuff is unbelievable. It tells you the inner heart, you gotta read it." He even went so far as to say: "I love WikiLeaks."

Trump's Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, and the US Justice Department appear to think very differently. They believe Julian Assange should be brought in front of a US court. When he was Director of the CIA, Pompeo said: "We can no longer allow Assange and his colleagues the latitude to use free speech values against us."

Pompeo said that WikiLeaks "walks like a hostile intelligence service and talks like a hostile intelligence service."

Whether Robert Mueller's team agrees -- that's the tantalizing question. (Courtesy cnn.com)

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