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Washington, D.C. 20520

October 10, 2018

Case No.: F-2018-00529, F-2018-00827,
F-2018-01063, & F-2018-01467

Michael Bekesha, Esq.
Judicial Watch, Inc.
425 Third Street, S.W., Suite 800
Washington, D.C. 20024

Dear Mr. Bekesha:

I refer you to our letter dated September 12, 2018, regarding the review of certain Department of State material under the Freedom of Information Act (the "FOIA"), 5 U.S.C. § 552.

The review of potentially responsive records is ongoing and has resulted in the retrieval of nine documents responsive to your request. After reviewing these documents, we have determined that seven may be released in full and two may be released in part. All released material is enclosed.

Where a document has been released to you in part, all non-exempt material that is reasonably segregable from the exempt material has been released. Where we have made excisions, the applicable exemptions are marked on the document. An enclosure provides information on FOIA exemptions and other grounds for withholding material.

We will keep you advised as your case progresses. If you have any questions, you may contact Trial Attorney Damon William Taaffe at (202) 252-2544 or damon.taaffe@usdoj.gov. Please refer to the case numbers cited above and the civil action number, 18-cv-968, in all correspondence regarding this case.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan C. Weetman for". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Susan C. Weetman
Chief, Programs and Policies Division
Office of Information Programs and Services

Enclosures: As stated

The Freedom of Information Act (5 USC 552)

FOIA Exemptions

- (b)(1) Information specifically authorized by an executive order to be kept secret in the interest of national defense or foreign policy. Executive Order 13526 includes the following classification categories:
- 1.4(a) Military plans, systems, or operations
 - 1.4(b) Foreign government information
 - 1.4(c) Intelligence activities, sources or methods, or cryptology
 - 1.4(d) Foreign relations or foreign activities of the US, including confidential sources
 - 1.4(e) Scientific, technological, or economic matters relating to national security, including defense against transnational terrorism
 - 1.4(f) U.S. Government programs for safeguarding nuclear materials or facilities
 - 1.4(g) Vulnerabilities or capabilities of systems, installations, infrastructures, projects, plans, or protection services relating to US national security, including defense against transnational terrorism
 - 1.4(h) Weapons of mass destruction
- (b)(2) Related solely to the internal personnel rules and practices of an agency
- (b)(3) Specifically exempted from disclosure by statute (other than 5 USC 552), for example:
- | | |
|----------------|---|
| ARMSEXP | Arms Export Control Act, 50a USC 2411(c) |
| CIA PERS/ORG | Central Intelligence Agency Act of 1949, 50 USC 403(g) |
| EXPORT CONTROL | Export Administration Act of 1979, 50 USC App. Sec. 2411(c) |
| FS ACT | Foreign Service Act of 1980, 22 USC 4004 |
| INA | Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 USC 1202(f), Sec. 222(f) |
| IRAN | Iran Claims Settlement Act, Public Law 99-99, Sec. 505 |
- (b)(4) Trade secrets and confidential commercial or financial information
- (b)(5) Interagency or intra-agency communications forming part of the deliberative process, attorney-client privilege, or attorney work product
- (b)(6) Personal privacy information
- (b)(7) Law enforcement information whose disclosure would:
- (A) interfere with enforcement proceedings
 - (B) deprive a person of a fair trial
 - (C) constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy
 - (D) disclose confidential sources
 - (E) disclose investigation techniques
 - (F) endanger life or physical safety of an individual
- (b)(8) Prepared by or for a government agency regulating or supervising financial institutions
- (b)(9) Geological and geophysical information and data, including maps, concerning wells

Other Grounds for Withholding

- NR Material not responsive to a FOIA request excised with the agreement of the requester

From: Brennan, Christopher <[redacted]@nydailynews.com>
Sent: Wednesday, January 11, 2017 4:07 PM
To: Winer, Jonathan <WinerJ@state.gov> **RELEASE IN PART B6**
Cc: winerjm@state.gov
Subject: Christopher Steele - NY Daily News

Hello,

My name is Christopher Brennan and I am a reporter for the NY Daily News looking into get in contact with the Jonathan Winer here:

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/jonathan-winer-5b28ba64?trk=miniprofile-name-link>

I am writing a story about the WSJ identifying Christopher Steele as the source of the "Russian Trump dossier" currently circulating via BuzzFeed. I saw that Mr. Winer is a LinkedIn contact of Mr. Steele and was wondering if I could talk to him, on background or otherwise, about Mr. Steele's work.

Please feel free to call me at [redacted] or on my cell at [redacted].

Sincerely,
Christopher

Reporter
NY Daily News

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***** (NJ)



STATE DEPARTMENT

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RELEASE IN FULL

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SECRETARY OF STATE

Syria Suspends Offensive In Aleppo To Allow Evacuations, Russia Says (DeYoung, WP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

Washington Post

By Karen DeYoung

PARIS — Russia said late Thursday that the Syrian military has suspended its combat operations in eastern Aleppo to allow civilians to leave the city and that it had reached agreement with the United States to negotiate the safe departure of rebel fighters.

A senior U.S. State Department official here traveling with Secretary of State John F. Kerry said that neither of those assertions could yet be confirmed but that Kerry was in contact with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.

There were conflicting reports from inside Aleppo, where some residents reported a sudden quiet, but others said neighborhoods were still under fire. On Wednesday, as many as 150 elderly residents of Aleppo's Old City were evacuated by the government in a joint operation with the International Red Cross.

Lavrov, speaking to Russian journalists in Hamburg, said a much bigger evacuation was underway. "Yet another and the biggest [operation] so far . . . to evacuate the civilians willing to leave the place is underway there," he said, according to Russia's state-owned Tass news agency. "There are some 8,000 people in the column. That's a huge operation, and the withdrawal route is five kilometers long."

Kerry and Lavrov met twice Thursday morning in Hamburg, where they were attending an international conference. Kerry left at midday for Paris, and the two spoke again by telephone in the afternoon, said the official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the diplomatic contacts.

The White House, which has long been skeptical of Moscow's sincerity in its discussions on Syria, reacted guardedly. "Our approach to this situation from the beginning has been to listen carefully to what the Russians say but scrutinize their actions," press secretary Josh Earnest said.

Last summer, the United States suspended military and diplomatic "expert" talks with Russia in Geneva over a possible cease-fire in Syria when the Syrian government's siege of eastern Aleppo began, aided by Russian air attacks. A ferocious government ground offensive in the past few weeks, with hundreds of reported civilian deaths, has retaken all but about a quarter of the territory the opposition once held in the city. As many as 200,000 civilians, and several thousand rebels, are said to remain there.

Lavrov said that he and Kerry had reached agreement to restart the Geneva talks on Saturday to determine "the ways and methods of a final settlement of the eastern Aleppo problem through the departure of all militants and those civilian residents, who will wish to do so, from there," the Russian news agency Interfax reported from Hamburg.

The State Department official said the resumption of expert talks had been "discussed" but had not been finalized as of late Thursday.

The immediate Kerry-Lavrov discussions are about evacuating Aleppo and "determining the timing, the safety and where [opposition fighters and civilians] are going to go," the State Department official said. France will host a meeting here Saturday morning of the United States and other governments in Europe and the region of the conflict to discuss the process.

The hope is that talks in Geneva will move quickly to a Syria-wide cease-fire that will allow the delivery of humanitarian aid to hundreds of thousands in besieged communities across the western third of the country, and to restart political talks between the opposition and the government of President Bashar al-Assad over a political transition.

Given that more than a year of start-and-stop negotiations have failed to halt the carnage in Syria, optimism was tempered. "If that occurs, we obviously would welcome that development," Earnest said. "It won't be some sort of accident or coincidence. . . . It will be the product and the result of skilled, principled, tough, tenacious diplomacy, and much of the credit will go to Secretary Kerry."

"But we'll see what happens," he said.

Louisa Loveluck in Beirut contributed to this report.

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Russia Says Syria Halts Aleppo Combat To Evacuate Citizens (Barnard, NYT)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[New York Times](#)

By Anne Barnard

BEIRUT, Lebanon — Russian officials said Thursday that the Syrian Army had stopped combat operations in the divided city of Aleppo in order to evacuate civilians, but residents of the rebel-held enclave reported that after a day of intense bombardment, fighting was continuing.

Russia's foreign minister, Sergey V. Lavrov, said that the pause would allow for 8,000 civilians to be evacuated, after forces loyal to the Syrian government recaptured three-quarters of the territory rebels had held for four years.

Mr. Lavrov, who spoke on the sidelines of a meeting of foreign ministers in Germany, did not offer specifics on an evacuation plan. But civilians inside the remaining rebel-held districts of eastern Aleppo were in a state of panic after a day in which rescue workers said 150 airstrikes had killed at least 50 people and in which residents said they were unable to flee because of the intense combat.

Residents said by telephone that they could hear drones and tank fire and that they feared government forces were closing in on the few neighborhoods still held by rebels. Several said they had not heard of evacuation offers and begged to be told of any chances to escape.

At the United Nations, the agency's envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, told reporters he could not verify whether the fighting had stopped or whether civilians were being allowed to evacuate, and he pressed the government authorities to let

them leave safely and with protection from United Nations staff.

His remarks followed a closed-door session of the Security Council, in which Mr. de Mistura said that government forces could take control of the remaining rebel-held parts of Aleppo by the end of the year and that rebel forces should be allowed to leave the city safely, if they wished, according to diplomats present.

The United States, which has backed elements of the opposition to President Bashar al-Assad of Syria, cautiously welcomed Mr. Lavrov's remarks.

Josh Earnest, the White House spokesman, called them "an indication that something positive could happen, but we're going to have to wait and see." He added, "Our approach to the situation has been to listen carefully to what the Russians say, but scrutinize their actions."

Pleas for help from eastern Aleppo escalated on Thursday, with doctors warning that they could no longer provide more than first aid. Some residents reached via telephone and text message were fleeing from the front lines into the center of the shrinking enclave, while others stayed near the edges, hoping to evacuate but complaining that the combatants would not pause to let them escape.

The recapture of most of the rebel-held part of Aleppo by the government is a potential turning point in Syria's war, which began in 2011 with largely peaceful street protests demanding political change and evolved into armed conflict after government crackdowns.

Mr. Assad told Al Watan, a pro-government newspaper, that victory in Aleppo "doesn't mean the end of the war in Syria. It is a significant landmark toward the end of the battle, but the war in Syria will not end until terrorism is eliminated," he said, referring to insurgents.

The International Committee of the Red Cross said that it had evacuated more than 140 civilians from a part of Aleppo's old city that had been retaken by the government, mainly residents of a home for older people, and that it had recovered the bodies of 11 people who had died of lack of medical care.

The White Helmets organization, which rescues people from bombing sites and has financing from Western countries, issued a statement saying that it feared a massacre, and asking to evacuate its volunteers, who have been accused by the Syrian government of colluding with terrorists. "If we are not evacuated, our volunteers face torture and execution in the regime's detention centers," the statement said. "We have good reason to fear for our lives."

Bombs containing chlorine, banned as a weapon by international law, fell on the front line near the Kalasseh neighborhood, sickening about 30 people, the White Helmets said.

Salem Abul Nasser, a dentist, said he had hoped for a few quiet hours after Mr. Lavrov spoke and had fallen asleep, only to be wakened when a corpse of a man newly killed on the front line and another person apparently suffering from chlorine inhalation were brought to his clinic.

Showing the body over an online video chat, he broke into tears, saying: "I was hoping it would be a real cease-fire. Now I'm deeply disappointed and pessimistic. The shelling resumed now; I can hear it."

The United Nations humanitarian chief, Jan Egeland, expressed frustration that aid deliveries had not been approved by the Syrian government in November — when front lines were more stable — and that now the United States and Russia, as well as the Syrian combatants, could not agree on a plan to deliver aid and evacuate civilians who want to leave.

Russia's Foreign Ministry issued an angry and sarcastic response to a statement from six Western countries a day earlier that had warned of a humanitarian catastrophe in Aleppo. The ministry said that Russia was providing aid to residents it said had been liberated from a terrorist occupation.

"If you are ready to render aid to residents of Aleppo, let us know where this aid is located," the statement said. "And if you just don't have any aid, letters and empty promises won't fill bellies of Aleppo's residents"

Mr. Lavrov's comments on a halt in fighting came on the eve of new efforts, albeit entirely symbolic, at the United Nations to press for a pause in fighting. Led by Canada, the United Nations General Assembly is scheduled to vote on a draft resolution that calls for a "cessation of hostilities" for an undefined period of time and that allows humanitarian aid to be delivered. It would have no force of law.

The Russian ambassador, Vitaly I. Churkin, described it as "not very effective."

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Russia Says Aleppo Combat Suspended, Residents Say No Let-Up (El Deeb, Isachenkov, AP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Associated Press](#)

By Sarah El Deeb And Vladimir Isachenkov

BEIRUT (AP) – Russia said the Syrian army was suspending combat operations in Aleppo late Thursday to allow for the evacuation of civilians from besieged rebel-held neighborhoods, but residents and fighters reported no let-up in the bombing and shelling campaign on the opposition's ever-shrinking enclave.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, speaking in Germany after talks with U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, said military experts and diplomats would meet Saturday in Geneva to work out details of the rebels' exit from Aleppo's eastern neighborhoods, along with civilians who were willing to leave the city.

Lavrov said the Syrian army suspended combat action late Thursday to allow some 8,000 civilians to leave the city in a convoy spreading across a five-kilometer (three-mile) route. However, opposition activists said there was no halt to the government offensive.

"Battles are intense," said a message from a rebel operation room shared with The Associated Press. Other residents reported warplanes firing from machine guns at rebel positions and artillery shells falling in the remaining rebel-controlled districts.

In Washington, State Department spokeswoman Elizabeth Trudeau said the U.S. was focused on de-escalating the violence in Aleppo to allow aid into the city and enable people wishing to stay in their homes to do so.

She said Kerry and Lavrov continued talks on Thursday with the goal of securing a cease-fire and the "safe departure of those who wish to leave the city." She said details of Saturday's U.S.-Russian technical discussions in Geneva were still being worked out.

Earlier, in Geneva, U.N. special adviser Jan Egeland said efforts to evacuate hundreds of wounded people from eastern Aleppo had stalled following a deadly attack this week on a Russian military hospital that left two Russian nurses dead and a doctor seriously wounded.

"It is with bitterness and frustration that we have to report that we have not been able even to evacuate the wounded," Egeland said. "The member states that are supposed to help us get access to civilians in the cross-fire are poles apart in how they regard what is happening in Syria."

He said Syrian President Bashar Assad's government had authorized U.N.-organized aid shipments into eastern Aleppo for the first time. However, he provided no details about how the aid might get in or where it would go, and past agreements have fallen through before any aid could be delivered.

Medical officials in the enclave issued a passionate plea for a cease-fire.

"Aleppo is finished. There is nothing left except a few residents and bricks," Mohammed Abu Jaafar, the head of the eastern Aleppo forensic authority, said in a recorded message shared with reporters. "This may be my last call."

By early afternoon, Abu Jaafar said 14 bodies had arrived at his facility from all over eastern Aleppo, although a comprehensive death toll for the day was not possible because of the intense fighting. Residents described streets littered with bodies as ambulances and rescue workers struggled to keep up.

The rebel defenses have buckled amid the wide-ranging government offensive, which opened a number of fronts at once and was preceded by an intensive aerial campaign. More than three-quarters of the rebel sector has now fallen, including the symbolically important ancient Aleppo quarters. More than 30,000 of the estimated 275,000 residents of the besieged eastern enclave have fled to western Aleppo.

The Syrian government has dismissed a proposal for a cease-fire put forward by the rebels Wednesday.

In comments published Thursday in the state-owned al-Watan newspaper, Assad said he would no longer consider truce offers, adding that such proposals, particularly by the Americans, often come when the rebels are in a "difficult spot."

"That is why we hear wailing and screaming and pleas for truces as the only political discourse now," Assad said.

He said that while a victory by Syrian government forces in the battle for Aleppo would be a "big gain," it will not end the country's civil war.

"Liberating Aleppo from the terrorists deals a blow to the whole foundation of this project," he said. But he added, "to be realistic, it doesn't mean the end of the war."

On Thursday, opposition activists reported intensive bombing in the al-Sukkari and Kallaseh neighborhoods still under rebel control.

Al-Sukkari is in the southern part of eastern Aleppo, an area that has become home to the majority of the displaced civilians who stayed behind; Kallaseh is near the Old City. Footage by the Syrian military showed intensive shelling of Bustan al-Qasr, a frontline neighborhood that links the rebel-held eastern and government-controlled western parts of the divided city.

The International Committee for the Red Cross said that it had evacuated 148 disabled civilians and others in need of

urgent care from a facility in Aleppo's Old City after fighting calmed down there.

The evacuation, undertaken jointly with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, was completed late Wednesday, the Red Cross said in a statement. The people had been trapped in a facility that was originally a home for the elderly and included mentally and physically disabled patients, as well as injured civilians who had sought refuge there.

"They were forgotten," said Pawel Krzysiek, the agency's communication coordinator in Damascus. The evacuees were taken to a hospital and shelters in the western, government-held part of Aleppo.

Isachenkov reported from Moscow. Associated Press writers Nataliya Vasilyeva in Moscow, Jamey Keaten in Geneva and Bradley Klapper in Washington contributed to this report.

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Kerry "Hopeful" On End To Aleppo Siege As US, Russia Eye Deal (Meyer, BLOOM)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Bloomberg News](#)

By Henry Meyer

The U.S. and Russia introduced a fresh push toward sealing an agreement to halt the siege of Aleppo as Syrian government forces tighten their grip on the opposition stronghold.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov met three times in 24 hours in the German port city of Hamburg on the sidelines of a gathering of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Lavrov said U.S. and Russian diplomats and military experts will resume talks on Saturday in Geneva.

"We are working on something," Kerry told reporters as he emerged from a bilateral meeting with Lavrov before leaving the international gathering. He'll attend a meeting of European and Arab allies on Saturday in Paris to discuss Syria.

The flurry of diplomacy comes as pressure builds on the Kremlin to use its leverage over its Syrian ally to push for an

immediate cease-fire allowing for humanitarian access to eastern Aleppo and a return to a political process. Syria's six-year-old war, which has killed about 300,000 people and displaced millions, dominated discussions on the sidelines of the conference in Germany. Several hundred thousand civilians remain trapped in eastern Aleppo.

Russian-backed air strikes have propelled Syrian forces and their allies deeper into rebel-held sections of the city, Syria's former commercial capital, where they've seized 70 percent of territory once controlled by opposition fighters. The U.S., U.K., France, Germany, Italy and Canada issued a joint statement Wednesday condemning the assault and singling out Russia for preventing humanitarian access. 'Final Resolution'

Lavrov said the current round of talks aims to lead to "the final resolution of the east Aleppo problem through the exit of all militants." Kerry said he was "hopeful" for a breakthrough, without elaborating. A previous cease-fire agreement, thrashed out following months of negotiations between Russia and the U.S., collapsed in September after only a week.

The Russian foreign minister rejected accusations that the Kremlin is holding up a solution to the conflict, accusing the United Nations' special envoy to Syria, Staffan de Mistura, of "sabotaging" the peace process. The UN, which has suspended talks because western-backed Syrian opposition forces have balked at attending, should convene a new round anyway, Lavrov said.

Tension between the Kremlin and the U.S. and European allies spilled over to the OSCE meeting, with Lavrov during the session citing the "myth of a Russian threat." Lavrov Retort

"We urge an end to warlike rhetoric, which continues every day," Lavrov told the group, referring to NATO's expansion into former Soviet territory. "If you want to invite your partners for dialogue, then you shouldn't start with accusations and demands to hold dialogue based on ultimatums."

German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, the meeting's host, lamented the heightened tension with the Kremlin and addressed other conflicts within the OSCE's remit, including the stalled peace process in eastern Ukraine, which he called "unacceptable." Kerry called for "full implementation" of the so-called Minsk accord that sets out a cease-fire and political measures on Ukraine.

"Our foundations have become fragile, the tone has become more bitter, especially between the east and west," Steinmeier told reporters earlier in the German port city.

Earlier, Kerry and Lavrov discussed “multilateral efforts to achieve a cessation of hostilities in Aleppo” and the delivery of humanitarian aid, the State Department said in a statement. Aleppo Fighting

A number of Syrian rebel factions asked for a five-day pause to fighting to allow for the evacuation of civilians and the wounded, the Associated Press reported. The rebel statement made no mention of a pullout of militants as demanded by Russia, the AP said.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov said Thursday that the U.S. and Russia were moving close to an agreement on Aleppo, Interfax reported. The ministry said later that the U.S. had agreed to facilitate the rebels’ departure. Lavrov said Tuesday in Moscow that the “terrorists” holed up in Aleppo will be “destroyed” if they “refuse to leave nicely.”

Capturing Aleppo, once Syria’s biggest city, would hand Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad control of all major urban centers, marking a turning point in the war. Russia’s military intervention in September 2015 averted the Syrian leadership’s collapse and allowed Assad’s forces to decisively push back rebel forces.

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The Latest: Turkey Sends 300 More Troops To Syria Border (AP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Associated Press](#)

BEIRUT (AP) – The Latest on the conflict in Syria (all times local):

9:40 p.m.

Turkey’s state-run news agency says 300 commandos have deployed to the border area with Syria.

Anadolu said Thursday that the commandos would join Turkey’s Operation Euphrates Shield, which aims to drive Islamic State militants and Kurdish forces out of a strategic area of northern Syria.

The report did not specify if they had crossed into Syria.

Turkey supports anti-government forces in Syria and has a military presence in the northern Syrian town of Jarablus and in the outskirts of the IS-held town of al-Bab.

7:45 p.m.

Russia’s foreign minister says Moscow and Washington have agreed to call a meeting to discuss the withdrawal of Syrian rebels from Aleppo.

Sergey Lavrov said Thursday after talks with U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry in Hamburg that they agreed to call a meeting of military experts and diplomats in Geneva on Saturday.

He said they would work on a document outlining details of the rebels’ exit from Aleppo’s eastern neighborhoods, along with civilians who are also willing to leave the city.

The Syrian government has dismissed calls for a cease-fire, as its troops press their offensive on the rebel-held enclave.

Lavrov says the Syrian army suspended its advance Thursday to allow some 8,000 civilians to leave the city in a convoy spreading across 5 kilometers (more than 3 miles).

6:40 p.m.

A senior Russian diplomat has dismissed a Western threat of new sanctions over Syria as a sign of “political impotence.”

Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said Thursday that a statement from the United States and five other Western powers raising the threat of additional sanctions against the supporters of Syrian President Bashar Assad was “cowardly.”

In a joint statement Wednesday, the leaders of Britain, Germany, Italy, France, Canada and the U.S. called for an immediate cease-fire in the Syrian city of Aleppo and said they were “ready to consider additional restrictive measures against individuals and entities that act for or on behalf of the Syrian regime.”

Russian news agencies quoted Ryabkov as saying that the threat of sanctions reflects a “complete political impotence of this group of nations.”

5:45 p.m.

A U.N. aid official says Syria’s government has authorized U.N.-organized aid shipments into eastern Aleppo for the first time.

Jan Egeland provided no details about how the aid might get in or where it would go in eastern Aleppo, where President Bashar Assad’s forces have made recent inroads to recapture areas from opposition fighters.

Egeland said Thursday in Geneva that efforts to evacuate hundreds of wounded people from eastern Aleppo stalled after a deadly attack on a Russian military hospital in government-controlled west Aleppo last week.

He said the government “finally” agreed to a U.N. plan to deliver aid across front lines and reach about 85 percent of

930,000 people in “besieged areas” across Syria. Such approvals, however, do not always result in actual deliveries.

5:10 p.m.

