Trump takes US reins with flurry of executive orders

AFP- US President Donald Trump begins his first full day in office Tuesday, riding a wave of executive orders signed just hours after his inauguration on everything from immigration to the environment and culture wars.

After the pomp of his inauguration ceremony and stunning array of executive orders, the president’s Tuesday begins with a more solemn event: a prayer service at the National Cathedral.

Trump, 78, last visited the neo-Gothic church in the US capital in early January for the funeral of late president Jimmy Carter.

It was unclear if or when more executive orders would come from Trump, as the country and world digest the blizzard of actions he took Monday – including initiating withdrawals from the Paris climate accord and World Health Organization.

Signed in front of roaring supporters at an arena and then later in the Oval Office, the long list of policy changes offered a vivid symbol of Trump’s increased preparedness versus eight years prior, when he entered the White House with zero governing experience.

The Republican said in a speech after taking the oath at the Capitol – in a ceremony held indoors due to freezing weather – that “America’s decline is over” after four years of Democrat Joe Biden’s presidency, pledging “the golden age of America begins right now.”

Biden, 82, watched stony-faced during the inauguration ceremony as his political nemesis read the last rites over his single term in office.

But after the pomp and ceremony, it was the showman Trump of his first term – along with the sometimes strongman-style rhetoric – who was on display later in the day.

“Could you imagine Biden doing this? I don’t think so,” Trump told a cheering crowd at a Washington sports arena as he threw them the pens he had used to sign a first round of orders.

– January 6 pardons –

Back in the Oval Office, he held an impromptu 50-minute press conference as he signed more orders – including one pardoning around 1,500 Capitol rioters.

They were charged for taking part in the assault on Congress on January 6, 2021 by thousands of Trump supporters seeking to stop certification of Biden’s election victory.

“We hope they come out tonight frankly,” Trump said. “They’re expecting it.”

He signed orders declaring a national emergency at the Mexican border and said he would deploy US troops to tackle illegal immigration – a key campaign issue that drove his election victory over Kamala Harris.

The returning president often struck a nationalistic tone, pledging to impose trade tariffs, rename the Gulf of Mexico to the “Gulf of America,” and take “back” the Panama Canal, which has been controlled by the Central American country since 1999.

But he played down his earlier promises to get a peace agreement in Ukraine before taking office.

He confirmed he would meet Vladimir Putin and said Putin was “destroying Russia” by not making a deal to end the war.

Trump and First Lady Melania Trump later attended several inaugural balls, beginning with the “Commander-in-Chief” event

with US service members.

“Instead of worrying about political agendas, you don’t have to worry about that at all,” Trump told the crowd in a brief speech.

“It’s only one focus, defeating America’s enemies. We’re not going to be defeated. We’re not going to be humiliated. We’re only going to win, win, win!”

Trump is making history – as both the oldest president ever to take office and as the first felon, after a conviction related to paying a porn star hush money during his first presidential run.

He is also just the second president in US history to return to power after being voted out, after Grover Cleveland in 1893.

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