

Headlines:

- **US Debt tops \$21 Trillion**
- **Saudi Arabia to Begin Nuclear Programme**
- **Sarkozy arrested for Gaddafi Money**

Details:

US Debt tops \$21 Trillion

For the first time in its history, the US national debt surpassed \$21 trillion this week, according to the US Treasury. When Trump took office on Jan. 20, 2017, the national debt was \$19.9 trillion. Since then, the GOP-led Congress has passed a \$1.5 trillion tax cut bill and a two-year spending deal which, together, are expected to drive the deficit and debt further upward. The Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget estimates annual deficits could top \$2.1 trillion per year in the next decade, which would send the national debt soaring even higher. Republicans railed against the national debt level under the Obama administration, when it jumped from \$10.6 trillion to \$19.9 trillion, but few have been as outspoken about the situation with Republicans controlling Capitol Hill and the White House. Sen. Rand Paul, R-Kentucky, held up the spending bill last month on the Senate floor, blistering Republicans for doing exactly what they had criticized the Obama administration for doing.

Saudi Arabia to Begin Nuclear Programme

Saudi Arabia's crown prince Mohammed bin Salman's in an interview with "60 Minutes" highlighted: "Without a doubt, if Iran developed a nuclear bomb, we will follow suit as soon as possible." The interview aired just days after Saudi Arabia's Cabinet approved the country's nuclear energy policy, which clearly spells out Riyadh's intention to develop its own nuclear activities. It comes amid the start of the crown prince's trip to the US, as well as negotiations between Washington and Riyadh that the latter hopes will permit U.S. companies to assist the desert kingdom in fulfilling its nuclear energy ambitions. Two primary concerns are driving Saudi Arabia's pursuit of a nuclear program: energy and security. Riyadh might sit atop the world's largest cache of oil reserves, but the country has an energy problem. In the past, Saudi Arabia has burned over 1 million barrels of oil per day for power generation during seasonal peaks. In an effort to diversify, the country has targeted the development of nuclear energy, renewables so it can — like most of the world — cease burning crude oil for electricity generation and water desalination. Riyadh endeavors to construct 16 nuclear reactors with a capacity of 17.6 gigawatts by 2032.

Sarkozy arrested for Gaddafi Money

Former French President Nicolas Sarkozy was placed in custody on Tuesday as part of an investigation into claims that he received millions of euros in illegal financing from the government of the late Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi, a legal source told AFP. The news agency reported that Sarkozy was being held at the Nanterre police station, west of Paris, where he had reportedly been summoned by anti-corruption police officers.

The former French leader had until now refused to respond to a summons for questioning in the case, which drew heightened scrutiny last November when a businessman admitted delivering three cash-stuffed suitcases from the Libyan leader as contributions towards the French leader's first presidential bid.

The former president's detention comes more than a year after French-Lebanese businessman Ziad Takieddine repeated claims that he delivered suitcases from Libya containing 5m euros (\$6.2m) in cash to Sarkozy and his former chief of staff Claude Gueant. It is alleged that three cash handovers took place at the Interior Ministry, while Sarkozy was interior minister in late 2006 and early 2007. On each trip Takieddine carried a suitcase with around 1.5m to 2m euros in 200-euro and 500-euro notes, it is alleged.

Soon after becoming the French president, Sarkozy invited the Libyan leader to France for a state visit and rolled out the red carpet. Sarkozy then put France in the forefront of Nato-led air strikes against Gaddafi's troops that helped rebel fighters topple his government in 2011. It is not the first time that Sarkozy has faced legal troubles. In February 2016, he was handed preliminary charges by French magistrates for suspected illegal overspending on his failed 2012 re-election campaign and ordered to stand trial.