Syrian opposition activists say Islamic State militants have seized territory near Palmyra, home to famed Roman ruins.

IS seized Palmyra and held it for 10 months before being driven out by Russian-backed Syrian government forces in March. During their reign, the extremists destroyed a number of 2,000-year-old monuments and artifacts.

Rami Abdurrahman, head of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, says IS launched a two-pronged attack on government forces Thursday, advancing to within 5 miles (8 kilometers) of the town.

The Palmyra Coordination Committee, another opposition group, says IS advanced from the south and north, capturing government checkpoints and a number of small villages, and approaching gas fields and grain silos.

The IS-run Amaq news agency posted a video of four captured government soldiers.

2:45 p.m.

A senior Turkish official says the fate of the Syrian city of Aleppo has dominated high-level talks between Turkey and Russia.

Turkey’s presidential spokesman, Ibrahim Kalin, said Thursday there was “intense diplomatic activity” in order to bring about a cease-fire and the delivery of humanitarian aid. He says “the events taking place in Aleppo are of serious concern to all of us.”

Kalin says Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is personally engaged in the effort and has spoken three times with his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin.

The Syrian government with the help of its allies has regained almost complete control of the eastern neighborhoods of the divided city in a devastating military offensive.

Russia is a key ally of the Syrian government and has been carrying out airstrikes for more than a year in support of President Bashar Assad’s forces. Turkey is a leading sponsor of the opposition.

1:05 p.m.

Syria opposition activists are reporting intense government bombings of a number of neighborhoods that remain under rebel control in the city of Aleppo.

They say clashes are underway on Thursday along the fast-moving front line. The opposition Local Coordination Committees says government airstrikes and artillery hit at least six rebel-held neighborhoods in central and southeastern Aleppo

Opposition Thiqa news agency says the government dropped barrel bombs on al-Sukkari and Kallaseh neighborhoods.

Syrian troops and allied militiamen moved swiftly into rebel-held eastern Aleppo less than two weeks ago and are now in control of more than three quarters of the besieged rebel enclave.

Activists are struggling to document casualties because of street clashes and intense bombings.

The Syrian Civil Defense in Aleppo says it was able to record 38 killed in Wednesday’s violence. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said 11 were killed in Aleppo’s Old City, which was seized by the government Wednesday.

12:15 p.m.

The International Committee for the Red Cross says it has evacuated 148 disabled civilians and others in need of urgent care from a facility in Aleppo’s Old City that is now under Syrian government control.

ICRC said in a statement on Thursday that the evacuation was possible after fighting calmed down in that part of the city. It said the evacuation was undertaken jointly with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and was completed late on Wednesday.

The government secured the area after repelling rebels, who retreated to the south.

Pawel Krzysiek, ICRC communication coordinator in Damascus, says the evacuees had been “forgotten” amid the fighting.

He says they were trapped in a facility that was originally a home for the elderly. They include mental health patients, elderly orphans, and patients with physical disabilities. Some were injured civilians who had sought refuge there.

Krzysiek says they were evacuated to hospital and shelters in the western, government-held part of Aleppo.

11:30 a.m.

Syrian President Bashar Assad says victory in the battle for Aleppo will be a “big gain” for his government but that it will not be the end of the war in Syria.

In an interview published on Thursday in the state-owned newspaper al-Watan, Assad described his forces’ fight in Aleppo as one against terrorism and a conspiracy to destroy and divide Syria, allegedly led by Turkey.

Assad says that “liberating Aleppo from the terrorists deals a blow to the whole foundation of this project.”

With Aleppo, Syria’s largest city and former commercial heart, the capital of Damascus and Homs, the third largest city under his control, Assad says “terrorists” no longer hold any cards.

But he added, “to be realistic, it doesn’t mean the end of the war.”

“Even if we finish in Aleppo, we will carry on with the war against them.”

9:40 a.m.

A Russian deputy foreign minister says Russia is close to reaching a deal with the United States on a cease-fire for the besieged Syrian city of Aleppo.

The Syrian government and its ally Russia have rejected previous calls for truce for the war-torn city, keeping up the military offensive that has squeezed and forced rebels to retreat in several areas.

Russian news agencies on Thursday quoted Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov as saying that Moscow and Washington are “close to reaching an understanding” on Aleppo but warned against “high expectations.”

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov met on Wednesday in Germany but didn’t release any statements.

Ryabkov said the Kerry-Lavrov talks were extensive but said a final deal has not been worked out yet.

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Kerry Warns Europe, Others Against ‘Authoritarian Populism’ (Moulson, AP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

Associated Press

By Geir Moulson

BERLIN (AP) – U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry warned countries from Europe and beyond on Thursday to beware of an increasing “danger of authoritarian populism.”

Kerry spoke at a meeting in Hamburg of foreign ministers from the 57-nation Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The group, chaired by Germany this year, includes European Union countries, the U.S., Russia, Ukraine, Turkey, Central Asian nations and others.

In “too many places” in the OSCE region, he said, there has been “a rise of authoritarian thinking, accompanied by backsliding on human rights, restrictions on independent media, a spike in acts of intolerance and hate crimes,” Kerry said.

“Bigotry, repression and the silencing of dissent cannot become the new normal for any of us,” he added. “Every chip away at the fundamentals of freedom is actually an ugly building block in the road to tyranny. And the fact is that we all need to be aware of the danger of authoritarian populism.”

Kerry didn’t single out any country or person for specific criticism. However, he cited “growing corruption in too many countries, the increasing authoritarianism, moves by certain leaders to change constitutions in an effort to consolidate power, false news being spread through new platforms of the media, torture being actually advocated in certain quarters.”

The two-day OSCE meeting isn’t expected to produce concrete decisions.

But German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said that “the OSCE has become even more important in these times of crisis as an organization to preserve peace and security in Europe.” The group has deployed monitors to oversee peace efforts in Ukraine.

Steinmeier and Kerry both met separately with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on Wednesday evening to discuss Syria, among other issues.

In comments to the conference, none of them mentioned Syria. Kerry, however, said that “it is in the interests of all concerned to end the suffering and the stalemate” in Ukraine.

Ongoing violence, he added, must not be allowed to obscure Ukraine’s longer-term challenge of building a healthy democracy and fighting corruption.

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EDITORIALS & OP-EDS

Obama's Tenure Ends With A Turf War Over Killing Terrorists (Ignatius, WP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Washington Post](#)

By David Ignatius

Given the turf wars and interagency rivalries that have long surrounded U.S. Special Operations forces, President Obama probably didn't do the commandos any favors when he delivered his last big military speech at the base in Tampa where they're headquartered.

Obama's visit Tuesday to MacDill Air Force Base, home of U.S. Special Operations Command, or SOCOM, was in many ways an endorsement of its mission to combat terrorism. For all Obama's wariness about using conventional military power, he has embraced the role of "covert commander in chief," most notably in the 2011 raid that killed Osama bin Laden.

Obama's Tampa trip came as the Pentagon and CIA were buzzing about what critics claimed was a power grab by the Joint Special Operations Command, the super-secret group that manages most military counterterrorism strikes. The flap centered on a Nov. 25 Post article that said JSOC had received "expanded power to track, plan and potentially launch attacks on terrorist cells around the globe."

Military officials deny that there's any formal expansion of authority for JSOC or its parent organization, SOCOM. But the clandestine military unit has indeed become Obama's preferred instrument for killing terrorists, filling a role once played mainly by the CIA's Counterterrorism Center. The Trump administration will doubtless make its own judgments about the respective missions.

JSOC's role is rarely discussed publicly. But Defense Secretary Ashton Carter opened a window when he said at an Oct. 25 news conference in Paris: "We have put our Joint Special Operations Command in the lead of countering [the Islamic State's] external operations. And we have already achieved very significant results both in reducing the flow of foreign fighters and removing [Islamic State] leaders from the battlefield."

The U.S. assaults cited by Carter have been far deadlier than is generally recognized. Military sources say that drone strikes have killed between 20,000 and 25,000 Islamic State

operatives in Iraq and Syria. U.S. conventional attacks have killed about 30,000, for a total body count of more than 50,000.

The interagency flap about SOCOM's "expanded" role is said to have begun after a National Security Council "deputies committee" meeting, in which a White House official asked which agency was targeting "external operations" by Islamic State operatives. A senior military official answered that it was JSOC. This apparently triggered protests that the CIA should have such coordinating responsibility.

The CIA's concern was apparently roused partly by a JSOC intelligence fusion operation, known as Gallant Phoenix, in an Arab country bordering Syria. That effort, begun about two years ago, now has more than a dozen member countries. It has fed information about foreign fighters to counterterrorism officials in Spain, Germany, France, Portugal and other countries, military sources said.

The CIA and JSOC both conduct roughly the same number of drone flights every day. But the sources said that the military's drones conducted more than 20,000 strikes over the past year, in Afghanistan, Yemen and Syria, while the CIA is said to have struck fewer than a dozen targets over that period.

Since the bin Laden raid, Special Operations forces may have become too visible for their own good. The celebrity of SEAL Team 6 and other special units spawned jealousy from conventional military units that felt their role was being ignored. This sort of intra-military rivalry with commando units has existed since Gen. Maxwell Taylor helped to popularize the Green Berets as a counterinsurgency force during the early 1960s.

The CIA oversaw much of the United States' drone warfare during the first half of Obama's presidency, when it was targeting al-Qaeda operatives in Pakistan. But the agency's focus on such counterterrorism "direct action" appears to have diminished over the past several years.

A U.S. official said the agency "continues to play a very significant role in CT efforts," including targeting Islamic State external operations.

Obama's Tampa speech highlighted his preference for Special Operations forces and their "small-footprint" tactics, as opposed to big conventional assaults. He said the United States had attacked Islamic State fighters in Iraq and Syria "not with American battalions but with local forces backed by our equipment and our advisers and, importantly, our special forces."

Obama took credit, too, for the drone attacks that have proved so deadly against extremist targets. "In a dangerous

world, terrorists seek out places where it's often impossible to capture them. . . . And that means the best option for us to get those terrorists becomes a targeted strike.”

One unlikely legacy of Obama's presidency is that he made the secret, once-impermissible tactic of targeted killing the preferred tool of American counterterrorism policy.

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Dismantling Climate Rules Isn't So Easy (Buzbee, NYT)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[New York Times](#)

By William W. Buzbee

Donald J. Trump has named Scott Pruitt, a leading opponent of President Obama's signature environmental initiatives, as his nominee to head the Environmental Protection Agency. Mr. Pruitt, Oklahoma's attorney general, is closely linked to fossil fuel industries and is a climate change skeptic. He was most likely chosen to reverse these environmental initiatives, a deeply disturbing turn in the nation's effort to slow climate change.

Fortunately, law and reality constrain presidents and agency heads. So do deeply ingrained federalism traditions that leave room for state leadership on the environment. Collectively, law, reality and regulatory choices by states would create a bulwark against abrupt changes by Mr. Pruitt and the president. Wholesale regulatory rollbacks by presidential fiat are difficult to accomplish. Radical change would probably require Congress to amend long-enduring environmental statutes.

Two of the most controversial Obama administration environmental regulations — the Clean Power Plan governing greenhouse gas emissions from existing power plants, and the Waters of the United States rule defining federally protected waters — have been fiercely fought by Mr. Pruitt and his allies and opposed by Mr. Trump during the campaign.

The president-elect's supporters have been crowing that his agency heads can use the president's executive power to dismantle Obama-era rules, much as critics claimed President Obama did inappropriately to impose those regulations. In reality, a president's "executive power" is constrained by what the laws allow. Mr. Trump and Mr. Pruitt will have to "faithfully execute" those laws. As a state litigator, Mr. Pruitt could criticize federal policy and sue, but as the E.P.A. administrator, he may struggle to achieve his goals.

Regulatory reversals lacking a legal or factual basis would result in lawsuits by citizens, states and industries supporting the regulations. Challengers would argue that the rules are

rooted in statutory language, court precedents and in careful documentation of environmental, technological and market facts. On the climate, for example, three Supreme Court decisions established that federal climate action is required by the Clean Air Act's broad language; and the E.P.A. then, via another rule upheld by the judiciary, documented substantial climate risks.

Moreover, the enormous administrative record compiled to buttress the rationale and architecture of the Clean Power Plan details how state and corporate leaders have transformed energy markets, engaged in energy and pollution trading and improved environmental performance. As partisan advocates, Mr. Pruitt and his allies could exaggerate regulatory costs, ignore clean energy employment trends and disregard the health risks of burning coal. The E.P.A. can't.

Market and environmental reality matter because the Clean Air Act requires regulation based on what is "best" and "adequately demonstrated." Similarly, the waters rule was based on a sweeping survey of all peer-reviewed science that will also constrain future rollback efforts.

These empirical groundings for rules are not just made-up. Mr. Pruitt and the incoming Trump administration cannot simply rely on their preferences or on baseless claims about science and markets. Decades of law, much of it created by conservatives' judicial heroes, require presidents and agencies to abide by the rule of law and justify regulatory reversals. They have to take a hard look at science and other underlying facts. A ruling by the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit upholding the Clean Power Plan would further constrain the new president and Mr. Pruitt.

What about a legislative attack? Past blunderbuss efforts to weaken environmental laws through congressional actions by Republicans have met with painful defeat, as former House Speaker Newt Gingrich can attest about his failed mid-1990s rollback efforts. Even narrow legislative bills proposing regulatory turnarounds face filibuster threats under current Senate rules. The Congressional Review Act allows Congress, on an expedited basis, to overturn rules approved in the final days of a presidency, but not rules issued many months or years ago.

On the climate front, many of the reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and cleaner energy innovations have resulted from state initiatives, although some states — like Oklahoma, where Mr. Pruitt is from — resist. Federal law and constitutional norms make federal pre-emption of such state-level leadership illegal under most laws and highly unlikely under any future laws. Even when federal progress falters, states can do more. Climate denialists in charge of the executive branch cannot halt energy and technological

transformations already underway, especially when those are a result of state policies and are linked to private innovations.

An E.P.A. led by an anti-regulatory zealot will benefit from deference from the courts, especially when he slows new initiatives, adopts lax enforcement policies, engages in collusive settlements or proposes reconsideration of past actions. Foot-dragging is hard to remedy. However, science, data, statutory requirements, Supreme Court precedents, existing regulations, state progress and the huge clean energy industrial sector will constrain regulatory rollbacks or the wholesale loss of progress to slow climate change. Under the Constitution and rule of law, change by presidential fiat is not an option.

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Donald Trump Warms Up (Collins, NYT)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[New York Times](#)

By Gail Collins

What do you think the theme for Donald Trump's appointments has been so far? Generals, generals, generals? Climate change deniers, climate change deniers?

Those seem to be the leading contenders, although there's always the ever-popular Give Chris Christie a job. While still cooling his heels as governor of New Jersey, Christie made history when a recent Quinnipiac poll showed him with a 77 percent job disapproval rating. None of his predecessors had managed such a feat. We knew he had it in him.

When I want to be cheered up, I always think about Christie, who's currently lobbying for head of the Republican National Committee. (Next week, the Surface Transportation Board.)

On the downside, we had the heartbreaking saga of Al Gore, who happily emerged from a meeting with Trump this week, telling reporters about the "lengthy and very productive session" he'd had with the president-elect on climate change. It was, Gore added hopefully, a conversation that was likely "to be continued."

Then Trump turned around and named Scott Pruitt, the attorney general of Oklahoma, as head of the Environmental Protection Agency. From Gore's perspective, this would be like the judge in a divorce case naming the aggrieved husband as marriage counselor.

Pruitt is best pals with the oil and gas industry, and he knows the E.P.A. mainly as an entity to be sued. Under his watchful eye, his state has allowed so much natural gas fracking that Oklahoma now has way more earthquakes than sunrises.

Why do you think Trump went to so much trouble to set Gore up for heartbreak? The most likely answer is that he was only pretending to listen to what Gore was saying about climate

change, while he waited for the chance to break in and talk about how tremendous, enormous, historic and stupendous his election victory was. This seems to happen a lot.

Also, it's perfectly possible that by the time Trump sat down with Gore, he no longer remembered who he was appointing to the E.P.A. Perhaps he didn't remember that Gore cared about the environment. The key to this man's success, you understand, is failure to recall anything that happened before his most recent meal.

The selection of a Trump administration has been sort of mesmerizing in its own awful way. Ben Carson will be running Housing and Urban Development — Ben Carson, whose associate recently said he wouldn't be taking any cabinet job because "he's never run a federal agency. The last thing he would want to do was take a position that could cripple the presidency."

And our new national security adviser is going to be Michael Flynn, a very creepy retired general whose son/former chief of staff has been promoting stupendously false stories about Hillary Clinton's involvement in a child sex ring at a pizza restaurant.

Trump says he's discussed his talent hunt with President Obama, who thinks "very highly" of some of the people on his list. Who do you think they are? Probably not the general with the son who tweets about Democratic child abuse. Maybe retired Gen. James Mattis, who Trump wants to make secretary of defense? Mattis is a pretty popular choice, possibly because his nickname is "Mad Dog."

Do you think if Governor Christie had a nickname, it would help his chances? What about "Growling Gerbil"?

And then there's secretary of state. Trump seems to be looking at nine million possibilities. By next week you may be in the mix. Think about it. You're far better qualified than Rudy "Rabid Rabbit" Giuliani. And unlike David Petraeus, I'll bet you are not currently serving out probation after pleading guilty to sharing highly classified government information with a lover.

Lately, it appears Trump has gone back into the field to drag in a whole new bunch of State contenders. My favorite is Representative Dana Rohrabacher of California, a person you have probably never heard of even though he's been in Congress since the 1980s and is currently head of the prestigious Subcommittee on Europe, Eurasia and Emerging Threats.

Rohrabacher is also a surfer and former folk singer who once claimed global warming might be connected to "dinosaur flatulence." He's told transition officials that if he gets the nod, he'll make the terrifying John Bolton his deputy, so the nation

can get a crazy warmonger plus a guy who knows how to play old Kingston Trio music.

Also in the running: Rex Tillerson, the C.E.O. of ExxonMobil. Unlike Representative Rohrabacher, Tillerson seems to believe that human beings have had an impact on the climate; he just doesn't care. ("What good is it to save the planet if humanity suffers?")

Another name being bandied around is Democratic Senator Joe Manchin of West Virginia, who first ran for the Senate with a famous ad in which he shot a hole in federal environmental legislation.

Do you see a pattern here? Apparently the next secretary of state will be somebody who likes smog. Perhaps this is an opening for Chris Christie. New Jersey has had a lot of environmental problems. Maybe he could invite Trump to a football game for some bonding. They could talk foreign affairs, and then pollute something on the way home.

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Not So Risky Climate Business (WSJ)

A new study dismantles the logic of oil and gas 'systemic risk.'

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Wall Street Journal](#)

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

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The US Must Stand For Human Rights (Carter, WSJ)

The only title higher and more powerful than that of president is the title of citizen.

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Wall Street Journal](#)

By Jimmy Carter

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

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What's Really Pushing Politics To The Right? Immigration. (Zakaria, WP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Washington Post](#)

By Fareed Zakaria

A joke among journalists is that we are taught to count: "one, two, trend." But at this point, I think it's fair to say that we are witnessing a populist trend around the world. The real question is, what is fueling its extraordinary rise?

Almost a month after Donald Trump's election, Europeans went to the polls, with mixed results. Italians voted against everything — the establishment, the European Union and, by extension, their centrist, reform-minded prime minister, Matteo Renzi. Austrian voters, by contrast, rejected far-right candidate Norbert Hofer. But it was still startling that his Freedom Party — whose first leader was a former Nazi minister and SS member — received 46 percent of the national vote. Over the past few years, almost everywhere in Europe — including France, the Netherlands and Germany — right-wing populist parties have gained ground.

In most of the continent, populists still seem unlikely to take power because they cannot replicate Trump's success in getting control of a mainstream political party. European parties are internally strong and have mechanisms to block such a hostile takeover. U.S. political parties, on the other hand, since the advent of primaries, have become nothing more than vessels for popular politicians. Once it was clear that Trump would win the Republican nomination, the party structure folded and became his executive arm.

Supporters of Trump and other populist movements often point to economics as the key to their success — the slow recovery, wage stagnation, the erosion of manufacturing jobs, rising inequality. These are clearly powerful contributing factors. But it is striking that we see right-wing populism in Sweden, which is doing well economically; in Germany, where manufacturing remains robust; and in France, where workers have many protections. Here in the United States, exit polls showed that the majority of voters who were most concerned about the economy cast their ballots for Hillary Clinton.

The one common factor present everywhere, however, is immigration. In fact, one statistical analysis of European Union countries found that more immigrants invariably means more populists. According to the study, if you extrapolate from current trends, "as the percentage of immigrants approaches approximately 22 percent, the percentage of right-wing populist voters exceeds 50 percent." Hostility to immigration has been a core theme of every one of these populist parties.

One way to test this theory is to note that countries without large-scale immigration, such as Japan, have not seen the same rise of right-wing populism. Another interesting case is Spain, a country that has taken in many immigrants, but mostly Spanish-speaking Latinos, who are easier to assimilate. While you see traditional left-wing economic populism in Spain, you do not see right-wing nationalist movements.

The backlash against immigration is rooted in fact. As I pointed out in a Foreign Affairs essay (written in September,

before Trump's victory), we are living in an age of mass migration. In the past three or four decades, Western societies have seen large influxes of people from different lands and cultures. In 1970, foreign-born people made up less than 5 percent of the U.S. population; today they are about 14 percent. The rise is even sharper in most European countries, home to 76 million international migrants, recently coming mostly from Africa and the Middle East. Austria, for example, took in almost 100,000 immigrants last year — adding 1 percent to its population in 2015 alone.

This much change can be unsettling. For most of human history, people have lived, worked and died within a few miles of the place they were born. But in recent decades, hundreds of millions of people from poorer countries have moved to wealthier ones. This reflects an economic reality. Rich countries have declining birthrates and need labor; poor countries have millions who seek better lives. But this produces anxiety, unease and a cultural backlash that we are witnessing across the Western world.

What does this mean for the future? Western societies will have to better manage immigration. They should also place much greater emphasis on assimilation. Canada should be a role model. It has devised smart policies on both fronts, with high levels of (skilled) immigration, strong assimilation and no major recoil.

Eventually, Western societies will be able to adjust to this new feature of globalization. Look at young people in Europe and the United States, most of whom deeply value the benefits of diversity and seek to live in an open and connected world. That's the future. We just have to ensure that we don't wreck the world before we get there.

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Sorry Mad Dog, Waterboarding Works (Mitchell, WSJ)

I respect Gen. Mattis, but he has never employed enhanced-interrogation techniques. I have.

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Wall Street Journal](#)

By James E. Mitchell

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

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South Sudan Could Repeat Rwanda's Horrors (WP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Washington Post](#)

SOUTH SUDAN "is on the brink of catastrophe," a three-member U.N. commission on human rights declared last week after a visit. The chairman, Yasmine Sooka, warned of a repeat of the Rwandan genocide. "There is already a steady process of ethnic cleansing underway in several areas of South Sudan using starvation, gang rape and the burning of villages; everywhere we went across this country we heard villagers saying they are ready to shed blood to get their land back," she said. "Many told us it's already reached a point of no return."

The world responded with a shrug. After long delays, the U.N. Security Council was expected to vote on a resolution Nov. 29 imposing targeted sanctions and an arms embargo, but then Russia, China and others expressed opposition in one form or another, and the vote was put off. An earlier plan to send 4,000 peacekeepers for a regional protection force to join the 12,000 already in South Sudan has yet to be implemented. South Sudan, the world's youngest nation and an example of U.S. intervention that officials were proud to boast about just a few years ago, is careering once again into chaos. A report from the Council on Foreign Relations says the danger of genocide is real and proposed that the United Nations and African Union run the country for 10 to 15 years to help it rebuild.

