

Beat: Politics

HEAD OF FRENCH ARMY PIERRE VILLIERS RESIGNED AFTER CLASH WITH PRESIDENT MACRON

OVER MILITARY BUDGET CUTS

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USPA NEWS - "I consider that I can no longer be in a position to ensure the sustainability of the model of the army in which I believe to guarantee the protection of France and the French, today and tomorrow, and support the ambitions of our country." Declared Pierre De Villiers, while he was presenting his resign from his Chief of Army to the French President Emmanuel Macron

General Pierre de Villiers had expressed his public disagreement with the National Assembly on the eve of the celebrations of the 14th July, a national day remembrance in France.-----

President de la Republic Emmanuel Macron had a meeting with General Pierre de Villiers, Chief of the French General Staff, on July 13, the day of President Trump's visit to the gardens of the Hotel de Brienne, Before their presidential dinner at the Eiffel Tower. The general had disagreed on the cuts in the defense budget. He announced his resignation Wednesday morning July 19, 2017. Then General de Villiers lived in a delicate situation, and was forced to resign from the Army Staff (AMS) on Wednesday morning, even though he had just been extended to his post until July 2018 . In a statement, he declared that he was "not in a position", "in the present circumstances", "to ensure the continuity of the model of army to which he believes to guarantee the protection of France and the French".-----

One of the reasons that pushed General de Villiers, 60, to resign from head of the French Army, was what made him mad is a cut on the army budget. It infuriated him by an €850m (\$975m; £752m) cut in the military spending budget for 2017. Most was to come from cuts to equipment.-----

President Macron wants to get the overall French budget deficit below a European Union cap of 3% of national income for 2017. As part of that effort, the government has earmarked €850m in savings in military spending for the year. New equipment orders will be delayed or cancelled and the defence ministry is also being asked to take on the €1.3bn cost of foreign operations. However, President Macron has also said he wants to raise defence spending in 2018 by €1.5bn to €34.2bn. Furthermore, he has pledged to lift the defence budget from 1.77% of GDP to Nato's target of 2% by 2025. That would mean a sum of €50bn - at least a further €2bn each year, unprecedented in France. It is unclear how these pledges played into General de Villiers' thinking, although he told MPs last week: "I know when I am being had." Spokesman of the government, Christophe Caster, explained further the Misnomer of Council of 12th July, that "there will be no impact on the cuts when it comes to the fees of the Army's budget, and especially as far as the fight against terrorism is concerned.

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Editorial program service of General News Agency:

UPA United Press Agency LTD

483 Green Lanes

UK, London N13NV 4BS

contact (at) unitedpressagency.com

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