Established out of the ashes of a long war in which millions died, South Sudan's independence in 2011 was a moment of hope but it did not last. The forces of President Salva Kiir and his rival and former vice president Riek Machar went to war with each other in late 2013, a senseless conflict that ended with a peace agreement nearly two years later. But key aspects of the deal have not been implemented, and Mr. Machar fled the country. On July 11, armed men, identified as government forces, went on a rampage in the capital, Juba, at a compound where foreign workers lived, robbing, beating and sexually assaulting them. Mr. Kiir, who has often urged Washington to be patient, appears to no longer be listening to appeals from the United States and elsewhere to stop the violence. The United States only recently backed the arms embargo.

The report from the U.N. team was alarming. Violence is spreading through regions of South Sudan, such as Central Equatoria, that had previously been quiet. Ms. Sooka said she found "an increase in hate speech, a crackdown on the media and civil society, deepening divisions between the country's 64 tribes," and a renewed drive for conflict in a nation already flooded with guns and armed groups. She added, "The scale of rape of women and girls perpetrated by all armed groups in South Sudan is utterly unacceptable and is frankly mind boggling." She said aid workers described gang rape as so prevalent that it has become "normal."

The U.N. Security Council, the United States and the rest of the world must find a way to confront these atrocities and stop the downward spiral of South Sudan.

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Veiled Bigotry In Germany (NYT)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[New York Times](#)

By

Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany has been a bulwark against the anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim and anti-globalization forces afflicting Western democracies. So it was dismaying when, on accepting her party's nomination on Tuesday as its candidate for another four-year term, she joined in the spreading European campaign against the full-face veil worn by some Muslim women.

In France, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Belgium, Bulgaria and Norway, where bans on face veils are in force or in the works, they have been portrayed as a defense of women against patriarchal subjugation, or as a security measure, or as an incentive to assimilation. But the truth is that the bans are first and foremost a direct expression of antipathy toward Muslim immigrants, usually meant to appease far-right xenophobes.

Ms. Merkel apparently believes that her endorsement of restrictions on face veils "wherever legally possible" is a relatively innocuous sop to discontent among Germans over her decision to allow more than a million asylum-seekers, most of them Muslims, into the country since 2015. Her address to her Christian Democratic Party was otherwise an admirable reaffirmation of her faith in human dignity and tolerance, along with a realistic assessment of an era in which "many people have the feeling that the world has gone off the rails."

The chancellor had rejected a drive in August for a complete ban on face veils by members of her party, ordering them to write a more limited law. The measure Ms. Merkel spoke of this week would not be a blanket ban, but would apply only in places like courtrooms, government buildings, schools and public demonstrations.

But that change doesn't alter the effect of associating Muslims who maintain traditional customs with terrorism. The rapturous applause that greeted Ms. Merkel's remarks on the ban was about Islamophobia, not a serious security concern over a rarely encountered form of dress.

In France, which was first to impose a full veil ban in 2011 and where some seaside cities last summer ordered even more absurd and humiliating injunctions against body-covering swimwear called the "burkini," one official claimed that the bathing suit "conveys an allegiance" to terrorist

movements. Islamic leaders in Europe have countered that the bans in fact lead to women feeling excluded from Western societies, and thus facilitate radicalization.

Ms. Merkel is right to see a growing threat from anti-immigration parties that have seized on popular anxiety over migrants and the fear of terrorism to challenge mainstream parties. But she is wrong to believe that trampling the rights of Muslim women to wear what they please will satisfy the anti-immigrant forces. The real danger is not the veil — it poses no threat — but the bigotry of those who've made it a symbol of their own fear and hate.

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A Bumpy Peace For Colombia (Ruiz, NYT)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[New York Times](#)

By Marta Ruiz

BOGOTÁ, Colombia — History is full of examples of countries that have found themselves immersed in war against the wishes of their population. In Colombia the opposite seems to be the case. President Juan Manuel Santos is seeking to achieve peace even though half the country apparently doesn't want it or believe that it's possible.

Mr. Santos will be given the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo on Saturday, "for his resolute efforts to bring the country's more than 50-year-long civil war to an end," in the words of the Swedish Academy. But even as the feared Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, guerrillas begin their transition into civil life, the future of Colombian peace is anything but certain.

The process for ending the armed conflict with the FARC has polarized Colombia radically. A new peace agreement reached on Nov. 12 was approved by the national Congress last week. To prevent another major political defeat, Mr. Santos did not hold a referendum to ratify it, as he had with the original agreement, which was rejected in October. In accordance with the new agreement, the FARC began to demobilize last week under United Nations supervision. It is the first step on the way to disappearing as an insurgent armed force.

The Constitutional Court needs to approve a fast-track mechanism for implementing the institutional reforms included in the new agreement in order to guarantee a stable peace. If this doesn't happen, the agreement will be subjected to revision in a series of town council meetings around the country before reaching Congress again in March.

Following the October plebiscite, the peace process was in a dangerous limbo, even though a bilateral cease-fire was already underway. Forty hectic days went by, during which the government heard out the leaders of the No faction, which

had won by a mere 53,000 votes, equivalent to a 0.43 percentage point. Heading the No backers are two former presidents who tried to make peace with the FARC in the past and failed: Álvaro Uribe and Andrés Pastrana.

The No supporters proposed 410 modifications, many of them poison darts aimed at the heart of the negotiation. For example, expecting the guerrilla movement to accept prison sentences for its members and that its leaders could not run for election would have been unthinkable in any reasonable agreement.

Other proposed modifications sought to stir up demons issuing from an intentional misinterpretation of the agreement. The fact that L.G.B.T. groups proposed gender equality in the original agreement made many churches and religious denominations view it as a threat to the family and Christian values. Likewise, the original agreement sought to grant land ownership to impoverished peasants who had been working the land for a long time. This was only a first step toward a modest agrarian reform, in a country where there has been none. However, landowners were still alarmed and saw the agreement as a threat to their private-property rights.

Before the plebiscite, the government negotiators said they had reached the best agreement possible with the FARC. After being defeated, they found themselves in the unusual position of asking the FARC to accept the opposition's proposals. The new agreement incorporated 80 percent of these suggestions, including the FARC's commitment to list all its assets in order to give reparations to the victims of the armed conflict. The new agreement also allows charges to be presented in ordinary courts of justice against former guerrillas involved in human rights crimes and drug trafficking. Still, Mr. Uribe and other critics have rejected it, claiming that it's not enough and that it condones the atrocities committed by the FARC.

The peace negotiations took place over a period of four years in Havana, with the aim of ending the spiral of political violence in Colombia once and for all. But what had been agreed on also reflected an old, unhealed wound in Colombia: the division between the conservative and liberal elites over issues including the lack of agrarian reform, the shortcomings of Colombian democracy, the unsuccessful war on drugs and rampant impunity for crimes.

In their proposals for the agreement, Mr. Uribe and the other No leaders defended the economic model based on large landowners, even though they know that Colombia's rural sector is one of the most backward in the world, and inequality is extreme. They criticized all the measures designed to guarantee the FARC political representation, including the creation of a party. They supported the fruitless

war on drugs. And lastly, they stubbornly refused to recognize the mechanisms of transnational justice designed to redress human rights abuses in armed conflict, including criminal prosecution, truth commissions and reparation programs. These far right-wing groups seek to maintain a status quo that has made Colombia a fractured country territorially, socially and politically.

Mr. Santos, by contrast, represents the liberal, moderate and modernizing right that has understood that Colombia must overcome political violence in order to develop economically.

Although Mr. Santos's ambitious reforms have not been endorsed by a clear majority of Colombians and his decision to skip a new plebiscite is unpopular, they are the only way to avoid abandoning a meticulously put-together peace agreement.

The new agreement, devised to ensure a stable and lasting peace, will become law without having broad popular support. It will be attacked from many sides during its implementation. The next stage, starting in March, will be disarmament. If those who repudiate the agreement should win the 2018 elections on a promise to rescind it, Colombia will face the risk of a new cycle of violence.

Since Mr. Santos did not manage to build a basic consensus around peace, he is obliged to fight for it in the 20 months he has left to govern. He must show that peace is a major accomplishment not only for his administration but also for the country. He's betting that disarming the FARC will be felt as a dramatic improvement in the everyday lives of Colombians, the sort of conclusive evidence that can convince skeptics of the benefits of peace.

What's more, he must keep up a political dialogue with diverse groups that felt excluded from the peace process, particularly the far right and the local and emergent elites who are weary about a pact with the guerrillas and who have been tolerant of paramilitary violence. Without the acceptance of these groups, peace will always be weak and shaky.

Mr. Uribe has announced that he and his partisans are taking to the streets to seek a new referendum against critical points of the agreement, and that he will seek the presidency in 2018 under the banner of indignation. It's the same banner that worked successfully in the plebiscite.

Thus, everything indicates that the presidential election of 2018 will operate as a second, definitive referendum on this new agreement. That's why, in the end, it's essential for Mr. Santos to form a broad center-left coalition in order to face the adversary. This coalition, unheard-of in Colombia, would bear the great banner of reconciliation. Its victory would depend on the courage and high purpose of its leaders, and

on the new agreement's becoming a tangible reality as soon as possible.

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The Ghosts Spain Tries To Ignore (Hancox, NYT)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

New York Times

By Dan Hancox

"In Spain," wrote the poet Federico García Lorca, "the dead are more alive than the dead of any other country in the world." García Lorca was writing in 1933; only three years later, he was assassinated by a militia supporting Gen. Francisco Franco's fascist uprising, only a month into the Spanish Civil War.

Despite extensive detective work, excavations and even recent DNA tests of his relatives, García Lorca's remains have never been found, and he has never been given a proper burial. In this at least, he is not alone. It is thought that at least 114,000 victims of fascist death squads remain missing or unidentified from the period of the civil war and the dictatorship that followed Franco's victory in 1939. Most were political prisoners who supported the left-wing Popular Front government, executed under cover of darkness, then bundled into unmarked mass graves.

In recent years, the clamor to acknowledge and commemorate Spain's many ghosts has grown louder. Last month, 50 bodies were excavated in the small town of Porreres on the Balearic island of Majorca, off the Spanish mainland — a full 80 years after their deaths. Most showed signs of having been shot in the head at close range. According to local historians, they were lined up alongside the wall of the town church before being executed. The passage of time, and the lack of records about the executions, makes both finding and identifying victims fiendishly difficult, although DNA testing will help in some cases. It is thought there are 47 such mass graves on Majorca alone.

The excavation followed campaigning by a relatives' group, the Memory Association of Majorca, and the passing of a law by the Balearic Islands' regional parliament in May, which also funded the digging. Civil society, in particular, has taken up the cause, thanks to an absence of government support. Last month, Amnesty International started a campaign, Justice for Christmas, calling for the government to investigate mass graves.

The citizen-driven historical memory movement came into being at the turn of the millennium, and as public pressure grew, the Spanish government under the center-left prime minister at the time, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, passed a "law of historical memory" in 2007, lending government

support and funding to excavation, commemoration and reburial. Many on the right accused Mr. Zapatero of politicizing tragedy and reopening old wounds, while historical memory campaigners felt the legislation had been watered down.

When the right-wing People's Party won the election in 2011, the new prime minister, Mariano Rajoy, promptly defunded the project and closed the Office of Victims of the Civil War and the Dictatorship. The Spanish people, Mr. Rajoy had said in 2008, would have to "look to the future, and generate neither tension nor division."

It may sound like a noble sentiment in isolation, but it is disingenuous. Spain is no more able to escape its past than any other country, and historical memory is not just an interest of Spain's defeated left. Under Franco's dictatorship, the winners in the civil war not only spent 36 years writing the history of their victory, teaching it in schools and enshrining it in popular culture, but also left exactly the kind of solemn monuments to their dead that have been denied to the missing 114,000. The most profound and awe-inspiring example of these is Franco's final resting place, the Valley of the Fallen. It is a basilica topped by the largest memorial cross in the world, at nearly 500 feet high — and is the site of annual commemorations by the far right, dressed in fascist uniforms, on the anniversary of Franco's death.

As a new generation of fascists gains influence with governments from the United States to Hungary, it may be the source of some surprise that Spain has no equivalent to Greece's Golden Dawn or France's National Front, especially given the desperate and long-lasting effects of the economic crisis in Spain. In part the absence of a major contemporary Spanish far-right party is a legacy of the civil war and dictatorship, and the mass killings that ensued, which loom over the country to this day. In part — and this is the other reason Mr. Rajoy would prefer to look to the future — it is because the governing Popular Party absorbed much of the Francoist political machinery. The party's founder, Manuel Fraga, had been a government minister under Franco.

The fault lines over the mass graves run deep in Spanish politics and society. During the transition after Franco's death in 1975, as Spain edged toward the re-establishment of democracy, the spirit of the age was enshrined in the political parties' self-explanatory Pact of Forgetting. There was no reckoning, no equivalent of de-Nazification of the civil service, judiciary or security forces. To cement the spirit of top-down amnesia, a 1977 amnesty law prevents any legal proceedings into crimes committed during the civil war and the dictatorship; Spain would not enter into anything resembling a "truth and justice" commission.

This institutional blockade has not gone unnoticed outside Spain. In 2013, the United Nations Committee on Enforced Disappearances censured Mr. Rajoy's government and the Spanish judiciary, and demanded Spain overturn the amnesty law and stop obstructing investigations into the hundreds of thousands of missing victims. Ana Menéndez Pérez, Spain's permanent representative to the United Nations, rejected the suggestion that the Spanish judiciary was not independent and impartial. (That would have been news to Spain's famous campaigning judge, Baltasar Garzón, whose attempts to bring Francoist crimes to trial in 2008 were followed by his being put on trial himself only a few years later.) Ms. Menéndez Pérez also accused the committee of "excessive focus on the past."

In doing so, Ms. Menéndez Pérez accused not just the United Nations committee, but great segments of Spanish civil society, and the descendants of hundreds of thousands of murdered Spaniards still searching for justice. Some local administrations have begun taking action in contravention of the government in Madrid (highlighting another Spanish tradition: the great tension between the capital and the regions). Following the Balearic Islands' example, the Valencian regional government is now preparing the way to pass its own historical memory law and apportion funds for excavations.

In April, Mr. Rajoy angered historical memory groups when he said on the popular TV program "Salvados" that he didn't think there was anything his government could do to help. Soon he may not have much choice. He returned as prime minister in October, but with a slender minority government. The major center-left opposition parties in the Spanish Parliament, the Socialist Party and the new left-wing party Podemos, are planning to force the government to restore funding to the historical memory project nationwide in 2017.

The dirt has been smoothed over in Majorca, but forgetting may not be possible for much longer.

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Making South Africa Great Again (Msimang, NYT)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[New York Times](#)

By Sisonke Msimang

JOHANNESBURG — In 2012, as a fellow at Yale University, I met an earnest and articulate American graduate student. I found her guileless patriotism touching; she regularly used phrases to describe America as "the greatest democracy on earth," with "the best political system on the planet."

Initially, I discounted the hyperbole. But it became clear she really meant it. One afternoon, this young Californian was

reduced to tears when others in our program pushed her to explain why she believed America was the greatest nation on earth.

I was suddenly struck by the fact that no one else in the class felt the need to assert their country's greatness or the superiority of its political system. The Indian, the South African, the Frenchman and the Englishwoman in the seminar room could all have claimed the mantle of "greatest" for some aspect of their countries' democratic systems. Yet none needed to; indeed, we found the very idea absurd.

My American friend was no exception, of course, in her view of American exceptionalism, yet little in her elite training had equipped her to think critically about the place the United States occupies in the world. Still, I felt for her: As a South African, I am sympathetic to the temptations of national exceptionalism.

While other societies have had race-based discriminatory systems, none held on to them as long as mine. The white minority government in apartheid South Africa was distinctive, and it has had a lasting effect on the region it controlled for centuries. In turn, no other society has received as much attention as South Africa for its efforts to address this legacy of hatred and segregation.

The South African story of exceptionalism is rooted in the idea that a nation able to overcome apartheid through a peaceful process of compromise can beat the odds, time and again. This founding myth of the post-apartheid nation says that a constitutional democracy geared toward giving rights to a black population that has been able to forgive its white oppressors is built for survival.

In recent years, South Africa's rising levels of economic inequality — which continue to run along race lines — have tested this theory. Led by an ossifying ruling party that seems perpetually enmeshed in corruption scandals, South Africans have begun to question the story their leadership has told them about who they are and what their democracy stands for.

Beleaguered South Africans are beginning to realize they can no longer rely on the political class to guarantee their democratic rights — to credible media, peaceful assembly, even freedom to dissent without fear of reprisal. There is a new wariness here among many who once believed the nation was destined for greatness based on the inspirational, if sentimental, story line of forgiveness, truth and reconciliation that marked the country's first democratic decade.

South Africans are beginning to reclaim their power over a sentimental mythology about forgiveness and racial harmony that has been, for at least a decade, inauthentic and out of

step with the realities of most people's lives. They have accepted that the exceptionalism of South Africa's rosy story of transformation to a rainbow nation has threatened to undermine their capacity to challenge authority and ask deeper questions.

Although we, too, have our demagogues who would whip up popular resentments to advance their own bids for power, this skepticism has given rise to a series of campaigns and political movements that are beginning to serve as a bulwark against the anti-intellectual and undemocratic tendencies of South Africa's deeply compromised president, Jacob G. Zuma.

For many people who fought against apartheid, this means taking up the battle cry again, this time protesting and organizing against leaders who talk exceptionalism while behaving in utterly mediocre ways. South Africans made this dissatisfaction clear in recent local government elections, in which the ruling party lost control of the largest metropolitan areas in the country for the first time since the end of apartheid.

Beyond the ballot box, the student movement brought the country to a standstill last year and in recent months over the crisis in funding for higher education. The nascent Save South Africa movement is another sign of stirring dissent, if as yet an elite one. Like the activism in defense of the country's former public protector, Thuli Madonsela, who clashed with Mr. Zuma and continues to be a thorn in his side, Save South Africa has support across race lines.

The new spirit of revolt has also given rise to innovative citizen campaigns like AmandlaMobi, a digital platform that connects activists who are organizing against inequality. Running through these initiatives is an acknowledgment that things in South Africa are not "great," and that if the country is exceptional, we will have to prove it.

I have not forgotten my American friend's idealism — it's important not to lose sight of the fact that America, for all its flaws, can be great. America is truly great when Americans of principle and conscience organize themselves to defend its constitutional values.

Many Americans have balked at President-elect Donald J. Trump's aggressive assertion of exceptionalism. Those of us who hail from countries where exceptionalism and nationalism jostle uncomfortably close together recognize this hollow and dangerous populism that makes "greatness" divisive rather than inspirational. Mr. Trump's greatest gift to America may be to remind us that all democracies are equal in this respect: They're strongest and best when people rise to defend themselves against those who threaten to stifle their freedoms.

This is what South Africans are doing now. Just as Poles, Indians, the French and the peoples of many nations have done in the past. I trust Americans will, too.

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Voices: Fidel Castro Is Already Just A Memory (Gomez, USAT)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[USA Today](#)

By Alan Gomez

SANTIAGO DE CUBA — As the sun rose over this eastern city after nine days of government-imposed mourning for Fidel Castro, something strange happened.

The streets, calm throughout the mourning period, clattered again Monday with car horns blaring and car doors slamming. Musicians who had been banned from performing the previous week set up their conga drums and guitars in city squares — tip jars at the ready. Restaurants workers who were forbidden from serving alcohol wiped down bottles of rum and whiskey and placed them back atop their display cases.

That Cubans were ready to get life back to normal after commemorating their communist dictator is not surprising. Cuba is a country defined by its movement, its rhythm, its volume. Forcing Cubans to sit home and sit quiet for nine days, no matter the reason, was always going to be difficult.

What's strange is that there was any normalcy to resume. For the 47 years that Castro ruled Cuba, people on the island and those who fled believed his death would be cataclysmic, the start of a history-altering series of events that would jeopardize his revolution and unleash waves of rafters flooding into South Florida.

What we got after Castro died Nov. 25 was far different. I saw a more muted reaction, a blustery tropical storm rather than the apocalyptic Category 5 political hurricane we had expected.

That shows how much times have changed. The U.S. and Cuban governments have ended their long isolation and are trying to become friends. Cuban President Raúl Castro has now been in power eight years, meaning the once-terrifying transfer of power from older to younger brother is now complete without disruptions.

That was not the message I got growing up in the Cuban-American enclave of Miami. On Spanish-language radio and TV, people intensely debated the sweeping changes that would take place once Fidel died. I overheard those same predictions in restaurants, supermarkets and barber shops. And as I later learned, those conversations were taking place far from my neighborhood.

Many in Cuba believed the Yankees would use the opportunity to invade. Many in Washington thought they'd see a flood of rafters land on their shores.

Federal, state and local governments in the U.S. had elaborate plans for Castro's death, from mobilizing military and Coast Guard units to enhancing police patrols in South Florida to get a handle on the chaos. Cuba had similar plans, including a military mobilization to protect against that possible invasion and to quell any domestic, dissident-led uprisings.

U.S. businesses had response plans in place that spelled out how they would rush to the island to set up shop. Cuban-Americans were prepared to race down on their boats to re-stake their claims to property seized by Castro or reunite with relatives. And Cubans had long been warned of that invasion by civilians who would take their homes and their jobs.

In Miami, the heart of the Cuban-American exile community, preparations were so detailed that they even knew where the huge party would be. The Kiwanis Club planned to host it at the Orange Bowl, the 75,000-seat football stadium in the middle of Little Havana.

Now, after seeing firsthand the jubilant reactions of Cuban-Americans in Miami and the somber memorials from Havana to Santiago de Cuba on the other end of the island, I realize how different the world is.

I spoke with weeping Cuban-Americans celebrating on the streets of Little Havana. But there was no massive party in the Orange Bowl, which was demolished eight years ago and replaced by a new baseball stadium that remained closed.

In Havana, a Cuban Navy ship patrolled offshore, but there were no battalions of troops roaming the streets, no loudspeakers warning residents to take cover, only a few extra police to help clear the way for Castro's funeral procession.

I saw instead that life goes on as before. Raúl Castro is firmly entrenched to carry on the state-run system Fidel established. All the hallmarks of his revolution — free education and health care, rampant political repression and staggering poverty — endure.

In Miami, Cuban-Americans have already moved on, preparing for their next big celebration: the party for Raúl Castro's planned retirement in 2018.

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STATE DEPARTMENT

Trump's Tough Talk To Test New China Envoy's Close Beijing Ties (Chen, WSJ)

Iowa governor Terry Branstad, early supporter of president-elect, has known Xi Jinping for decades
Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Wall Street Journal](#)

By Te-Ping Chen

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Model Farm In China To Highlight Xi's Ties To Iowa, Donald Trump's Beijing Envoy (Chen, WSJ)

Terry Branstad, whose ties with Xi Jinping date back to the 1980s, is considered an 'old friend' of China
Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Wall Street Journal](#)

By Te-Ping Chen

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TRADE

U.S. Chamber Said To Tell Mexico It Will Defend Nafta From Trump (Sink, BLOOMPOL)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Bloomberg Politics](#)

By Justin Sink

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce told a closed-door gathering of Mexican and American corporate and government leaders that it is aiming to keep Donald Trump from fulfilling his campaign threat to tear up the North American Free Trade Agreement, according to three people with direct knowledge of the matter.

Tom Donohue, head of the biggest U.S. business lobbying organization, told members of the U.S.-Mexico CEO Dialogue in Mexico City on Wednesday not to panic and to wait and see what the president-elect proposes once he takes office, said the three people, who spoke about the private event on condition of anonymity. The audience included cabinet officials from President Enrique Peña Nieto's administration, U.S. Secretary of Commerce Penny Pritzker, and more than 100 business and government leaders.

Donohue's remarks could deepen the divide between the president-elect and the Chamber after they sparred over trade policy during the 2016 campaign. Trump made what he called the unfairness of the U.S. relationship with its biggest trade partners a central theme of his campaign, and he

singled out Nafta, which also includes Canada, as ripe for being gutted or renegotiated.

The discussion around Nafta only added to tensions that had been building ever since Trump declared his candidacy for president last year, when he called some Mexican immigrants criminals and rapists and later vowed to make Mexico pay for a wall along the border. His comments have been condemned by Mexican business executives, including Mexichem SAB Chairman Juan Pablo del Valle and Cinopolis de Mexico SA Chief Executive Officer Alejandro Ramirez. Pena Nieto likened his rhetoric to that of Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini.

The CEO Dialogue, held over two days at the Four Seasons hotel in downtown Mexico City, was attended by General Electric Co. Vice Chairman John G. Rice, Alfa SAB Chairman Armando Garza and FedEx Freight Chief Executive Officer Michael Ducker, as well as Mexican Finance Minister Jose Antonio Meade and Economy Minister Idefonso Guajardo.

Tom Collamore, senior vice president of communications and strategy, said in an e-mail that the Chamber is supportive of Nafta but is open to it being updated as necessary. The Chamber helped organize Wednesday's event, he said, "because 14 million American jobs depend on trade with Mexico and Canada."

Modernizing Nafta

At another gathering of business leaders last month, Guajardo said that he believes Trump will seek to modernize Nafta without completely abandoning the agreement. For instance, issues that weren't included when the deal was negotiated in the early 1990s, such as e-commerce, could be added to the pact, he said.

Mexico is arguably more dependent on trade with the U.S. than any other major world economy. Trade between the two countries has grown five-fold to more than \$500 billion in goods annually since Nafta took effect in 1994, making Mexico the third largest U.S. trade partner, trailing only China and Canada, according to data from the International Monetary Fund. Nafta, which phased out most tariffs among the three two countries over the past two decades, has proven crucial to Mexico's emergence as a manufacturing powerhouse.

While Trump on the campaign trail called Nafta a disaster for the U.S., his transition team has sent signals that he may not be looking to fully eviscerate the deal. Anthony Scaramucci, a senior adviser on the Trump transition team, said in a speech on Monday that the president-elect was simply "looking to right-size it and make it fairer."

Still, the uncertainty around Trump's plans has prompted economists to cut forecasts for Mexico's growth and sent the Mexican peso to record lows.

Powerful Advocate

To make their case, Mexican businesses have a powerful advocate in the Chamber. It's one of the best-funded lobbying organizations in Washington and spent \$29.8 million in the 2016 cycle to benefit Republican candidates in 16 pivotal House and Senate races, according to an analysis by nonprofit advocacy group Public Citizen. But how much clout the group will have with the Trump administration remains an open question.

Donohue was a frequent critic of Trump and his trade policies throughout the campaign and appeared at a White House press briefing earlier this year to promote the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a trade deal among a dozen Pacific nations that Trump regularly railed against on the campaign trail and has promised to abandon as president.

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CONGRESSIONAL ACTIVITY

Visa Program For Afghans Under Threat For Helping U.S. Is Renewed (Huetteman, NYT)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[New York Times](#)

By Emmarie Huetteman

WASHINGTON — After a protracted political debate, Congress on Thursday passed a measure that would offer sanctuary to a fraction of the Afghan interpreters and translators who have risked their lives to help the military.

The measure, included in an annual military policy bill, renews the nearly nine-year-old visa program for Afghans facing serious threats because they assisted American troops. The Senate passed the broader, \$619 billion legislation, 92 to 7, sending it to President Obama for his signature.

But the renewal added just 1,500 extra visas, not nearly enough to cover the approximately 13,000 pending applications, and imposes more eligibility restrictions on an already complicated process.

The fix may not be enough to save the program — and the Afghans who are anxiously hoping it will be their deliverance from the Taliban and other threats, said Senator Jeanne Shaheen, Democrat of New Hampshire.

"I think it's clear that we will run out of those visas," she said.

Last summer a handful of Republican lawmakers disrupted what has become a somewhat regular allocation of visas to the program, questioning the cost of the 4,000 additional visas requested by the Obama administration this year and, in one case, tying them up procedurally to force consideration of unrelated legislation.

Now the fate of the visa program will hinge on a government led by President-elect Donald J. Trump, who has yet to say how he will handle an issue that is championed by the military but would also bring more Muslim immigrants to the United States.

There is some cautious optimism that the more members of the military there are among Mr. Trump's advisers, the more likely he is to support the program. Gen. David H. Petraeus, a former commander of American forces in Afghanistan who is reportedly under consideration for secretary of state, is among those who have argued the United States has made a commitment to protect those Afghans — one that would hurt the country's credibility overseas if abandoned.

"By failing to allocate sufficient visas to provide our Afghan allies with a path to safety, we fail to keep the faith with them — and with our troops and diplomats who rely on them to succeed in their mission," Betsy Fisher, the policy director of the International Refugee Assistance Project, said in a statement last week.

It was a relatively subdued conclusion for the broader bill, known as the National Defense Authorization Act, which set off bitter disputes this year about workplace protections for gays and lesbians employed by federal contractors, and about efforts to restrict the Confederate flag. It also prompted a debate about whether women should be required to register for the draft, a measure that was ultimately cut from the final bill.

Republicans touted in particular the fact that the bill would offer troops their largest pay increase since 2010, a raise of 2.1 percent, as well as an overhaul of the troubled health care system for veterans. The legislation will also make changes to the acquisitions office at the Pentagon, splitting it into two to separate its more cutting-edge research work from daily tasks like managing contracts.

The bill will lay the framework for the Pentagon that Mr. Trump will soon inherit, leaving it up to the next Congress to set aside the money to fund many of those policies. Mr. Trump said during his campaign that he would toss out the military budget caps known as sequestration, opening the door to more spending. Speaker Paul D. Ryan of Wisconsin said Tuesday that lawmakers will quickly take up spending bills early next year.

Democrats expressed some reservations about the legislation, which totaled more than \$3 billion above Mr. Obama's budget request. While officials have not yet said whether Mr. Obama will sign it, Eric Schultz, a White House spokesman, recently told reporters there were parts of the legislation that were "encouraging."

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Republicans Ready To Launch Wide-ranging Probe Of Russia, Despite Trump's Stance (Demirjian, WP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Washington Post](#)

By Karoun Demirjian

Leading Senate Republicans are preparing to launch a coordinated and wide-ranging probe into Russia's meddling in the U.S. elections and its potential cyber threats to the military, digging deep into what they view as corrosive interference in the nation's institutions.

Such an aggressive approach puts them on a direct collision course with President-elect Donald Trump, who downplays the possibility Russia had any role in the November elections — arguing that a hack of the Democratic National Committee emails may have been perpetrated by "some guy in his home in New Jersey." The fracture could become more prominent after Trump is inaugurated and begins setting foreign policy. He has already indicated the country should "get along" with Russia since the two nations have many common strategic goals.

But some of Trump's would-be Republican allies on Capitol Hill disagree. Senate Armed Services Chair John McCain (Ariz.) is readying a probe of possible Russian cyber incursions into U.S. weapons systems, and said he has been discussing the issue with Select Intelligence Committee Chair Richard Burr (N.C.) with whom he will be "working closely" to investigate Russia's interference in the U.S. elections, cyber threats to the military and other institutions. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) has been apprised of the discussions. Burr did not respond to requests for comment.

Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Bob Corker (R-Tenn.) also said he intends to hold hearings next year into Russian hacking. Corker is on Trump's shortlist for secretary of state, according to the Trump transition team.

Trump transition officials could not be reached for comment.

The loudest GOP calls for a Russia probe are coming from McCain and Sen. Lindsey Graham (S.C.). Both have taken a hardline on Russia and have been highly critical of Trump, particularly his praise of President Vladimir Putin.

“They’ll keep doing more here until they pay a price,” Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) said of Russia. He plans to spearhead legislation and hold a series of investigative hearings next year into “Russia’s misadventures throughout the world,” including Russian meddling in the U.S. elections.

“I’m going after Russia in every way you can go after Russia. I think they’re one of the most destabilizing influences on the world stage. I think they did interfere with our elections and I want Putin personally to pay the price,” Graham said in an interview with CNN on Wednesday.

McCain said his Armed Services Committee will launch a probe in the 115th Congress into Russia’s cyber capabilities against the U.S. military and weapons systems, “because the real threat is cyber,” he explained.

But McCain said he expects the investigation will also dovetail with the topic of Russia’s hacking of the DNC and state-based election systems — which include a hack that took place in McCain’s home state of Arizona.

“See, the problem with hacking is that if they’re able to disrupt elections, then it’s a national security issue, obviously,” McCain said Thursday.

He added that the Armed Services Committee was “still formulating” exactly how to address the issue during hearings. But despite Trump’s dismissal, “there’s very little doubt” Russia interfered in the U.S. elections, which he called “very worthy of examination.”

The U.S. government in October officially accused Russia of hacking the DNC’s emails during the presidential campaign. The emails were posted on web sites like WikiLeaks, and caused embarrassment for the party, including forcing the resignation of ex-DNC Chair Debbie Wasserman Schultz (Fla.).

And U.S. military officials are concerned about Russia’s capacity to steal military secrets and corrupt operations: Officials already suspect Russian hackers are behind a major email breach at the Pentagon last year. And the military could be a target for backlash, after an NBC news report widely circulated by Russian media stated U.S. military hackers were ready to launch attacks against Russia in the event of an obvious election hack.

Trump continued to downplay Russian involvement in the elections in an interview released this week for TIME magazine’s “Person of the Year” feature. In the interview, the president-elect disputed the Obama administration’s accusation that Russia interfered in the election.

“I don’t believe they interfered,” Trump said of Russia. “It could be Russia. And it could be China. And it could be some guy in his home in New Jersey. I believe that it could have

been Russia and it could have been any one of many other people. Sources or even individuals.”

Some Republicans delicately demurred, while still defending Trump’s ability to negotiate with Putin.

“The Democratic National Committee...the intelligence community is of pretty much one mind that Russia was involved in that, was behind that,” said Rep. Peter King (R-N.Y.), a member of the House’s Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence and House Homeland Security Committee’s Intelligence and Counter-terrorism subcommittee chair.

King added that he was “confident” Trump “will not be taken in by Putin.”

Democrats have also taken issue with Trump’s desire to pursue more friendly relations with Moscow, as well as his affinity for Putin.

“The primary area of discomfort for the Republicans here and the Trump administration, in foreign policy and national security, is over Russia,” said Rep. Adam Schiff (Calif.), the House Intelligence Committee’s ranking Democrat, who accused Trump of becoming “a propaganda piece for the Kremlin” on MSNBC this week. “They may be giving him breathing space right now, but I don’t expect that to last.”

Since the election, Republican lawmakers have voted to reestablish an American hard line against Russia’s global ventures, with a House-passed measure to sanction anyone who supports the Syrian government in its ongoing civil war — a category that primarily includes Russia and Iran. There is also language in the annual defense policy bill to provide millions of dollars in lethal aid to Ukraine, where the government in Kiev is engaged in open hostilities against Russian-backed separatists.

But many Democrats are impatient with Republicans for not taking faster and more concrete steps against Russia after the Obama administration officially accused Moscow of meddling in the elections.

Corker expressed early interest in holding hearings on Russia. But months later, those hearings have not been held. “We’re getting no pressure from anyone — we just feel like it’s something we should do,” Corker said in an interview Wednesday, when asked if there president-elect had pressured him not to raise the topic. “As a matter of fact, we attempted to set a classified briefing up this week.”

Obama administration officials maintain that the Office of the Director of National Intelligence and other officials were ready to brief senators about Russia’s role in the DNC hack on Thursday. Administration officials said that at the last minute,

the committee dramatically broadened the scope of the hearing, forcing them to cancel.

Spokespeople for Corker said the hearing was postponed because State Department officials were unavailable due to previous travel commitments. Corker pledged that hearings investigating Russia's role in the elections would be forthcoming next year. "We're definitely going to look at it," he said.

An aggressive probe of Russia's activities may not extend to the House, where leading Republicans say they have already been investigating Russia and will continue their efforts regardless of Trump's stance.

"[Russia]'s always been a priority for me and it will remain a priority for me," House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence Chairman Devin Nunes (R-Calif.) said.

The House Armed Services Committee Mac Thornberry stressed that his committee has been looking at Russian cyber threats to the military for the last two years.

"We're going to have to all pay more attention to cyber and to Russian activities to influence things through cyber," Thornberry said.

Democrats, meanwhile, are going to use whatever power they have to ensure that Russian activities in the elections and beyond get attention.

Seven top-ranked Democrats sent a letter to Obama on Tuesday asking for classified briefings "regarding Russian entities' hacking of American political organizations," including the DNC hack, emails released by WikiLeaks, and fake news.

"Regardless of whether you voted for Donald Trump, Hillary Clinton, or anyone else, Russia's attacks on our election are an attempt to degrade our democracy and should chill every American – Democratic, Republican, or Independent – to the core," said Rep. Elijah Cummings, the ranking Democrat on the House Oversight and Government Relations panel.

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Government Shutdown Looms Over Stopgap Spending Measure (Kaplan, NYT)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[New York Times](#)

By Thomas Kaplan

WASHINGTON — The House overwhelmingly voted on Thursday to fund the government through late April, but the measure has hit a snag in the Senate, threatening a shutdown of the government this weekend.

The stopgap spending measure must be approved by the Senate by midnight Friday to keep the government open. But

Democrats in the Senate, led by Joe Manchin III of West Virginia and Sherrod Brown of Ohio, are objecting to a provision extending health benefits for retired coal miners who face losing their health insurance at the end of the year.

The spending only covers miners in the short term, which the Democrats view as insufficient. If the senators move to slow down approval of the spending measure over the issue, it could lead to a weekend shutdown of the government.

The House voted 326 to 96 to approve the spending measure, which funds the government through April 28.

Republicans on Thursday were not sympathetic to the Democratic senators' case concerning coal miners.

"They're not going to get what they want," said Senator John Cornyn of Texas, the chamber's No. 2 Republican. "They ought to actually be grateful for what they got."

The spending measure also includes language that would speed up the consideration of a waiver that James N. Mattis, a retired general who is President-elect Donald J. Trump's pick for defense secretary, needs in order to serve in that position.

Federal law requires a seven-year waiting period between active duty and serving as defense secretary, and General Mattis retired from the Marines in 2013. The spending bill does not give the waiver to General Mattis, but lays a path for the swift consideration early next year of legislation granting one.

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GLOBAL ISSUES

As Trump Knocks Obama On Climate, Firms Recommit To Carbon Reduction (Olson, Sweet, WSJ)

Cheaper natural gas and wind power are keeping corporations on the lower-emissions path

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Wall Street Journal](#)

By Bradley Olson And Cassandra Sweet

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

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U.S. Wants To Send Guantánamo Detainee To Israel For Trial (Rosenberg, MCT)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[McClatchy](#)

By Carol Rosenberg

The Obama administration has asked Israel to take and prosecute a Kenyan captive held at Guantánamo since 2007, the Miami Herald has learned.

U.S. intelligence authorities have linked Mohammed Abdul Malik Bajabu, 43, to a 2002 terror attack on an Israeli hotel in Mombasa, Kenya. Israel is interested, according to U.S. officials aware of the offer, but is awaiting cooperation from the FBI, whose agents interviewed Abdul Malik sometime after he got to Guantánamo in March 2007.

A leaked May 2007 prison profile describes Abdul Malik as having “admitted that he participated in the planning and execution” of two terrorist attacks that targeted Israelis on the same day, Nov. 28, 2002 in Mombasa. A car-bombing of the Israeli-owned Paradise Hotel killed 13 people, mostly Kenyans, around the same time an unsuccessful surface-to-air missile attack targeted an Israeli Arkia airliner carrying 271 passengers near Mombasa airport.

Abdul Malik has never been charged with a crime at the war court, suggesting what is alleged is beyond the reach of military commissions. In June, the Obama administration’s parole-style board for uncharged captives declared him too dangerous to release, a “forever prisoner,” or indefinite detainee in the War on Terror.

Obama administration officials involved in the effort to close Guantánamo prison describe the effort as part of White House-encouraged “creative thinking” to find places to prosecute unreleasable captives. With just 20 of the 59 captives now held at Guantánamo approved for release, and another 10 charged at the Pentagon war court, the administration has been brainstorming about where and how to transfer the “forever prisoners.” Congress has forbidden relocation in the United States.

Reached by the Miami Herald, Abdul Malik’s attorney Darin Thompson declined to comment on the proposed deal.

According to three government officials who were aware of the trip, the State Department’s Special Envoy for the closure of Guantánamo, Ambassador Lee Wolosky, traveled to Israel in April and met with senior officials who “expressed interest” in the case. Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu was not among those he met.

But the deal has hit a snag, according to three sources, because the FBI has failed to furnish the Israelis with information from its interrogations.

“The government of Israel has repeatedly asked for information to support their possible prosecution. But, for reasons that are unclear, the FBI has declined to provide the information that has been requested by senior Israeli prosecutors,” said a U.S. government official, who spoke on

condition of anonymity because the official is not authorized to discuss the proposed transfer. “They want to see the incriminating statements. And that’s where we are stuck — and have been for many months —which is frustrating.”

The official said the White House had specifically requested that the Department of Justice get the FBI to cooperate. “We have no comment on our communications with foreign governments,” said FBI spokesman Andy Ames. Department of Justice spokesmen did not respond to multiple requests for information.

Israel’s Ambassador to the United States, Ron Dermer, declined through an aide to discuss the deal. Nor would he designate someone at the embassy to provide information about it.

Kenya unsuccessfully sought to prosecute some men for the Mombasa attacks. In 2009, U.S. commandos targeted and killed another Kenyan reportedly tied to al-Qaida in East Africa and the Mombasa attack.

It is not known whether the proposed deal would be viable during the administration of President-elect Donald Trump, who in July declared his Republican party’s platform the “most pro-Israel of all time!”

Trump told the Miami Herald this summer that he has disagreed with some of Obama’s release decisions but did not rule out transfers. “I want to make sure, 100 percent sure, that if we’re going to release people, No. 1 they are going to be people that can be released and it’s going to be safe to release them.”

Meantime, Trump’s choice for Secretary of Defense, retired Marine Gen. James Mattis, has said he opposes war prisoner releases. But the idea in the instance of the Kenyan is not to free him but send him to an allied nation for trial.

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‘Rhetoric Of Fascism’ On Rise In US, Europe, Warns UN (AFP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

AFP

Geneva (AFP) – Human rights standards worldwide are under “unprecedented pressure”, the UN said Thursday, warning that “the rhetoric of fascism” was becoming commonplace in parts of Europe and the United States.

Speaking ahead of the international Human Rights Day on December 10, UN rights chief Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein urged people around the globe to push back against a dangerous erosion of rights protections.

“2016 has been a disastrous year for human rights across the globe,” Zeid said in a statement, warning that “if the growing

erosion of the carefully constructed system of human rights and rule of law continues to gather momentum, ultimately everyone will suffer.”

International human rights standards, he said, were “under unprecedented pressure” and risked “unravelling”.

Zeid pointed to conflicts, like the one raging in Syria, that have unleashed a massive refugee crisis, extremist movements that are subjecting people to “horrific violence”, climate change, discrimination and “yawning economic disparities”.

The failure of many leaders to effectively and honestly deal with such issues has pushed many to turn to “the siren voices exploiting fears, sowing disinformation and division, and making alluring promises they cannot fulfil,” he warned.

His comments follow a string of populist victories in Europe, and the stunning November election of Donald Trump as the next US president.

“In some parts of Europe, and in the United States, anti-foreigner rhetoric full of unbridled vitriol and hatred, is proliferating to a frightening degree, and is increasingly unchallenged,” Zeid warned.

“The rhetoric of fascism is no longer confined to a secret underworld of fascists, meeting in ill-lit clubs or on the ‘Deep Net’. It is becoming part of normal daily discourse,” he said.

Zeid, who is set to launch a campaign entitled “Stand up for someone’s rights today” on Saturday, urged everyone to “push back the violence and hatred which threaten our world.”

“At a time of enormous turmoil and rapid change, the values which uphold peace across the world are too important to be left to international institutions and governments alone,” he said.

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U.N. Says Nearly One In Four Children Live In Conflict Or Disaster Zones (Gladstone, NYT)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[New York Times](#)

By Rick Gladstone

More than a half-billion children, or roughly one in four, now live in countries affected by conflicts or other disasters, the United Nations Children’s Fund said Thursday.

The new figure was reported in a Unicef statement, issued to coincide with the agency’s 70th anniversary, that said many of those children live “without access to medical care, quality education, proper nutrition and protection.”

About three-quarters of the affected children — roughly 393 million — were concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa, the

agency said, which by many measurements remains the most deprived region of the developing world.

The statement amounted to a triage list of the challenges confronting Unicef and other children’s aid agencies.

It said nearly 50 million children had been uprooted from their homes, more than half of them forced to flee by conflict.

In Syria, where a war has raged for nearly six years, close to 500,000 children live in 16 besieged areas across the country. Many of the children have known nothing but conflict. In northeast Nigeria, nearly 1.8 million people, more than half of them children, have been displaced in the insurgency waged by the Boko Haram extremist group.

In Yemen, upended by a nearly two-year-old war between Houthi insurgents and a military coalition led by Saudi Arabia, nearly 10 million children have been affected, Unicef said. In South Sudan, where a civil war has convulsed the country for almost three years, more than half of primary-school-age children are out of school.

In Haiti, the Western Hemisphere’s poorest country, more than 90,000 children are in need of help, the agency said, more than two months after the devastation wrought by Hurricane Matthew.

While the number of children globally who die before their fifth birthday has been reduced by half since 1990, and out-of-school rates have been cut by more than 40 percent, Unicef said, “the emergencies faced today by the most vulnerable children threaten to undermine” such progress.

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Ex-Im Bank Critics, Supporters Look To Donald Trump For Help (Timiraos, WSJ)

Conservatives who fought to close bank worry he may back it; backers say it will boost exporters

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Wall Street Journal](#)

By Nick Timiraos

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

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ISIL

Obama Says U.S. Intelligence Missed The Rise Of The Islamic State (Boyer, WT)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Washington Times](#)

By Dave Boyer

President Obama is blaming U.S. intelligence agencies for failing to detect the rise of the Islamic State, one of the biggest foreign-policy calamities of his second term.

In an interview with CNN's Fareed Zakaria that aired Wednesday night, the president said his administration underestimated the terrorist group known as ISIL.

"The ability of ISIL to not just mass inside of Syria, but then to initiate major land offensives that took Mosul, for example, that was not on my intelligence radar screen," Mr. Obama said.

The president infamously referred to the Islamic State in 2014 as a "jayvee team" among terrorists. But within a year, Mr. Obama was assembling an international coalition to carry out airstrikes against the group in Iraq and later in Syria, and he has deployed about 5,000 U.S. troops to Iraq as advisers and trainers in a ground war against the extremists.

In the interview, Mr. Obama said his national-security team has done the best it could in the war on terror.

"Have we been flawless in the execution of what is a complicated policy in the region? Absolutely not," he said. "I think flawless is not available when it comes to foreign policy or the presidency, at least with mere mortals like me at the helm. But have we made, I think, the best decisions that were available to us, at each stage? The answer is yes."

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ISIS Graveyard: Senior Military Official Says 50K Killed Over Last 2 Years, Warns Of 'AQI 2.0' (Ernst, WT)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Washington Times](#)

By Douglas Ernst

A conservative estimate of the number of dead Islamic State group terrorists in Iraq and Syria over the last two years stands at 50,000.

The U.S.-led coalition against Islamic State has historically been coy about giving exact numbers of Sunni terrorists who have perished since 2014. A senior military official who spoke to Fox News on Thursday relayed the number before issuing a warning — the organization may mutate into "AQI 2.0" (Al Qaeda in Iraq).

"I give them credit for being so resilient," the source said.

To better highlight the kind of resources being deployed against Islamic State, Col. Daniel Manning, the deputy director of the Combined Air Operations Center, told Military.com in November that Iraq's assault on Mosul began with a relentless air campaign. B-52s rained bombs on the city every eight minutes for three days beginning Oct. 16.

"It's a pretty intense bombing campaign if you think about each of these bombs are precision-guided weapons ... so it's a really high rate to be concentrated over one city over a prolonged period of time," the officer said Nov. 5.

Iraqi units attempting to wrestle control of the city for the first time since 2014 say they are facing fierce urban warfare involving sniper fire and vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIED). Their task is complicated by an intricate network of tunnels the terrorists created in anticipating of a U.S.-led mission.

The United Nations estimates that nearly 2,000 members of Iraq's security forces — along with 900 cops and civilians — were killed in November, Reuters reported Tuesday.

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Assad Supporters See Domino Effect In Aleppo Government Win (Mroue, AP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Associated Press](#)

By Bassem Mroue

ALEPPO, Syria (AP) — Aleppo shakes with explosions and gunfire day and night in both the government- and rebel-held sides of the divided Syrian city. But for supporters of President Bashar Assad, there is a growing sense of imminent victory.

If the city's rebel-held sector falls, many see a domino effect across the country. And with the rebels losing one ravaged stronghold after another, attacked from the skies and abandoned by allies, it's a scenario that looks ever more plausible.

A rebel defeat in Aleppo, Syria's largest city and once its commercial center, would reverberate across the war-torn country, where opposition forces continue to hold out in smaller, scattered areas. It would cap a string of government successes over the past year and provide a turning point in a war that has killed more than a quarter of a million people, displaced more than half of the country's population and defied all international efforts for a political solution.

"When Aleppo is done, 90 percent of the Syrian crisis will be resolved," said Mohammad Hassino, a 45-year-old businessman walking with his wife in the narrow alleys of the old quarter of the Syrian capital, Damascus.

It is a belief shared by many government supporters, who also note a radically changed international atmosphere that aligns more with Assad, including an incoming U.S. president who has suggested he might be willing to work with the Syrian president and his international backer, Russia, against the Islamic State group.

While Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan continues to maintain his goal is Assad's removal from power, his military intervention in northern Syria has been focused against the Kurds, and the Islamic State group around the militant-held town of al-Bab, north of Aleppo. International demands for Assad to step down have all but vanished.

Around the country, Assad's forces have been steadily gaining ground, particularly around Damascus, seat of Assad's power. There, rebel strongholds have surrendered to government forces in quick succession, forging truce deals with Assad's troops that have allowed fighters safe passage to the rebel-held northern province of Idlib.

In Aleppo, rebel factions that had held out for four years finally buckled last week under the pressure of a massive air campaign that took out all remaining hospitals, and a suffocating siege that has seen medical and food supplies running dangerously low.

By Wednesday, Syrian troops and allied militiamen had seized control of three-quarters of the territory the opposition controlled, leaving the rebels boxed in, mostly in the southern part of their ever-shrinking enclave.

A military victory in Aleppo now seems inevitable, and only a matter of time. Fighters and remaining residents of rebel-held areas say morale has hit rock bottom.

Rebels still hold other pockets around Syria, including northern Idlib province and the southern province of Daraa. But if government forces prevail in Aleppo, any movement to unseat Assad would have to reckon with the reality that he holds the country's four largest cities and its key coastal region.

"A defeat in Aleppo will leave the Syrian opposition at a dead end, not just because it will have lost its most important piece of real estate, but because the remaining rebel strongholds are of little use as platforms to reverse the tide of war," wrote Aron Lund, a fellow with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace's Middle East Program.

Part of the reason for Assad's survival, in addition to the unwavering support of Russia and Iran, has been his ability to preserve a measure of normalcy in areas under his control.

On a visit to Aleppo this week, an Associated Press team witnessed the devastation wrought by years of barrel bombs and airstrikes on the city's rebel-held sector. Entire blocks of the recently captured eastern neighborhoods of Hanano and Bani Zeid were leveled and thousands of housing units were not suitable to live in anymore. Newly evacuated residents were traumatized, recalling days cowering in bathrooms and their children going hungry amid an ever dwindling supply of

food. Some said their children had not gone to school in years.

By contrast, in western Aleppo, schools, businesses and government institutions continued to function, albeit with intermittent interruptions. On a recent day, shops were busy and restaurants packed with people who came to dine or have a drink on the popular Aziziyeh Street. When a shell hit nearby, people ran for safety inside buildings and moved away from windows for fear of another barrage. But an hour later, normal life picked up again.

Residents said the government's capture of the once rebel-held Bani Zeid neighborhood, located on a hill overlooking large parts of western Aleppo, was a turning point. From Bani Zeid, rebel militia fighters used to fire gas cylinders that could knock out several floors of a building.

"We are living the best period in more than four years," said Mohammed Youssef, a 52-year-old waiter in western Aleppo.

Aleppo has been without electricity since 2012 and giant generators are seen in the streets of the government-held sector where people pay a weekly fee for power. Last year, the state began powering traffic lights in government-controlled areas with solar energy, placing mirrors directed toward the sky on every intersection.

"We as Aleppans want victory so that Aleppo returns to its normal life," said a man who only gave his first name, Tony, as he sipped a cup of tea at a cafe in government-controlled downtown Aleppo as explosions echoed in the distance.

In government-controlled parts of the country and on social media, Assad supporters are already touting the Aleppo advances as an overall military victory by Assad in the war.

But the conflict is far from over, even with a government win in Aleppo. Large parts of the country remain outside government control, including areas held by the Islamic State group. Hundreds of armed rebel factions are likely to continue the insurgency with guerrilla-like tactics.

Syrian TV and cinema producer Basil Taha, 33, said even if the city is retaken, it does not mean that the war will end.

The Aleppo native, who now lives mostly in Damascus, said the conflict in Syria is a battle between foreign powers.

"I am happy for what is happening in Aleppo," Taha said, referring to the government push. "But if the fighting ends in Aleppo, it will resume somewhere else."

Associated Press writer Zeina Karam in Beirut contributed to this report.

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Aleppo Would Be Major Victory For Assad Regime And Weaken Rebel Forces (Michaels, USAT)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[USA Today](#)

By Jim Michaels

Recapturing rebel-held portions of Aleppo, once Syria's most populous city, would be a major victory for President Bashar Assad, but it would not end the 5-year-old civil war and the violence tearing the country apart.

Assad acknowledged that in an interview published Thursday in a state-owned newspaper. "To be realistic, it doesn't mean the end of the war," he said, according to the Associated Press.

Regaining control of the full city, once the country's main financial center, would significantly weaken the rebels fighting the Assad regime and give the government control over most of the population.

Syrian regime forces have made significant gains in recent weeks into the city, parts of which had been under rebel control for several years. Russian-backed government forces have driven fighters from 75% of rebel-controlled areas in the eastern part of the city and appeared poised to make more gains, the AP said.

"Aleppo is obviously a huge prize," said Chris Chivvis, an analyst at RAND Corp., a think tank.

Chivvis said it may take several more weeks or months to control the city in northern Syria. Crushing an insurgency in a crowded city of narrow streets and buildings is difficult.

Even with government control over Aleppo, a large chunk of northeastern Syria remains under the the Islamic State or is contested, and rebels can operate in other areas of the country as well.

The fight in Aleppo pits Russian- and Iranian-backed government forces against anti-Assad rebels, including groups linked to al-Qaeda.

The United States is not involved in the Aleppo battle. The U.S. air campaign is occurring mainly over northeastern

Syria, where forces backed by a U.S.-led coalition are fighting against the Islamic State, which claims Raqqa, about 130 miles east of Aleppo, as its capital.

If Assad succeeds in capturing Aleppo, his regime will face the choice of consolidating gains over the area or joining the battle against the Islamic State, Chivvis said.

The Pentagon has said it will not coordinate with Russian forces and has said Assad should step down. Still, it's possible that Russian forces could independently attack Islamic State targets.

The choices could change once President-elect Donald Trump assumes office next month. He has raised the possibility of working with the Russians and has been skeptical of the U.S. policy of secretly backing some of the rebels fighting Assad's regime.

Even if Assad cannot claim total victory, the capture of Aleppo would place Assad in a stronger negotiating position to remain in power, Chivvis said. The U.S. has backed talks aimed at ending the civil war and finding a political solution that would remove Assad from power

But Russian military power has had the biggest impact so far. Russian aircraft were instrumental over the past year in allowing the Assad regime to stop rebels from making gains and then allowed them to begin to claw back territory.

The Assad regime began a ground offensive in the city in September. It has been accompanied by a brutal Russian bombing campaign that has made no distinction between civilians and rebel forces. Bombs flattened hospitals and mosques and have sent thousands of people, including women and children, fleeing from the city.

Assad said the fighting against rebels would continue. "Even if we finish in Aleppo, we will carry on with the war against them," Assad told the newspaper al-Watan.

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Russia Says Over 8,000 Civilians Leave Eastern Aleppo (AP)

Friday, December 9, 2016

[Associated Press](#)

MOSCOW (AP) — The Russian military says it has helped more than 8,000 civilians leave the rebel-controlled eastern part of Aleppo.

The military's Center for Reconciliation in Syria said early Friday that 8,461 civilians, including 2,934 children, have left Aleppo's eastern neighborhoods in the last 24 hours. The center said 14 militants surrendered their weapons and were granted amnesty.

The statement came hours after Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said that Syrian government troops suspended their active operations in Aleppo to allow the evacuation of civilians. Syrian President Bashar Assad's forces have retaken large parts of eastern Aleppo in recent days.

The Russian military said its sappers have cleared mines from 6 hectares (15 acres) of Aleppo, allowing the restoration of a water facility, two power stations, two mosques and two schools.

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Hellish Conditions Engulf East Aleppo, While Life Goes On In The West (Wirtschaft, Nabeel, USAT)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[USA Today](#)

By Jacob Wirtschaft And Gilgamesh Nabeel

All four hospitals in east Aleppo are shuttered, so physician Mohammed Kaheel can't care for Syrians injured from unrelenting bombardments and chemical weapon burns. There's no anesthesia, antibiotics or bandages.

"People are fleeing from one neighborhood to another" seeking treatment and shelter, he said in a phone interview as bomb blasts from Syrian government and Russia jets pounding the rebel stronghold can be heard exploding in the background. "We lack everything: medications, food, water and fuel."

Just a few miles from the hellish conditions in east Aleppo lies another world. Most residents of west Aleppo have remained loyal to the regime of President Bashar Assad and life goes on normally even as Syria's long and bloody civil war rages around them. People can shop at markets, go to work and walk to school.

"The situation here in west Aleppo has been the same for 4½ years," said gastroenterologist Nabil Antaki. He heard that people were suffering in east Aleppo but hadn't ventured there to see for himself.

If he had, he would see an ancient city reduced to rubble. He would see thousands of people trapped without adequate food, water or medicine, no electricity, no hospitals or schools and death constantly lurking nearby, as Syrian forces, aided by Russian airstrikes, move ever closer to retake east Aleppo by bombing everything from apartments to humanitarian aid convoys.

Syrians sit at a restaurant in western Aleppo, Syria, Dec. 2. (Photo: Hassan Ammar, AP)

The rebel stronghold has been surrounded and under siege by government forces since the summer, and Assad is now on the brink of regaining full control of what once had been Syria's largest city and commercial capital. Government troops have seized three-quarters of the rebel positions amid vicious fighting and bombing that have forced hundreds of thousands to flee a metropolis that had a population of 2.5 million before war broke out in 2011.

East Aleppo has long been distinct in character from its western counterpart. The neighborhoods include historic districts with narrow alleyways dating to the 12th century and communities of devout Sunni Muslims with large families who moved into the city from the countryside.

Professionals and the more secular, educated upper-middle classes have long lived in the city's newer and more modern western neighborhoods along with Christians and members of Assad's Alawite sect.

Syrian pro-government troops walk on a street in Aleppo's eastern Karm al-Jabal neighborhood as they advance toward the al-Shaar neighborhood during their offensive to retake the city. (Photo: George Ourfalian, AFP/Getty Images)

Since the rebels took over the east in 2012, the differences have become even more stark.

"With the presence of militants, it is impossible not to wear a head scarf in the eastern part," local historian Souheil Lawand said of Islamic State fighters who are among the anti-government groups entrenched there. "It is normal not to wear one in the western part."

The pro-Assad residents of west Aleppo can shop in markets where items are available but increasingly expensive because of the war and can even take a quick weekend holiday in Beirut, a four-hour drive.

"The road to Lebanon was opened by our troops about two months ago and, without wanting to be too optimistic, the news from the front lines is good," Antaki said.

The war sometimes spills over into the west, such as when a rebel bombardment recently hit a few neighborhoods. But the main impact is intermittent electricity and costlier goods.

"We now depend mostly on local generators," said Ibrahim Abd Al Majid, 34, a civil servant who lives in the Hammadiyya neighborhood of west Aleppo.

Al Majid said his daughters continue to go to school and his wife knows where to find fresh vegetables and meat for family meals. "Food is available but very pricey, drinking water has to be bought, and washing water is supplied by tankers who

truck it in since the treatment plant on the rebel-held side cut off the supply," he said.

In eastern Aleppo, all the hospitals are destroyed, while the western side has 11 of 12 functioning, said World Health Organization spokesperson Fadéla Chai.

Most of the bakeries in eastern Aleppo have been bombed, and even those that have flour don't have fuel for ovens. People use doors for firewood, as temperatures drop below freezing at night.

"Most of the buildings are without doors and windows," physician Kaheel said. "There are little kids dying from exposure. What should I describe to you? The hunger? The cold? The pain of the injured?"

Abu Nihad, who works with the White Helmets, a volunteer group in east Aleppo that provides emergency services, said the suffering is worse than ever. "I do not know where to start to describe it," Nihad said. "This is a savage assault by the regime."

The Syrian military recently dropped leaflets over east Aleppo urging the rebels and their supporters to evacuate the city: "This is your last chance — rescue yourselves. If you do not evacuate these districts soon, you will be destroyed. We have left a safe path for you to leave."

Thousands have heeded that warning by fleeing to the west but others are refusing to leave for fear they will be killed by Assad's army.

"We have no choice," Kaheel said. "Would we go back to those who destroy, kill and bombard us?"

Wirtschaftler reported from Cairo and Nabeel from Istanbul.

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A Lethal Mistake Leads To A Harrowing Ambush In Iraq's Mosul (George, AP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

Associated Press

By Susannah George

IRBIL, Iraq (AP) — As Iraqi forces advanced toward the al-Salam hospital in Mosul earlier this week, encountering only light resistance from Islamic State fighters, commanders decided to seize the facility instead of sweeping the neighborhoods along the road leading to it.

A few hours later, as the sun set Tuesday evening, the trap was sprung. First came the suicide car bombs, and then the hospital was surrounded by hundreds of militants firing bursts of heavy machine gun fire and rocket-propelled grenades.

"We thought we were going to die, all we could think about was saving our lives," Pvt. Mithad Abdulzahra of the Iraqi

army's 9th Division said later, as he recovered in a hospital bed in the nearby city of Irbil from gunshots that shattered his right arm. The IS fighters eventually fought their way inside the al-Salam hospital. Of the 100 or so Iraqi soldiers trapped there, nearly all were killed or wounded, he said.

Seven weeks into the Iraqi operation to retake Mosul, IS fighters are still contesting every block of Iraq's second largest city, and the battle will likely continue well into next year. The battle for the al-Salam hospital highlights the challenges Iraqi forces face as they move deeper into the city.

"Every time we would fight off one unit of IS fighters, another would appear," said Col. Haider Hatem, who was wounded early on by a sniper's bullet. He said he called in U.S.-led airstrikes but was told that the IS fighters were so close that hitting them from the air would endanger his forces.

Over the next 24 hours, the IS fighters unleashed 15 suicide car bombs.

On Wednesday morning, Iraqi special forces were pulled away from another front in eastern Mosul and tasked with launching a rescue mission. The elite force has served as the tip of the spear in the Mosul offensive, but has also taken heavy losses. The special forces eventually fought their way to the hospital, opening up a route of retreat for the embattled soldiers of the 9th Division.

"When we reached them, they barely had any bullets left," a special forces officer said on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to brief reporters.

As Iraqi forces retreated, U.S.-led warplanes hit both the hospital and the abandoned Iraqi army vehicles. IS often uses hospitals as bases to fire on Iraqi troops. The coalition says it is reluctant to strike them for fear of damaging vital infrastructure.

Col. John Dorrian, a coalition spokesman, said the strike was carried out at the request of Iraqi ground forces and the hospital was hit because IS fighters were using it to fire down on Iraqi troops.

In all, more than 20 Iraqi soldiers were killed in the battle, and a handful of armored Iraqi vehicles were captured by IS, the special forces officer said. An IS video posted online Thursday showed what appeared to be about a dozen destroyed Iraqi army vehicles near the al-Salam hospital. The video could not be independently verified.

The battle for the Mosul is the biggest operation Iraq has carried out since the 2003 U.S.-led invasion, and comes just two years after Iraqi forces crumbled in the face of the lightning IS advance in the summer of 2014.

Iraqi forces have retaken a number of cities and towns over the past year, but few units have experience in urban combat. The 9th Division is an armored force, designed for conventional battles against other armies on open terrain. Iraq's special forces are better equipped for the street battles in Mosul, but there aren't enough of them to retake the city on their own.

Abdulzahra, the soldier who was hospitalized after the battle, says he doesn't believe his commanders will learn from their missteps. "Of course these mistakes will keep happening," he said. "They happen every time."

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Kurds Looking To Trump In Post-Mosul Scramble (Muñoz, WT)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Washington Times](#)

By Carlo Muñoz

Iraq's Kurds, having played a major role in the fight against Islamic State, are banking that the incoming Trump White House will expand U.S. military and political support for Iraq, taking on a larger role in stabilizing the country after the defeat of the terror group in Mosul.

As American-backed Iraqi and Kurdish peshmerga forces face a long and bloody campaign to re-take Mosul, the ethnic Kurds will need Washington's support in the political aftermath, Masrour Barzani, chancellor of the Kurdistan Region Security Council, said on a Washington visit Thursday.

"We expect more support from the next administration," he said told an audience at the Wilson Center. "We do not claim [Islamic State] is the end of terrorism" in Iraq, Mr. Barzani said. "The issue is not solved" even when the group is driven out of the country.

His comments come amid recent reports of heavy Islamic State resistance east of Mosul, after several days of advances by U.S.-backed Iraqi forces. Iraqi and coalition troops were forced to pull back from the Wahda neighborhood, southeast of the city, under "heavy enemy fire," coalition officials told the Reuters news agency.

The majority of Iraqi forces are pressing into Mosul's eastern borders, while Kurdish troops have focused their attack on the city's northern edges. Iraqi Shiite paramilitary groups, known as Popular Mobilization Forces, are moving into the city from the west while blocking escape routes into neighboring Syria. Roughly 1,000 American service members and military advisers are on the ground, supporting the Iraqi-led assault.

Despite recent progress, "it is very hard to say exactly when this fight will come to an end," Mr. Barzani said.

When asked if Kurdish leaders would allow U.S. forces to maintain an extended presence in northern Iraq after Mosul falls, Mr. Barzani replied: "We would love to see Americans engaged [in Kurdistan] to help stabilize the region," but added that would be up to the incoming administration.

U.S. and Iraqi officials are concerned that the defeat of Islamic State may not solve the country's deeper political problems, including sectarian hostility between Shiites and Sunnis and the Kurds' long-stated hopes for greater autonomy and — in time — a homeland of their own uniting Kurdish communities in Syria, Turkey and Iran.

On the campaign trail, President-elect Donald Trump repeatedly stated that his primary national security goal for his administration would be the complete defeat of Islamic State, also known as ISIS and ISIL, while criticizing the Obama White House's overall counterterrorism strategy.

Mr. Obama's strategy included heavy reliance on local armies and paramilitary groups, trained and armed by small U.S. special operations teams and backed by American surveillance drones and air power.

During the campaign, Mr. Trump famously claimed one of his first acts as commander in chief would be to order the Pentagon to draft up a new Islamic State strategy, due a month after he takes office. But the president-elect's transition team and prospective members of his emerging national security team have provided few details on Mr. Trump's long-term political solution for Iraq.

"We don't only have to win the war, we also have to win the peace," Mr. Barzani.

The widespread slaughter and displacement of Iraq's ethnic and religious minorities — especially the Iraqi Kurds — at the hands of the Islamic State for the last two years has exacerbated the divisions, he added.

"How are they going to live together [again]" once the Islamic State is defeated, Mr. Barzani said. "It will be very difficult for those people to trust each other again." As always, Kurdish dreams of independence are a major sticking point, opposed

not just by Baghdad, but by the other countries housing significant Kurdish populations.

On Wednesday, Mr. Barzani said discussions were already underway between Irbil, the increasingly powerful Kurdish regional capital, and Baghdad, regarding a referendum vote on Kurdish independence. "This is an open dialogue, to see what would be [needed]" in any type of agreement on independence.

"The world, unfortunately, has not been very just to the Kurdish people," Mr. Barzani said, but indicated a Trump White House could provide a much-needed push to get a deal in place.

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US Official: 50,000 Islamic State Militants Killed To Date (Baldor, AP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

Associated Press

By Lolita C. Baldor

WASHINGTON (AP) – The U.S.-led coalition has killed 50,000 Islamic State militants in the last two years in Iraq and Syria, a senior U.S. military official said Thursday, describing a conservative total that is a bit larger than what others have stated before.

U.S. leaders have routinely expressed reluctance to disclose specific numbers, and note that IS has been able to replace fighters rapidly, particularly early on.

In August, Lt. Gen. Sean MacFarland said about 45,000 combatants have been taken off the battlefields.

Speaking to a small group of reporters Thursday, the military official said coalition airstrikes could be more aggressive in places like Mosul, where Iraqi troops are battling to retake the city, but civilian casualties are a risk.

The official would not detail any specific proposals for increasing the fight that may be under discussion with the Obama administration, but said there are some things under consideration, including sending additional resources. The official wasn't authorized to discuss the matter publicly so spoke on condition of anonymity.

Asked for details, the official said there are enough special operations forces currently deployed, but a key issue under discussion is what forces may be needed to help the Iraqi troops hold Mosul once Islamic State fighters are pushed out of the city.

Air Force Col. John Dorrian, a spokesman for the U.S. military in Iraq, echoed suggestions that the ongoing military campaign is reducing the numbers and capabilities of the Islamic State group.

"Unfortunately were seeing younger fighters; perhaps adolescent age, rather than adults," Dorrian said.

He added that the vehicle-borne explosive devices are less sophisticated than they have been. He said that while earlier vehicle bombs were carried in armored vehicles, lately IS has been using regular vehicles.

"What that tells us is they're beginning to run out of those resources," said Dorrian, speaking via teleconference from Iraq. "It doesn't mean that it's not still an extraordinarily dangerous situation. They are not going to go quietly, but they are going to go."

Seven weeks into the operation to retake Mosul, Iraqi fighters have been pushing through the eastern section of the city. They have been hitting fierce resistance from Islamic State insurgents who took control of the city two years ago. Iraqi forces have had significant losses, particularly as they move deeper into the city.

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IS Calls For Attacks On US Bases In Uneasy Island Of Bahrain (Gambrell, AP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

Associated Press

By Jon Gambrell

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) – The Islamic State group is calling on its followers to launch attacks in Bahrain and to target American military personnel stationed on the tiny island ahead of a visit by the U.S. defense secretary.

The appeal came in a video that also urges militants to attack the Sunni-ruled island's Shiite majority, amid a wide-scale government crackdown on dissent.

IS propoganda has waned as the extremists continue to lose territory in Iraq and Syria under the onslaught of a U.S.-led campaign. Bahrain is part of the anti-IS coalition.

In the IS video, images of Bahraini fighter jets are juxtaposed to footage of an airstrike hitting an IS-held area. It also shows

clips of a Bahrain-based Gulf Air flight, the King Fahd Causeway linking the island to Saudi Arabia, and other sites in the capital, Manama.

“Wherever the enemies of Allah are found, there is jihad. Below you are the malevolent (Shiites) and the apostate soldiers of tyranny,” one fighter says, according to a transcript provided by the U.S. jihadi-monitoring SITE Intelligence Group.

“The muzzles of your weapons should not miss those American bases where from military aircraft took off to pour their flames on the monotheists in the territories of Islam,” the militant adds.

Bahrain is home to the U.S. Navy’s 5th Fleet, as well as a British naval base still under construction.

Cmdr. Bill Urban, a 5th Fleet spokesman, said officials were aware of the video, but declined to discuss possible security measures the Navy might have taken.

Late Thursday, the U.S. Embassy in Manama issued a security message noting that “extremist groups have issued broad calls for action by their supporters against the government of Bahrain and (the) U.S. military.”

In a statement to The Associated Press on Thursday, Bahrain’s government said it “remains vigilant against terrorist activities and extremism.”

“Authorities continue to take all necessary steps to preserve security and stability within the kingdom,” it read.

The video appeared timed for high-level meetings on the island.

A Gulf Cooperation Council conference attended by British Prime Minister Theresa May ended on Wednesday. Weeks earlier, Britain’s Prince Charles and wife Camilla visited the island.

This coming weekend, Bahrain will host the Manama Dialogue, where U.S. Defense Secretary Ash Carter is scheduled to give the opening address. British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson is also due to attend.

The video listed 14 purported fighters from the island who IS says died as suicide bombers or fighters in Iraq and Syria. One of their names is similar to a man the government identified in January 2015 as having his citizenship stripped for belonging to the militant group. Bahrain prosecuted a group of people last year it accused of forming a local IS cell.

The video, like others from the extremists, seeks to cleave Sunnis from Shiites – something that’s particularly worrying in Bahrain.

It’s been five years since Bahrain’s 2011 Arab Spring protests, which saw Shiites and others demand more political freedoms from the ruling Al Khalifa family. The government put down the demonstrations with help from Saudi and Emirati troops, and later pledged to carry out reforms.

In the time since, sectarianism has grown on the island and the Sunni-dominated government is in the midst of a crackdown on unrest at a level unseen since 2011.

Authorities have suspended the country’s largest Shiite opposition group, Al-Wefaq, and doubled a prison sentence for its secretary-general. Human rights activists, Shiite leaders and others have been imprisoned, lost their citizenship or been forced into exile.

Bahrain’s government meanwhile has insisted that no one “will, or can be, prosecuted for his or her political views.”

“The government is fully committed to community cohesion and upholding the principles of reconciliation and tolerance, and will not allow the disruption of that cohesion and peace to go unchecked,” the government’s statement said.

Follow Jon Gambrell on Twitter at www.twitter.com/jongambrellap . His work can be found at <http://apne.ws/2galNpz> .

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UN Envoy Says Syria Peace Talks Should Restart (AFP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

AFP

United Nations (AFP) – The UN envoy for Syria said Thursday that political talks to end the nearly six-year war should resume soon.

Staffan de Mistura told reporters following a closed-door meeting of the Security Council that “now is the time to actually look seriously at the possible renewal of political discussions.”

The envoy raised the possibility of a return to the negotiating table as Russia announced that the Syrian army was halting military operations in order to evacuate civilians from Aleppo.

Backed by Russia, Syrian forces have captured about 85 percent of eastern Aleppo after three weeks of heavy fighting to seize one of the last opposition strongholds.

“Military victories are not a victory for peace, because peace needs to be won separately,” De Mistura said.

Russian Ambassador Vitaly Churkin said he hoped talks could resume before UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon leaves office on December 31.

“Time is short. It would be important to revive the talks before Mr. Ban’s term expires, in just 20 days,” Churkin told reporters.

The last round of UN-brokered peace talks ended in April, with no progress on the key issue of Syria’s future government and the fate of President Bashar al-Assad.

De Mistura said talks would be possible if the government in Damascus were ready to “discuss substantially” the terms of a settlement and if the opposition did not “refuse to come.”

Without an effort to restart peace talks, there will be an “impression which no one wants to have that there is only a military victory, only a military solution. There is neither,” he added.

More than 300,000 people have been killed since the conflict began in March 2011, and over half the population has been displaced, with millions becoming refugees.

Moscow launched an air war in support of Assad’s forces last year, while Washington has supported rebel forces battling the regime.

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UK Spy Chief: Britain Not Safe Until Syrian War Ends (AP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Associated Press](#)

LONDON (AP) – The head of MI6, Britain’s international spy agency, is warning that Britain cannot be safe until the war in Syria is brought to an end.

Alex Younger used his first speech since taking the job to say that the British intelligence and security services have disrupted a dozen plots in the U.K. in the last three years and are conducting hundreds of investigations. Even so, he says it’s not possible “to pull up the drawbridge” in increasingly uncertain times.

Younger says “the scale of the threat is unprecedented.”

Young described the Islamic State group as a “murderously efficient” organization that is plotting attacks despite facing military pressure in their strongholds in the Middle East.

He says the spy service must take the fight “to the enemy, penetrating terrorist organizations upstream.”

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Russia In Syria Sustains Terror Threat To UK, Spy Chief Says (Hodges, BLOOM)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Bloomberg News](#)

By Jeremy Hodges

Unless Russia changes its strategy in the conflict in Syria, militants that thrive amid the insecurity will continue to pose a terrorist threat to Britain, the head of the U.K.’s Secret Intelligence Service said in a rare speech Thursday.

“Legitimacy is the strongest weapon against international terrorism,” Alex Younger said in the first ever public speech to be made inside the London headquarters of the agency, also known as MI6. “The Russian conduct in Syria, allied with that of Assad’s discredited regime, will, if they do not change course, provide a tragic example of the perils of forfeiting legitimacy.”

Russian forces have been working alongside the troops of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to oust rebels from the northern city of Aleppo. The Russian support for the regime runs counter to existing U.S. and European policy in opposing Assad and backing moderate rebel groups in a civil war that has dragged on for six years. Russian intervention in the conflict last year averted the regime’s collapse and allowed Assad’s military to regain the momentum. The Islamic State group, also known as Daesh, remains in control of parts of the country.

“The plight of the Syrians continues to worsen,” Younger told journalists. “I cannot say with any certainty what the next year will bring. But what I do know is this – we cannot be safe from the threats that emanate from that land unless the civil war is brought to an end. And brought to an end in a way that recognizes the interests of more than a minority of its peoples and their international backers.”

Recruitment Drive

The U.K.’s three spy agencies have, in recent months, made an effort to put more of a public face on what they do as they look to recruit record numbers of agents. The pointed

Russian remarks came in a speech that was less specific about other states and threats to the country's security. MI6, which has been dogged by image problems in the past thanks to its associations with elite education and class, has sought to encourage a more diverse recruitment process.

The threat of a terrorist attack within Britain remains "unprecedented," said Younger, who was appointed head of the agency in 2014. U.K. security services have foiled 12 terrorist plots since June 2013. "As I speak, the highly organized external attack-planning structures within Daesh, even as they face military threat, are plotting ways to project violence against the U.K. and our allies without ever having to leave Syria."

Western Europe remains on high terror alert after 18 months of fatal attacks in France, Germany, Belgium and Turkey that have all been linked back in some way to Islamic State.

Younger highlighted hybrid warfare as an increasingly dangerous phenomenon. "The connectivity that is at the heart of globalization can be exploited by states with hostile intent," he said, without naming particular countries. "They do this through means as varied as cyber-attacks, propaganda or subversion of democratic process."

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UN Syria Envoy Expects To Meet With Trump Team (AP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Associated Press](#)

UNITED NATIONS (AP) – The U.N. envoy for Syria says he expects to meet with someone President-elect Donald Trump's team in the coming days.

Staffan de Mistura made his remarks on his way to brief the Security Council on the situation in Syria.

"The plan is to meet some people around the team of President Trump," de Mistura told reporters, without offering more details.

It was unclear if any action would result from de Mistura's briefing after Russia and China vetoed a resolution earlier this year calling for a 7-day truce in the Syrian city of Aleppo. It was the sixth time Russia used its veto to block action on Syria.

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UN Syria Envoy To Meet Trump Team (AFP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[AFP](#)

United Nations (AFP) – The UN's peace envoy for Syria on Thursday said he is planning to hold meetings with US President-elect Donald Trump's transition team.

Staffan de Mistura, who has been leading diplomatic efforts to end the five-year war in Syria, told reporters that talks would be held in New York and in Washington next week.

"The plan is to meet some people around the team of president Trump," De Mistura said as the Security Council met behind closed doors to discuss the crisis in Syria.

Declining to give details on the issues he plans to raise, he said he has "some ideas" about how the new US administration "would be able to help fight terrorism in a very effective way."

Although it was not immediately known with whom he would be meeting, he said the talks would take place on Monday and Tuesday.

Backed by Russian air power, Syrian forces have captured about 85 percent of eastern Aleppo after three weeks of heavy fighting to seize one of the last opposition strongholds.

The United States and Russia are holding talks on a ceasefire deal that could allow rebel fighters and civilians to leave the city.

The United Nations has stepped up calls for a pause in fighting to allow hundreds of sick and injured children to be evacuated.

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Syrian Rebels Pin Hopes On Trump (Trofimov, WSJ)

Opposition leaders optimistic that U.S. president-elect's hostility to Iran would offset desire to improve relations with Russia

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Wall Street Journal](#)

By Yaroslav Trofimov

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Pentagon Works To Ease Kurdish-Turkish Tensions In Syria (AFP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[AFP](#)

Washington (AFP) – The US military is working to ease simmering tensions between Syrian Kurdish rebels and Turkey, both fighting the Islamic State group in northern Syria, US defense officials said Thursday.

A US-led coalition has trained and armed the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces – most of whom are Kurdish – to attack the IS group.

Turkey, a key NATO ally, has also entered Syria, where it, too, is fighting the jihadist group.

But Turkish troops are positioned behind the Kurdish YPG – considered by Ankara to be a terrorist offshoot of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which has been waging an insurgency inside Turkey since 1984.

Turkish troops have attacked Kurdish forces multiple times since Ankara entered Syria in August.

“This week, we’re facilitating joint discussions with Turkey, the SDF and other coalition partners to promote deescalation in the area,” coalition spokesman Colonel John Dorrian said.

“Every party to these discussions has an overriding interest in common – this is the defeat of ISIL, an enemy that threatens us all,” he added, using an alternate acronym for the IS group.

Turkey, which has also sent troops into northern Iraq, is focused on preventing the Kurdish peshmerga there and the YPG in Syria from linking up and forming a contiguous proto-state along the Turkish border.

Ankara has repeatedly said it would not allow a “terror corridor” on its southern frontier and that it wants to prevent the joining of the Kurdish “cantons” of Afrin and Kobane.

A senior US military official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Kurdish forces had slowed their advance on the IS Syrian stronghold of Raqa because they are worried the Turks will attack them.

“Their biggest concern is the Turks behind them are threatening to attack them and that’s what caused them to hesitate to move forward,” the official said.

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Chechnya’s Leader Says Troops Would Fight Happily In Syria (Isachenkov, AP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

Associated Press

By Vladimir Isachenkov

MOSCOW (AP) – Chechnya’s strongman leader said Thursday that troops in the Russian province would be happy to fight the “scum” in Syria if they receive the Kremlin order.

Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov reacted to Russian media reports claiming that two battalions of military police from Chechnya were preparing to leave for Syria to protect the Russian air base there and perform other tasks.

Kadyrov wouldn’t confirm the reports, but posted on Instagram that the troops stationed in Chechnya would be happy to deploy to Syria, if they are sent there. He added that he would be eager to personally join the fight against “international terrorism.”

“I would be happy and proud to immediately go to Syria to fight the scum” on President Vladimir Putin’s orders, Kadyrov said. “The enemy must be destroyed in his den before his tentacles reach your land.”

Russia has waged an air campaign in support of Syrian President Bashar Assad since September 2015, helping his forces steadily gain ground across the country, most recently in Aleppo, Syria’s largest city and its commercial capital before the war.

The Kremlin has relied on Kadyrov to stabilize Chechnya after two separatist wars, effectively allowing him use generous federal subsidies to rule the region like a personal fiefdom.

International rights groups have accused his feared police force of abductions, torture and extrajudicial killings. In September, Kadyrov won re-election as Chechnya’s leader with almost 98 percent of the vote.

Kadyrov has repeatedly described himself and his troops as “Putin’s foot soldiers.” Many Chechens have played a role in the fighting in eastern Ukraine, where they backed pro-Russia separatists against Ukrainian troops when the conflict erupted in 2014.

Earlier this year, he said in a documentary made by Russian state television that he had sent Chechens to infiltrate the Islamic State group in Syria and gather intelligence.

Putin has stood by Kadyrov amid Russian opposition claims of his involvement in the 2015 killing of prominent Kremlin critic Boris Nemtsov. Kadyrov has denied playing a role in the killing. The suspected triggerman now facing trial alone served as an officer in Chechnya’s security forces.

While Kadyrov had the central avenue in Chechnya’s capital city of Grozny named after Putin, he also has encouraged strict observance of Islamic rules in Chechnya, making it obligatory for women to wear headscarves in public. Men in Chechnya have been tacitly allowed to have several wives, a practice Kremlin critics have used to show that Chechnya under Kadyrov has effectively become a separate state governed by its own rules.

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MSF: Jordan Closure Blocked 70 Syrians From Life-saving Care (AP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Associated Press](#)

AMMAN, Jordan (AP) – Seventy severely wounded Syrians, including 16 children, have been prevented from getting life-saving treatment since Jordan closed its border with Syria six months ago, an official from the medical aid group Doctors Without Borders said Thursday.

Some of those patients have likely died, said Marjan Besuijen, a project coordinator for the group, known by its French acronym MSF.

Besuijen urged the Jordanian government to allow the evacuation of the most severely wounded Syrians to the kingdom, “basically giving them a chance to survive.”

Jordan sealed the border in June, in response to a deadly cross-border attack on its security forces by Islamic extremists.

Government spokesman Mohammed Momani said Thursday that Jordan allows “critical cases” to enter the kingdom for treatment and also permits medical supplies to be sent to Syria.

Besuijen said that an MSF surgical ward in the Jordanian border town of Ramtha has stood virtually empty since the border closure. Before June, 50 to 80 war wounded from southern Syria were transferred to the Ramtha facility every month, she said.

Earlier this week, MSF decided to close a clinic in Jordan’s Zaatari refugee camp which previously had treated overflow patients from Ramtha.

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ISIS Remains Threat In Libya Despite Defeat In Surt, US Officials Say (Schmitt, NYT)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[New York Times](#)

By Eric Schmitt

WASHINGTON — The Islamic State, though driven from its coastal stronghold in Surt this week, still has several hundred fighters who have dispersed across Libya and pose a threat to the country, its neighbors and, potentially, Europe, according to American officials and the Pentagon’s Africa Command.

The government’s top counterterrorism official, Nicholas J. Rasmussen, said the Islamic State’s defeat in Surt had dealt a major setback to the militancy’s ambitions to expand its caliphate in North Africa. But he said he remained “very concerned” about the ability of surviving fighters to exploit the country’s economic and political vacuum.

“The concern we have about external attacks from Syria and Iraq extends to Libya if ISIL is able to maintain a stable foothold there,” Mr. Rasmussen, the director of the National Counterterrorism Center, told a security conference here on Wednesday. The Islamic State is also known as ISIL or ISIS.

That assessment, which echoed other recent warnings from senior American officials, underscores the resilience of what had been considered a potent Islamic State affiliate outside the group’s main territory in Syria and Iraq.

Jonathan Winer, the Obama administration’s special envoy to Libya, told Congress last month that the Islamic State, as it suffered defeats in Surt at the hands of Libyan fighters and American warplanes, was most likely forming cells around the country. He called on Libyans to unite behind the country’s fledgling Government of National Accord to combat the terrorists.

“Most of those who have not been killed probably have stayed in Libya and gone underground, forming cells elsewhere in the country,” Mr. Winer said in testimony to a House panel on Nov. 30. “We believe they are waiting for opportunities to engage in further attacks in Libya or its neighbors, and if possible to reassert ISIL geographically.”

A recent analysis by the American Enterprise Institute, a policy organization in Washington, found that Islamic State militants operating as “desert brigades” south of Surt had ambushed Libyan military positions, disrupted supply lines with explosives and established checkpoints on key roads. The Islamic State is recruiting foreign fighters into southern Libya and is most likely relying on the same havens used by the group Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, according to the analysis.

In a telephone interview this week, an official at Africa Command's headquarters in Stuttgart, Germany, said that several hundred Islamic State fighters remained in the eastern, southern and western portions of the country, and that counting fighters aligned with Al Qaeda brought the militants' ranks in the country to more than 1,000.

The official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity under the command's ground rules for news media interviews on intelligence matters, said many of the remaining Islamic State fighters had been drawn to the conflict from Tunisia, Morocco, Sudan and other countries in the region.

American intelligence agencies have offered wide-ranging estimates on the peak number of Islamic State fighters in Libya — mainly in Surt, but also in Benghazi and Tripoli — with some assessments this year topping 5,000 militants.

Although the Islamic State has lost its main base in Libya, it could reorganize as an underground terrorist network by activating the pockets of support it enjoys in cities like Tripoli and Benghazi, and by tapping into the networks of other jihadist groups like Ansar al-Sharia.

"Is jihadism down and out in Libya? No," said Frederic Wehrey, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington. He pointed to a cocktail of factors that helped the jihadist cause, including economic collapse, the contraction of civil society and the rise of authoritarianism in eastern Libya. "These are not good signs for the destruction of radicalism," he said.

Last year's Islamic State assault on the Corinthia Hotel in Tripoli, which killed 10 people, including an American, provides a possible template for future actions intended to destabilize the country's fragile United Nations-backed unity government.

But since the assault on Surt started in May, the Islamic State has not carried out any major bombings in Tripoli, which raises questions about the group's capabilities. In February, American warplanes devastated a major training camp outside the western town of Sabratha, killing at least 43 people, including a commander linked to attacks against Western tourists in Tunisia last year.

The siege of Surt revealed tensions between local and foreign fighters inside the Islamic State ranks. As the forces from nearby Misurata pressed the siege in recent months, Libyan news media outlets reported divisions between Libyan militants who wanted to surrender and foreign jihadists who were determined to fight to the death.

This past summer, the Obama administration deemed Surt an "area of active hostilities," after the Libyan prime minister asked for assistance in dislodging Islamic State militants from

that city. The move exempted the area from 2013 rules that restrict drone strikes and other counterterrorism operations away from battlefield zones, which President Obama had announced in a major speech that year that sought to turn a page in the long-running war against Al Qaeda.

As of this week, Africa Command had carried out 495 airstrikes against militants in Surt since August.

Pentagon and Africa Command officials said there were no plans to expand authorities to conduct airstrikes beyond Surt, although United States officials have said they would consider additional requests from Libyan officials.

Under the procedures set up for the Surt operation, Libyan ground commanders meet at a Libyan operations center outside Surt with American Special Operations forces who have been in the country for months. The Libyan commanders request targets they want the Americans to hit, such as T-72 tanks.

The American forces, working with military spotters and officials at Africa Command, analyze the prospective targets using imagery from American surveillance drones and other intelligence. If deemed valid and not too great a risk to civilians, the targets are approved for attack.

The United States began flying unarmed surveillance drone missions this summer in Libya from bases in neighboring Tunisia, a significant expansion of that country's counterterrorism cooperation with the Pentagon.

Tunisia, which has suffered several devastating terrorist attacks, had already built a 125-mile earthen wall, which stretches about half of the length of its border with Libya, in an attempt to prevent militants from infiltrating. "We are ready," Faysal Gouia, Tunisia's ambassador to Washington, said in an interview.

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NEAR EAST & NORTH AFRICA

Iran Races To Clinch Oil Deals Before Donald Trump Takes Office (Erdbrink, Krauss, NYT)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[New York Times](#)

By Thomas Erdbrink And Clifford Krauss

TEHRAN — President Hassan Rouhani of Iran is in a tight race to sign as many oil deals with Western companies as he can, before hard-liners at home and President-elect Donald J. Trump have a chance to return the Mideast country to cultural and economic isolation.

At the same time, Iran is in a battle with Saudi Arabia and other OPEC producers to reclaim its position as one of the

world's leading oil exporters, a spot that it lost during the years of international sanctions over Tehran's nuclear program.

A provisional agreement this week with Royal Dutch Shell to develop the South Azadegan and Yadavaran oil fields, two of the country's largest, along with the Kish natural gas field, is the latest sign of growing interest in Iran from international energy companies.

A few days ago, Schlumberger, a giant oil services company, signed a memorandum of understanding to study several oil fields around Iran that are currently in decline to seek ways to lift production. Over the last four weeks, Tehran has negotiated similar agreements with China National Petroleum Corporation; DNO, a Norwegian oil services company; PTTEP, the Thai state-run oil company; and PGNiG, a Polish oil and gas company.

The deals, if finalized, would bring much-needed expertise and foreign investment to Iran's ailing energy sector.

Just as important, the agreements provide a lifeline to the rest of the world, experts say, a critical element in keeping dollars flowing and in cementing relations with European and Asian countries. Few Iranian officials like to acknowledge that in public, insisting that the country is immune to outside pressure, but the election of Mr. Trump and his selection of a national security team that views Iran as a major threat in the Middle East seems certain to usher in a new period of tensions.

"Our officials are in a rush to sign contracts with big oil companies in order to have leverage when Trump enters the White House," said Saeed Laylaz, an economist with close ties to the government of Mr. Rouhani, who has bet his political future on ending Iran's isolation. Mr. Laylaz pointed out that most European energy giants had been present in Iran for decades and had left only after sanctions, now lifted, were imposed during the Obama administration. "Just as in the past, we need them back here, also to make sure we are not isolated," he said.

Analysts noted that the deals were only memorandums of understanding, not hard contracts. But they stressed that the agreements also indicated a strong desire by Western and Asian energy companies to return to Iran, once the world's second-largest exporter of oil.

"It seems the big oil and gas companies in Europe are determined to show Mr. Trump that they are going to make deals with Iran anyway. These are important signals to America," said Reza Zandi, an Iranian journalist and analyst who specializes in the oil and gas industries.

Mr. Zandi said it was not hard to see why the oil companies were so eager to return to Iran. "We need \$40 billion in investment in the oil and gas sector each year," he said, "and we don't have such resources inside the country."

Mr. Rouhani and his government of technocrats are fighting their oil battle on two fronts. Domestically, they face pressure from hard-liners who have been closely scrutinizing the oil contracts, seeking anything that could undermine Iran's independence and trying to steer them to companies under their control.

But Iran's oil minister, Bijan Namdar Zangeneh, told the semiofficial news agency Fars in November that only foreign companies had the capability and capital to modernize Iran's crumbling oil and gas sector. "We need technology, including the management technology that allows a project to come into operation in four years rather than in 12 years," he said. "And above all, we need the money."

Iran also faces a struggle to rebuild its oil exports. Growing production has allowed Iran in recent months to recover many of the Asian and European markets that it lost to Saudi Arabia and other OPEC producers during the years when sanctions were in effect. And as Iran effectively flexes its muscles in OPEC for the first time since the sanctions were lifted in January, its goal is not only to protect its newfound gains but also to expand its markets, pitting it directly against its bitter sectarian rival, Saudi Arabia.

Further production and export expansion, however, will require more foreign investment.

The new wave of agreements with Iran, most of which remain provisional, began on Nov. 8, the day of Mr. Trump's victory, when Total of France became the first Western energy company to negotiate a deal to develop and produce natural gas from a section of a giant Persian Gulf gas field. Total leads a consortium that includes China National Petroleum Corporation and Petropars, a subsidiary of the Iranian state-run oil company, in the \$4.8 billion project. The provisional agreement is due to be finalized early next year.

"They are signing before Trump does something," said Dragan Vuckovic, president of Mediterranean International, a Texas-based oil services company that works in North Africa and the Middle East. "The Iranians will give the Europeans favorable terms because of Trump. They want to send a message to Trump that if you try to cancel this agreement, we will just go to the Europeans."

Iran needs foreign capital and technical expertise to reach its immediate goal of returning to its 2011 oil production level of 4.3 million barrels a day, reversing a drop that began even before sanctions were imposed. Many Iranian fields are old and in decline, requiring sophisticated and expensive

redrilling of wells and injections of water and carbon dioxide to coax more oil from the ground.

Since oil export sanctions were lifted in January, Iran's production has risen almost a third, to about 3.7 million barrels a day, with minimal foreign help. By reaching agreements with Total and Shell, Tehran now has the ambitious goal of reaching production levels of 4.8 million barrels a day by 2021, which would give it added clout in OPEC and the ability to go head-to-head with Saudi Arabia in competing for growing Asian markets, particularly in India.

In past decades, Iran has been aggressive in urging other OPEC members to use their position to manipulate the market for higher prices, while Saudi Arabia has often argued for caution. Saudi Arabia has held the upper hand in recent years, but Iran was a major player at the latest OPEC meeting, as the cartel decided to cut production for the first time in eight years.

It remains to be seen whether the agreement to scale back production, not slated to take effect until January, will hold up. Similar agreements among OPEC members in the past have crumbled in the face of widespread cheating and a lack of any enforcement mechanism. The agreement is also contingent on cooperation from a handful of non-OPEC producers, particularly Russia, which is notoriously unreliable in such matters, said Philip K. Verleger Jr., an energy economist who served in the Ford and Carter administrations.

"There is no one who will concede market share, and so there is no way to come to an enforceable agreement," Mr. Verleger said.

But just the fact that Iran was able to play a leading role at the OPEC meeting is a sign that its leaders are determined to return to world markets — as long as they are not stymied once again by geopolitical developments.

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Iranian Government Opens Theme Park Where Children Learn To Shoot U.S., Israel Flags: Report (Richardson, WT)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Washington Times](#)

By Bradford Richardson

The Iranian government has reportedly opened a new theme park where, rather than riding roller coasters or Ferris wheels, children dress up as soldiers and pretend to defend the Islamic republic against its enemies, including Israel and the United States.

The City of Games for Revolutionary Children, located in the city of Mashad, splits children aged 8 to 13 into "squads" of up to 10, The Sun reported. The platoons complete various

themed challenges pertaining to the Iran-Iraq war, the defense of holy shrines and making it through minefields safely.

At the station of the Holy Defense, children are encouraged to fire bullets at an effigy of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and lob artillery shells at U.S. and Israel flags.

"At the final station, children learn that the most important elements for attaining victory are wisdom and intelligence for fighting the enemy," theme park boss Harnid Sadeghi told Raja News in Iran.

He said there was "great demand" for the park.

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Emboldened Iran Hawks Eager To Press Tehran On Nuclear Violations Under Trump (Sands, WT)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Washington Times](#)

By David R. Sands

Hawks critical of the Obama administration's outreach to Iran over the past eight years were in a distinctly upbeat mood as they took over an ornate Senate caucus room Thursday to promote their cause. The incoming Trump administration, many said, understands their case and the threat posed by the regime in Tehran far better than President Obama ever did.

Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman John McCain and Democratic Sen. Robert Menendez, a longtime member of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, were among the lawmakers saying Mr. Trump and the team he is assembling will clearly be more skeptical of Iran and ready to call out any violations of the multinational nuclear deal Mr. Obama helped negotiate in 2015.

"There is every reason to believe and be hopeful that the president-elect will take a new set of eyes and a new approach to this theocracy. I'm very hopeful that will happen," former Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Ridge, the first secretary of homeland security, told the briefing on the policy options on Iran held in the Russell Senate Office Building.

Mr. McCain said he was heartened by Mr. Trump's choice of James N. Mattis to head the Defense Department, saying the retired Marine general was deeply familiar with the threat posed by Tehran to the U.S. and its regional allies. Gen. Mattis has criticized the Iran nuclear deal as "imperfect" and said in an April speech that "the Iranian regime, in my mind, is

the single most enduring threat to stability and peace in the Middle East.”

“I don’t know, frankly, what Donald Trump wants to do [about Iran], but I do know the people he has selected so far for major positions I’ve been very pleased to see,” the Arizona Republican said.

The Capitol Hill event itself marked another step in the remarkable evolution of its organizer, the Paris-based National Council of Resistance of Iran and the NCRI’s largest component, the Mujahedeen-e Khalq (People’s Mujahedeen of Iran), or MEK. A fierce opponent of the Islamic republic regime in Tehran and a source of many of the intelligence scoops detailing Tehran’s clandestine nuclear programs, the secular coalition broke with other elements of the coalition that toppled the Shah of Iran in the 1979 revolution, and has operated in exile ever since.

The MEK was placed on the State Department’s list of terrorist organizations in the mid-1990s but, backed by a growing number of supporters on Capitol Hill, was removed from the list in 2012. MEK officials say they have renounced violence but remain committed to the peaceful overthrow of the theocratic regime in Tehran in favor of a new secular, democratic government.

Camp Liberty resolved

The group was buoyed this year by the end of a long stalemate over Camp Liberty, a onetime U.S. military base in Iraq that became a holding post for over 3,000 MEK members, held there by the Iraqi government and constantly criticized by Iranian authorities. The last of those detained at the camp left Iraq this fall, many having been taken in by the government of Albania.

Former Sen. Joseph Lieberman, the 2000 Democratic candidate for vice president, told Thursday’s gathering that he voted for Hillary Clinton last month but that Mr. Trump’s surprise election, coupled with strong congressional majorities critical of the Iranian regime, could mean a major change in Iranian policy in the months ahead.

“I really think a new day is dawning for the cause of a free, stable, independent and democratic Iran,” said Mr. Lieberman, who noted the resolution of the Camp Liberty standoff means the NCRI “can focus on resistance and changing the regime” in Iran.

“Elections have consequences,” Mr. Lieberman said. “I can tell you, when it comes to Iran, the change from Barack Obama to Donald Trump is a very hopeful one. Now we go to an administration that is not protective or defensive of the Iran agreement, but is ready to challenge it.”

Mr. Trump has been sharply critical of the deal — and the tens of billions of dollars in frozen and sanctioned funds returned to Iran — but has been unclear on whether he would scrap it unilaterally or take a far more aggressive approach to enforcing it and calling out Iranian violations. Many of the other signatories to the deal, including Russia, China, Germany and France, have been actively exploring new commercial opportunities with Iran, in the energy sector and beyond.

For its part, Iran has stepped up its warnings against any move by the Trump administration to torpedo the nuclear deal and the lifting of international sanctions Iran demanded as part of the agreement.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, considered a relative “moderate” on the Iranian political spectrum, said just this week Mr. Trump “may wish many things, he may wish to weaken or tear up [the nuclear deal], but will we and our nation allow such a thing? America cannot influence our path of strength and endurance.”

But Mr. McCain and other critics of the deal say Iran has already violated both the letter and the spirit of the deal, with little sign that Tehran has modified its policies or stopped sowing instability in regional hot spots from Syria to Yemen.

Mr. Lieberman said Mr. Trump and the Republican-dominated Congress could take a number of steps to check Iran’s aggressiveness short of tearing up the nuclear deal, including new unilateral sanctions and designating Iran’s Revolutionary Guard Corps, the military unit specifically charged with defending the country’s Islamic theocratic system, as a terrorist organization. The sanctions could hurt, because the IRGC has built up a major business empire in addition to its military operations.

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UN Concerned About Upswing In Libya Violence (AP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Associated Press](#)

UNITED NATIONS (AP) – The U.N. Security Council says it is concerned by the recent escalation of violence between armed groups in Tripoli.

The clashes have raised fears of another mini-civil war erupting around the oil fields and in a statement issued Thursday, the council called on the parties to cease fighting.

The council also welcomed progress in the fight against the Islamic State group, al-Qaida and their affiliates, particularly

in Sirte and Benghazi, but warned that IS fighters may have dispersed to other parts of the country and urged Libyans across the political divide to unite in the fight against extremists.

Libya is split into two governments, with a parliament in the east that has refused to approve the U.N.-brokered government in the capital, Tripoli.

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In The Battle For Control Of Key Oil Installations In Libya, A Military Man Takes Center Stage (King, LAT)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Los Angeles Times](#)

By Laura King

With Islamic State driven from its last urban stronghold in strife-ridden but energy-rich Libya, fresh turmoil is brewing over control of lucrative oil installations.

And a polarizing military figure who once enjoyed close U.S. support — Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar — is at the heart of the unfolding struggle.

The North African country is splintered by an array of rival armed groups, some of them loyal to one of two competing governments. Haftar has carved out a powerful fiefdom independent of the weak but internationally supported administration in the capital, Tripoli.

Three months ago, forces loyal to Haftar seized the main terminals at the heart of Libya's "oil crescent," a concentration of oil-shipping ports and facilities on the Mediterranean coast. That gave him and his ally, a rival government based in the country's east, control over crucial oil exports, which currently amount to about 600,000 barrels of crude a day.

That grip has not gone unchallenged. This week, Haftar's forces — the self-styled Libyan National Army — beat back a series of attacks by a loose coalition of armed groups based in western Libya. The attackers consisted of a mishmash of Islamist fighters and some backers of the Tripoli government, including a militia leader named Ibrahim Jadran, who headed a semi-official force that formerly controlled the oil facilities.

Few expect the fighting to end any time soon — but in the meantime, Haftar, who is based in Libya's second city,

Benghazi, has seen an exponential leap in his personal power and prestige in the months that the oil terminals have been under his thumb.

"It's been a huge boost for him, and really shifts the momentum to his advantage," said Frederic Wehrey, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for Peace. "He has credibly shown the international community he's guarding the oil fields, and the oil is flowing, with revenue going into central coffers.... It's an enormous card that he's been able to play."

Born in 1943, the field marshal — a title conferred on him by the eastern government, not recognized by the Tripoli one — has faced reversals of fortune before. In fact, they have defined Haftar's long career.

A onetime key lieutenant of dictator Moammar Kadafi, who was killed in 2011 after being ousted in a popular uprising, Haftar fell out of favor after commanding Libyan forces on the losing side of a 1980s conflict in the neighboring African state of Chad. He fled into exile in the United States, and from a base in northern Virginia, cultivated close ties with the Central Intelligence Agency.

He returned to Libya to fight on the side of anti-Kadafi forces, but failed to achieve the degree of influence he had hoped for in the power struggle that erupted after the dictator's downfall.

In 2014, he again burst into view when he went on national television to outline his plan for "national salvation," launching a wide-ranging battle against Islamists who then held sway in Benghazi and other eastern towns and cities.

Backed by a number of former military commanders and an impressive array of military hardware left over from Kadafi's time, Haftar won popular backing by doing what the then-central government could not: largely restoring stability in Benghazi and other eastern towns, where a local Al Qaeda affiliate, Ansar al Sharia had staged a chaotic campaign of assassinations and bombing attacks.

Confident and charismatic, Haftar has demonstrated an astute grasp of regional political forces at play. He won the support of Egypt's President Abdel Fatah Sisi, whose stridently anti-Islamist views dovetail neatly with Haftar's, and of the United Arab Emirates, another avowed enemy of the Islamists.

Haftar is also well-positioned to take advantage of a newly assertive Mideast stance by Russia. He has made several trips to Moscow this year, most recently last month, when he was photographed in a Russian-style fur hat as he headed to high-level official meetings.

Russian news reports said he may have submitted a "wish list" of weapons if a U.N. arms embargo applying to all parties in Libya except the Tripoli government was lifted.

And Haftar and his allies are said to have been heartened by the incoming U.S. administration of President-elect Donald Trump. Analyst say Haftar's inner circle believes the new American president may tilt away from the Tripoli government, which has some Islamist-leaning elements — even if that means breaking with the United Nations and Europeans.

The Tripoli government “is in a very weak position in relation to Haftar, and that's a big turnaround,” said Richard Reeve, a Libya expert at Britain's Oxford Research Group, an independent think tank. “He's a force to be reckoned with.”

Though the field marshal will probably stay in the spotlight and continue to flex his military muscle, Libya's other power struggles haven't gone away.

The battle against Islamic State in the coastal city of Surt, though unrelated to the struggle for the oil installations Haftar controls, sapped the strength of powerful militias based in the western city of Misrata. The seven-month campaign to retake Surt ended this week when the Misratans and their government-allied supporters finally cleared out the last square city block Islamic State fighters were holding.

Islamic State, although ejected from its only urban redoubt in Libya, nonetheless remains a threat, according to analysts and the U.S. military, which oversaw coalition airstrikes against Islamic State positions.

“There's still ISIS in Libya,” Pentagon spokesman Capt. Jeff Davis said after Surt was declared free of the militants, using another acronym for the group. “They are out in the desert, they are underground, they have blended into the population, and they are going to be a challenge for the Libyan government in the future.”

Amid Libya's volatile political landscape, Haftar's wider ambitions may be limited by unpopularity outside his eastern sphere of influence. In other parts of the country, he is despised for both his American links and his past as a Kadafi confidant and enforcer, with Islamists holding him in particular disdain.

But some of Haftar's backers aspire to greater powers for him, with some suggesting that the entire country would benefit from emergency military rule — presided over by the field marshal.

“His opponents accuse him of being another Kadafi, of wanting to take Libya back to a military dictatorship,” Wehrey said. “He's a military man through and through, and he wants to have a seat at the table — he's emerged as the indispensable power broker in Libya.”

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Rights Group Says US May Be Complicit In Yemen “Atrocities” (Michael, AP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Associated Press](#)

By Maggie Michael

CAIRO (AP) – Human Rights Watch on Thursday called for an arms embargo on Saudi Arabia over the war in Yemen, and said the United States might be complicit in “atrocities” by supplying bombs.

The New York-based group said more than 160 people were killed in one month, mostly by U.S. bombs sold to the Saudi-led coalition battling Yemen's Houthi rebels. It said the U.S. arms were supplied after earlier violations had been publicized, and were used in airstrikes in September and October.

“The Obama administration is running out of time to completely suspend U.S. arms sales to Saudi Arabia or be forever linked to Yemen wartime atrocities,” Human Rights Watch researcher Priyanka Motaparthy said.

A Saudi-led coalition supported by the United States launched an air campaign on behalf of Yemen's internationally recognized government in March 2015. The year before, the Houthis had seized much of northern Yemen, including the capital, Sanaa.

More than 4,000 civilians have been killed in the conflict, and some 3 million have been displaced. The fighting, along with an air and sea blockade by the coalition, has pushed the Arab world's poorest country to the brink of famine.

Rights groups have investigated dozens of airstrikes that targeted weddings, busy markets, hospitals, and schools. They have accused the coalition of committing war crimes and called for an international investigation.

The Human Rights Watch report released Thursday included findings from an investigation into an air raid in Arhab, a town north of Sanaa, on Sept. 10 that killed 31 civilians, including several first responders, and wounded more than 40.

HRW said fragments of the weapons used in the attack show they were produced in the U.S. in October 2015, after several rights groups had already reported alleged violations.

Ten days later, warplanes struck a three-story house near a funeral, killing more than 28 civilians and wounding 32 in the Red Sea port city of Hodeida, the group said.

“Governments selling weapons to Saudi Arabia cannot with any credibility rely on either coalition or Yemeni-led investigations to determine whether these weapons are being used against civilians,” Motaparthy said. “The U.S., U.K., and others selling weapons to Saudi Arabia should suspend these

sales until unlawful attacks are curtailed and properly investigated.”

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US Approves \$7 Bn In Aircraft Sales To Arab Allies (AFP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[AFP](#)

Washington (AFP) – The United States on Thursday approved a series of deals worth more than \$7 billion to supply military helicopters, planes and missiles to four of its Arab allies.

The green light, announced by the State Department, will mark another windfall for plane maker Boeing and other large US defense manufacturers.

But it may face opposition from critics of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates’ controversial role in Yemen’s ongoing civil war.

The biggest agreement announced Thursday was for the \$3.51 billion sale to the Saudi kingdom of 48 CH-47F Chinook cargo helicopters with spare engines and machine guns.

Boeing and Honeywell Aerospace will be the main contractors. Up to 60 Americans – both private and government employees – will work in Saudi Arabia to maintain the aircraft.

Next, the United Arab Emirates want to spend \$3.5 billion on 27 AH-64E Apache attack helicopters plus support equipment, made by Boeing and Lockheed Martin.

Qatar, meanwhile, has requested eight C-17 military cargo jets and spare engines in a pair of contracts totaling \$781 million.

And Washington has also approved a contract to sell Morocco 1,200 TOW 2A anti-tank missiles made by US arms giant Raytheon for \$108 million.

Although the State Department has approved the sales, after consultation with the Pentagon, Congress could still block them in theory.

Since all four Arab countries involved are US allies and past major arms purchasers, however, the contracts are expected to be approved without problem – despite human rights

groups’ criticism of US support for the Saudi-led coalition campaign against Huthi rebels in Yemen, which has killed many civilians.

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May Disclaims Foreign Minister’s Remark On Saudi ‘Proxy War’ (AP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Associated Press](#)

LONDON (AP) – Britain’s outspoken foreign secretary has claimed that U.K. ally Saudi Arabia was engaging in “proxy wars” in the Middle East – comments that Prime Minister Theresa May said do not represent Britain’s position.

The Guardian newspaper on Thursday published footage of Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson saying there was no strong leadership in the Middle East willing to reach out beyond the Sunni-Shia divide, and “that’s why you’ve got the Saudis, Iran, everybody, moving in and puppeteering and playing proxy wars.”

Johnson made the comments during a conference in Rome last week.

Downing Street was quick to distance itself from his remarks, which were awkward for the government because officials rarely, if ever, criticize allies in public. May spokeswoman Helen Bower said they were Johnson’s own views and do not reflect Britain’s policy on Saudi Arabia or the Middle East kingdom’s role in the region.

Johnson is scheduled to be in Saudi Arabia on Sunday, when he could set out how Britain wants to boost its relationship with the Saudis and work with regional allies to tackle the conflict in Yemen, Bower added.

Britain backs a Saudi-led military campaign in Yemen, which has been in the midst of a civil war since Shiite Houthi rebels overthrew the government in September 2014.

Johnson had earlier defended U.K. arms sales to Saudi Arabia for potential use in Yemen, amid calls to stop the sales from British lawmakers who said the weapons were likely used to violate human rights laws.

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Boris Johnson Lashes Out At Saudi Arabia And Gets Stung At Home (Bilefsky, NYT)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

New York Times

By Dan Bilefsky

LONDON — Boris Johnson, Britain's famously undiplomatic chief diplomat, finally seems to have gone too far.

In an unusual upbraiding of a foreign secretary by a sitting prime minister, Downing Street on Thursday was forced to issue a statement that Mr. Johnson was not representing the "government's position" on Saudi Arabia. Mr. Johnson had accused the country, a British ally, of "puppeteering" in "proxy wars" across the Middle East and of "abusing Islam."

The comments by Mr. Johnson came to light on Thursday after The Guardian published video footage of a conference last week in Rome where Mr. Johnson was shown on a panel, punching his fist in the air while arguing that countries including Saudi Arabia and Iran were destabilizing the Middle East.

"There are politicians who are twisting and abusing religion and different strains of the same religion in order to further their own political objectives," he said, adding, "That's why you've got the Saudis, Iran, everybody, moving in and puppeteering and playing proxy wars."

Mr. Johnson's comments are hardly shocking, perhaps, considering that before his appointment as foreign secretary, he suggested that President Obama had an "ancestral dislike of the British Empire." Mr. Johnson also wrote a poem insinuating sexual relations between Turkey's president and a goat, compared the European Union to Nazi Germany and wrote that Hillary Clinton looked like "a sadistic nurse in a mental hospital."

But by criticizing an ally publicly, Mr. Johnson not only breached diplomatic protocol but embarrassed Prime Minister Theresa May, who had recently returned from a two-day trip to the Persian Gulf. While there, she extolled the Saudi royal family's leadership, as part of a diplomatic drive to cement close relations between the two countries.

The timing also could not be worse because Mr. Johnson is scheduled to travel to Saudi Arabia to meet with government ministers there on Sunday. Britain, which is on the verge of starting difficult negotiations to leave the European Union, is eager to offset its dependence on the enormous European market. Saudi Arabia has been a lucrative market for British arms exports.

"The foreign secretary's views are not the government's position on, for example, Saudi Arabia and its role in the region," the prime minister's spokeswoman told the BBC. She

also said that Downing Street had "full confidence in the foreign secretary."

The public distancing from Mr. Johnson underscored Downing Street's simmering frustration with the foreign secretary, an ebullient former mayor of London whose self-deprecating wit, affability and evident passion for the city won him many fans — some who regarded him as an amusing jester. But he has struggled to adopt the thick skin and stiff upper lip befitting a British foreign secretary.

On Sunday, Mr. Johnson walked away from a television interview on Sky News after he was asked to name the president of South Korea. After jauntily and correctly naming the French foreign minister as "mon ami" Jean-Marc Ayrault, he bristled over naming Park Geun-hye, the South Korean leader.

"We are not getting into a pub quiz about the leaders around the world, and I am going to, with great respect, invite you out to the pub," he told the show's host, Dermot Murmahan.

In November, Mr. Johnson was forced into an embarrassing denial after four unnamed ambassadors to the European Union said he had told them privately that he supported the free movement of people across European borders. That opinion is an apparent departure from the government's official stance before negotiations on leaving the bloc. During the campaign over the exit, Mr. Johnson championed Britain's control over its borders as a reason for the country to leave the 28-member bloc.

Nor were supporters of leaving amused when he said at an awards event last month that leaving the European Union would be a "titanic success."

Lately, even his political allies have worried that his being mocked at home is making it harder for him to be taken seriously on the global stage.

Last month, Philip Hammond, the chancellor of the Exchequer, used an important economic speech to Parliament to poke fun at Mr. Johnson's failed bid to win leadership of the Conservative Party. Mrs. May quipped that Mr. Johnson could be "put down" like a dog once he outlived his usefulness. During the Conservative Party conference in October, she jokingly asked: "Can Boris Johnson stay on message for a full four days?"

Whatever his challenges at home, Mr. Johnson could struggle as he seeks to build close ties with allies abroad, including the United States. As mayor of London, he once said President-elect Donald J. Trump was "clearly out of his mind" for planning to stop Muslims from immigrating to the United States.

He has since said he was “looking forward” to working with the Mr. Trump.

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The British Government Doesn't Agree With Its Top Diplomat About Saudi Arabia (Tharoor, WP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Washington Post](#)

By Ishaan Tharoor

At the start of 2016, few thought that Boris Johnson, Britain's foreign secretary, and President-elect Donald Trump would be in the positions they are now as the year comes to an end.

Astonishing electoral outcomes — the surprise win of the Brexit camp in Britain's June referendum and Trump's victory Nov. 8 — vaulted unorthodox politicians into positions of tremendous power and stature. And all signs point to their tenures being as unpredictable as their rise.

In a week that began with Trump seemingly upending decades of established Washington policy in Asia through a few tweets and a phone call, Johnson landed in hot water as well. Britain's top diplomat delivered remarks at a conference in Rome in which he appeared to be attacking longstanding British ally Saudi Arabia.

On stage with Ahmed Aboul Gheit, secretary-general of the Arab League, Johnson gestured to the damage regional powers in the Middle East are causing by “puppeteering and playing proxy wars.” He specifically mentioned geopolitical rivals Saudi Arabia and Iran.

“There are politicians who are twisting and abusing religion and different strains of the same religion in order to further their own political objectives,” Johnson said. That's one of the biggest political problems in the whole region. And the tragedy for me — and that's why you have these proxy wars being fought the whole time in that area — is that there is not strong enough leadership in the countries themselves.”

He went on: “There are not enough big characters, big people, men or women, who are willing to reach out beyond their Sunni or Shia or whatever group to the other side and bring people together and to develop a national story again. That is what's lacking. And that's the tragedy.”

Most observers of the Middle East would say this is a mostly fair analysis. In various Arab states, the politics of sectarianism and narrow interest have overshadowed questions of the common good and hampered effective governance. And Iran and Saudi Arabia, the region's dominant Shia and Sunni powers, respectively, are indeed guilty of fueling sectarian strife in their wider neighborhood.

But the problem is that Johnson, in his capacity as Britain's foreign secretary, stepped out of line in calling out Saudi Arabia, one of the biggest customers for British weapons. Johnson's government, led by conservative Prime Minister Theresa May, is desperate to bolster an image of a Britain open for business as she shepherds its untidy exit from the European Union. And Johnson himself is expected in Riyadh this weekend.

Not surprisingly, a spokeswoman from Downing Street came out strongly against Johnson's remarks, telling the Guardian that Johnson's remarks “are not the government's views on Saudi [Arabia] and its role in the region.” As far as political statements go, it's a strong message to Johnson.

“The prime minister has just come back from the Gulf where she has been promoting Britain's engagement with a part of the world whose trade will be hugely important after Brexit,” noted BBC diplomatic correspondent James Landale. “She has dined with the Saudi king, praised the kingdom for its reforms and given thanks for the vital intelligence the Saudi security services have provided Britain over the years.”

The Downing Street spokeswoman told the Guardian that the prime minister had “full confidence in the foreign secretary.” She went on to celebrate Britain's relationship with the kingdom as well as defend Britain's indirect involvement in the controversial Saudi-led war effort in Yemen, which rights groups argue include attacks on civilian areas that could be considered war crimes.

Saudi Arabia was “a vital partner for the U.K., particularly on counter-terrorism and, when you look at what is happening in the region, we are supportive of the Saudi-led coalition which is working in support of the legitimate government in Yemen against Houthi rebels,” said Downing Street.

Simon Tidsall, a Guardian columnist, argued that the whole incident illustrates Johnson's inconsistency and “unfitness” for his job. Johnson opposed an earlier Labour party move to block arms sales to Saudi Arabia, no matter his posturing in Rome this week.

“Suspend U.K. arms sales until the U.N. certifies that Riyadh is respecting international law,” Tidsall proposes, before concluding: “Defy Donald Trump and deepen Barack Obama's opening to Iran. Work to break the Saudi-Sunni mindset of religious war-making. In other words, Boris, put your money where your big mouth is.”

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EUROPE & EURASIA

German Intel Agency: Russia Is Trying To Destabilize Germany (Jordans, AP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

Associated Press

By Frank Jordans

BERLIN (AP) – Russia is trying to destabilize German society with propaganda and cyberattacks ahead of the country's general election, Germany's domestic intelligence agency said Thursday.

The warning was the bluntest public claim yet from Germany's BfV agency about Moscow's alleged campaign of disinformation and hacking targeting Europe's biggest economy.

"There is growing evidence of attempts to influence the federal election next year," said the BfV's head, Hans-Georg Maassen, citing "increasingly aggressive cyberespionage" against political entities in Germany.

Russia has been blamed for the hacking and release of Democratic National Committee emails before the U.S. presidential election. But Moscow has strongly denied involvement in orchestrating cyberattacks on foreign soil and hit back with allegations of its own against the West.

Dmitry Peskov, spokesman for Russian President Vladimir Putin, said last month: "Believe me, we're expecting cyberattacks during election campaigns, every election campaign in Russia. These cyberattacks also happen, and believe me, there are also people behind those tens of thousands of cyberattacks who work from Germany just like other European countries."

Maassen, the BfV chief, expressed particular concern that voters' increasing use of social media could make them more vulnerable to disinformation.

"We are worried that echo chambers are being created there," he said, adding that "automated opinion-forming" with bots could be used to spread fake news.

Media outlets controlled by the Russian government and pro-Russian blogs in Germany regularly report on crimes committed by migrants in Germany, linking the incidents to Chancellor Angela Merkel's decision to allow hundreds of thousands of refugees into the country last year.

German politicians have been the targets of recent hacking attacks, which Maassen said could have been attempts to gather information that could be used to discredit them.

"We expect a further increase in cyberattacks in the run-up to the elections," he said.

Germany has not yet set a date for its national election in 2017, but it's expected in September.

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German Firms Place New Bets On Russia (Bender, WSJ)

Undeterred by sanctions and optimistic about Donald Trump, German companies are rushing back in, hopeful for an economic recovery

Thursday, December 8, 2016

Wall Street Journal

By Ruth Bender

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

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Putin: NGO Restrictions Needed To Stem Foreign Influence (AP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) – President Vladimir Putin says Russia will continue to counter foreign influence over its domestic affairs through non-government organizations.

Speaking at Thursday's meeting of the presidential human rights council, Putin said "we will never allow" what he described as attempts to use NGOs to push Russia toward making decisions contradicting its interests.

Following major protests against his rule in 2011 and 2012, Putin signed a law requiring NGOs that receive foreign funding and engage in vaguely defined "political activity" to register as "foreign agents," a stigma they say undermines their credibility.

Several speakers at Thursday's meeting criticized the law and called for amending it, and Putin promised to look into their proposals. But he also reaffirmed the need to counter foreign attempts to use NGOs as a tool for political influence.

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[Back To Top](#)**Carter Page, Ex-Trump Adviser With Russian Ties, Visits Moscow (Nechepurenko, NYT)**

Thursday, December 8, 2016

New York Times

By Ivan Nechepurenko

MOSCOW — Carter Page, an early foreign policy adviser to Donald J. Trump who was scrutinized by the F.B.I. on suspicion of private communications with senior Russian officials last summer, was back in Moscow on Thursday.

Mr. Page was closelipped about the purpose of his visit, telling RIA Novosti, a Russian state-run news agency, that he would stay in Moscow until Tuesday and would meet with “business leaders and thought leaders.”

Mr. Page, who founded an investment company in New York called Global Energy Capital, drew attention during the summer for a speech that criticized the United States and other Western nations for a “hypocritical focus on ideas such as democratization, inequality, corruption and regime change” in Russia and in other parts of the former Soviet Union.

He worked as an investment banker in Russia for at least three years in the 2000s, advising on several major transactions involving Russian state companies. Mr. Page’s extensive business links in Russia prompted suggestions that he might be serving Mr. Trump as a back-channel liaison with senior Kremlin officials.

Mr. Page dismissed the accusations, calling the F.B.I. investigation a “witch hunt.”

Dmitri S. Peskov, the Kremlin’s spokesman, told journalists that government leaders in Moscow had no plans to meet with Mr. Page and that they had never had any contact with him. “We have learned about this from the press,” Mr. Peskov told the news agency Interfax.

Russia’s deputy foreign minister, Sergei A. Ryabkov, said officials at his department had no plans to meet with Mr. Page.

In the Russian Parliament, Leonid E. Slutsky, of the international affairs committee, dismissed talk of Mr. Page as a foreign policy adviser to Mr. Trump, even though the American president-elect told the Washington Post editorial board in March that he was.

“He is not Mr. Trump’s adviser. He is an impostor who likes to make a lot of media noise about himself,” Mr. Slutsky said.

In his previous visit to Moscow, in July, Mr. Page gave a speech at a graduation ceremony at the New Economic

School, a Moscow university. At the time, he insisted that he had traveled to Russia as a private person.

Speaking to CNN in September, Kellyanne Conway, Mr. Trump’s campaign manager, said that Mr. Page was not part of the Trump team and that he was not authorized to speak to Russian officials on its behalf.

[Back To Top](#)**Trump’s One-time Policy Adviser In Moscow For Meetings (Vasilyeva, AP)**

Thursday, December 8, 2016

Associated Press

By Nataliya Vasilyeva

MOSCOW (AP) – An ex-foreign policy adviser of U.S. President-elect Donald Trump is visiting Moscow to meet businessmen and politicians, a Russian state-owned news agency reported on Thursday.

RIA Novosti on Thursday quoted Carter Page, one of Trump’s foreign policy advisers during his election campaign, as saying that he has arrived in Moscow and will stay through Tuesday for talks with “influential businessmen and opinion leaders.”

Dmitry Peskov, spokesman for Russian President Vladimir Putin, told reporters that the Kremlin had no contacts with Trump’s team and has no plans to meet Page.

“We learned about it from the press,” Peskov said of Page’s visit, adding that he is unaware in what capacity Page will be holding meetings in Russia.

Page previously visited Moscow in July when he attended a graduation ceremony of a prestigious Moscow school. He insisted at that time, however, that he was visiting as a “private citizen.” Page worked for Merrill Lynch in Moscow in the 2000s and says he has advised the Russian state natural gas monopoly Gazprom on major deals.

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[Back To Top](#)**Putin Caps A Turnaround Year With Rosneft Deal Beating Sanctions (Arkhipov, BLOOM)**

Thursday, December 8, 2016

Bloomberg News

By Ilya Arkhipov

As the U.S. and Europe try to isolate Russia with sanctions, Vladimir Putin just managed to oversee one of the biggest investments in the global energy industry this year.

The surprise \$11 billion sale of shares in oil giant Rosneft PJSC to Qatar's sovereign wealth fund and Glencore Plc caps a 2016 that's only gotten better for the Russian president as the political tide moved in his favor. A rebellion against the mainstream swept admirer Donald Trump to the U.S. presidency, saw Britain vote to leave the European Union and undermined other leaders who backed the measures against Russia.

"It's possible that Trump and Brexit have changed the relationship to sanctions," Alexey Chesnakov, a former Kremlin political aide, said by e-mail after the deal was announced.

It's been a remarkable turnaround for Putin's fortunes in stark contrast to the leaders who penalized Russia over its involvement in the Ukrainian conflict.

The year began with Putin in confrontation with Turkey over the shooting down of a Russian warplane, deadlocked with other oil producers over a plan to bolster prices and stung by the refusal of foreign banks to take part in a bond sale. Putin since patched up relations with Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdogan, reached a landmark agreement with OPEC last week to cut production, and traders are betting that Russian bonds will reap the benefit of better relations with a Trump White House.

Assad Ally

The involvement of Qatar in the Rosneft deal may also help him reinforce Russia's role in the Middle East, where Putin intervened to support Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, according to Elena Suponina, a senior analyst at the Institute of Strategic Studies, which advises the Kremlin.

Despite the Gulf State's opposition to Assad, it may have set a precedent for strengthening economic ties with "the biggest deal with the Arab world in modern Russian history," she said.

That's not to say the sanctions imposed over the 2014 seizure of Crimea and the conflict in eastern Ukraine had no effect. Coupled with a collapse in oil prices, Russia was pushed into its longest recession in two decades and its finances were crippled. The 10.2 billion-euro agreement for a 19.5 percent stake in Rosneft helps Putin to plug a hole in the Russian budget.

The U.S. is "reviewing" the Rosneft deal to determine if it violates sanctions, U.S. Special Envoy Amos Hochstein said on Bloomberg Television. While the agreement is "not what

we were hoping for" when implementing the penalties, it's "not necessarily" one to block, he said.

Putin's Politics

Trump has said he may recognize the annexation of Crimea, while the EU is struggling to maintain unity in the face of pressures from nationalist and populist groups.

They already upended the political careers of U.K. Prime Minister David Cameron and Italy's Matteo Renzi. France's 2017 presidential elections may provide further evidence that events are moving in Putin's favor, with front-runner Francois Fillon promising to seek better ties with Russia. Incumbent Francois Hollande, who backed the sanctions over Ukraine, isn't running.

In the meantime, 2016 rounds out nicely for Putin. He personally guided Russia's commitment to reduce crude output, which underpinned OPEC's first agreement to cut production in eight years and lifted prices. Then came Rosneft and longtime ally Igor Sechin, its chief executive officer.

The deal "only became possible thanks to your personal contribution," Sechin told Putin when he announced the agreement on state television late Wednesday in Moscow.

Peter Grauer, the chairman of Bloomberg LP, the parent of Bloomberg News, is a senior independent non-executive director at Glencore.

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Journalist In Crimea Charged With Extremism (AP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) – The lawyer for a Crimean journalist says his client has been charged with extremism for allegedly undermining Russia's territorial integrity, which could put him in prison for five years.

Emil Kurbedinov said late on Wednesday that Mykola Semena, who works for a local website of Radio Free Europe, has been formally charged with extremism. In April, a local court issued an order barring Semena from leaving the regional capital, Simferopol.

Shortly after Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine in March 2014, the Russian parliament passed a law making it a criminal offense to question Russia's territorial integrity – in this case, by opposing the occupation of the Crimean peninsula.

Prosecutors earlier accused Semena of justifying "sabotage and extremism" in his articles.

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IOC President Bach Wants Life Bans For Proven Russian Cheats (Dunbar, AP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Associated Press](#)

By Graham Dunbar

LAUSANNE, Switzerland (AP) – Russian athletes and officials who are proven to have been part of a doping “manipulation system” should be banned for life from the Olympics, IOC President Thomas Bach said Thursday.

Bach gave his personal view one day before Canadian investigator Richard McLaren publishes a final report into alleged state-backed cheating at the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics.

Proof of systematic doping would be “aggravated circumstances” to justify life bans, the IOC leader said at a news conference after a three-day executive board meeting.

“I would not like to see this person again at any Olympic Games in any function,” said Bach, who declined to speculate if fresh revelations Friday could lead to calls for Russia’s exclusion from the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Games. “I do not know the content and the scope of the report of Professor McLaren.”

Bach did note that as an IOC disciplinary commission chairman he approved life bans for Austrian team members implicated in a doping program at the 2006 Turin Winter Games.

However, proving that individual athletes knew of systematic doping involving state agencies could be difficult.

McLaren, who was appointed by the World Anti-Doping Agency in May, is expected to give more detail about cheating operations at the Sochi laboratory.

In his interim report in July, McLaren confirmed claims by former lab director Grigory Rodchenkov of a hole-in-the-wall swapping system aided by the FSB security agency to exchange athletes’ dirty urine samples for clean ones.

Earlier Thursday, the IOC member appointed to oversee disciplinary cases that arise from McLaren’s evidence acknowledged they could be tough to prove.

“Can you prove (athletes) were aware?” Denis Oswald said on the sidelines of a sports law conference in Geneva.

“It is not that we would be scared to attack high level people in the Russian regime,” the Swiss lawyer said. “The question is more on the legal point of view. Can you punish athletes if they have done nothing and whether they were not aware of what was happening?”

Bach has also appointed a second IOC commission, headed by former Switzerland president Samuel Schmid, to evaluate if McLaren’s report and evidence proves a state-run doping system.

“And then based on that we will see if we can start cases against athletes,” Oswald said.

Oswald will approach his next Olympic clean-up project after spending several months disqualifying dozens of athletes – mostly in Russia and former Soviet Union countries – from the 2008 Beijing Olympics and 2012 London Olympics. Their use of anabolic steroids was detected in re-tests of samples.

He acknowledged it was “easy to see the link” in claims that Russian authorities approved a doping program for the home Olympics at Sochi after the team’s poor performance at the 2010 Vancouver Winter Games.

“There are some indications according to first report there was this mouse hole (in the Sochi lab) and trafficking of samples,” Oswald said. “And there are certainly enough elements to prove that something was done by the authority, by the minister of sport.”

Still, the evidence to prove doping might be missing.

“With DNA we can prove that the sample under the name of that person is not belonging to the person,” Oswald said, of the sample swaps in Sochi. “But, again, does it mean the original urine is positive, is contaminated?”

For now, Russia is atop the Sochi medal table with 13 golds ahead of Norway’s 11, and 33 total medals compared to 28 for the United States.

Asked if Russia will remain there in the fallout of McLaren’s report and the IOC’s follow-up commissions, Oswald said “probably not.”

Meanwhile, United States lawmakers want Bach to attend a congressional committee hearing next Thursday to provide an update on sports’ fight against doping.

“Unfortunately I cannot attend there,” said Bach, adding that the IOC will “provide by other means all the information they may need.”

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GOP, Dem Lawmakers Plan To Probe Russian Hacking Role In U.S. Elections (Noble, WT)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Washington Times](#)

By Andrea Noble

Momentum is growing on Capitol Hill for a federal probe into the role Russia played in interfering in the U.S. election, with Republican and Democratic lawmakers pledging to investigate Kremlin-backed hacking efforts.

But as President-elect Donald Trump continues to express skepticism over Russia's involvement, it's unclear how far any investigations would go.

House Democrats introduced legislation Wednesday that would establish a 12-member bipartisan, independent commission to investigate attempts by the Russian government "to use electronic means to influence, interfere with, or sow distrust in this year's U.S. elections."

Top U.S. intelligence and homeland security officials accused the Kremlin in October of directing the hack of the Democratic National Committee, which resulted in the embarrassing publication of extensive internal communications among top Democrats on WikiLeaks.

Announcing their plan for a commission, Rep. Eric Swalwell and Rep. Elijah Cummings said the scope of the investigation into Russia's meddling would include the hacking of the DNC as well as Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign chairman John Podesta, and former Secretary of State Colin Powell; a scan of electoral systems in Arizona, Illinois and Florida; and involvement by any foreign entity in the spread of fake news about the U.S. election.

"While our intelligence agencies have concluded with high confidence that Russia meddled in America's elections, to what degree and whether other state or non-state actors were involved remains unresolved," said Mr. Swalwell, California Democrat. "Americans of all political parties are rightfully worried and deserve answers."

The commission — which would be empowered to interview witnesses, issue subpoenas, obtain documents and receive public testimony — would have 18 months to issue recommendations to Congress and the president about how to enhance security protections.

The proposal was introduced on the same day that Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina said he plans to lead an inquiry into Russia's hacking efforts through his leadership role on two subcommittees. Mr. Graham, who has previously had called on Congress to examine the Russian hacks, told CNN on Wednesday that he plans to use his roles on both the the State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs subcommittee and the Crime and Terrorism subcommittee to advance an investigation.

While lawmakers seek further information about the extent Russia has sought to influence the U.S. elections, Mr. Trump has expressed skepticism over the intelligence community's conclusion that Russia was involved.

"I don't believe they interfered. That became a laughing point, not a talking point, a laughing point. Any time I do something, they say, 'Oh, Russia interfered,' " Mr. Trump told Time magazine in an interview published on Wednesday. "It could be Russia. And it could be China. And it could be some guy in his home in New Jersey."

Rep. Adam Schiff, the senior Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, called the insinuation that the intelligence community is lying "enormously damaging to the country."

"Notwithstanding the abundance of evidence that Russia hacked our political institutions during the presidential campaign and dumped documents in an effort to meddle in our political affairs, President-elect Trump's comments this morning continue to contradict our intelligence professionals and carry water for the Kremlin," he said.

Democrats have been calling for weeks for additional disclosures about what U.S. intelligence agencies know about Russian attempts to tamper with this year's election. In the Senate, some have asked for hearings to be convened on the topic while others have urged the White House to declassify additional details about Moscow's efforts.

Although some lawmakers have access to classified intelligence, House leaders wrote to President Obama this week requesting a classified briefing on the matter for all their colleagues to ensure lawmakers have "a comprehensive understanding of what the U.S. Intelligence Community knows regarding Russia's involvement in these actions and attempts to interfere in our election."

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Italian Populists Renew Anti-Euro Stance While Eyeing Power (D'emilio, AP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

Associated Press**By Frances D'emilio**

ROME (AP) – A leader of Italy's populist 5-Star Movement is pressing for a vote on whether the country should keep the euro as its official currency, a pitch for support as the party eyes national power for the first time.

Alessandro Di Battista, one of the populist party's several leaders, said in comments published Thursday in La Repubblica newspaper that "euro and Europe aren't the same thing."

"We want only that the Italians decide," Di Battista said, suggesting the party might push for a referendum on abandoning the single currency.

Movement founder Beppe Grillo has long railed against Italy's membership in the eurozone, the 19 countries where the euro is the official currency.

The Movement, Parliament's second-largest party, is hoping to gain the premiership following Matteo Renzi's resignation Wednesday night as head of Italy's center-left government.

Renzi's tenure came to an abrupt end when voters by a wide margin rejected constitutional reforms he had made an essential goal of his nearly three years in office.

The next national election is not scheduled until 2018, but the 5-Star Movement and other opposition parties have started advocating for voting to take place earlier.

President Sergio Mattarella, as head of state, opened formal talks Thursday as he weighs who should get the mandate to try to form a new government to lead in the meantime.

The heads of both chambers of Parliament, as well as Mattarella's predecessor as president, Giorgio Napolitano, left the presidential palace without commenting to reporters about their meetings.

Mattarella is scheduled to start consulting the leaders of Italy's political parties on Friday, beginning with representatives from the parties with the smallest number of seats in Parliament.

He expects to finish the talks on Saturday after meeting with Renzi's Democrats, the 5-Star Movement, the anti-migrant Northern League and former Premier Silvio Berlusconi's center-right Forza Italia.

Some Democrats, whose party is the largest in Parliament, are lobbying for the broadest possible coalition government to guide the country to elections.

Whoever succeeds in cobbling a governing coalition will have overhauling Italy's election law as an urgent first task.

Parts of the current law are being challenged in the Constitutional Court, which plans to rule in late January. Even if the challenges are rebuffed, lawmakers are insisting on new rules for electing the Senate.

The defeated constitutional reforms would have made the Senate of Parliament no longer elected by voters. Unless lawmakers fashion a fresh electoral law for the upper chamber, the country risks going to the polls with one set a rules for electing the lower Chamber of Deputies, and another for the Senate. Many political leaders predict that would invite government gridlock.

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Draghi Says Italy Must Address Weaknesses No Matter What Happens (BLOOM)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

Bloomberg News

European Central Bank President Mario Draghi said that Italy will have to undertake economic reforms, no matter what the outcome of the country's political crisis.

"The vulnerabilities that both the banking system and Italy have, have been there for a long time," Draghi said at a press conference in Frankfurt on Thursday. "So they ought to be coped with, and I am confident the government knows what to do, and they will be dealt with."

The euro area's third-largest economy is facing political turmoil after voters' rejection of a constitutional overhaul prompted reformist Prime Minister Matteo Renzi to resign. The country's political leaders are starting discussions that may lead to the appointment of a technocratic government and early elections.

"Countries that need reforms have to undertake them regardless of what is the general political uncertainty because the best way for countries to cope with this uncertainty is actually to restore growth and employment and job creation," Draghi said in his press conference.

Bank Pressure

The country's return to political crisis has rekindled pressure on its financial institutions, particularly on Banco Monte dei Paschi di Siena SpA, the only lender to fail a Europe-wide stress test this year. The ECB's Supervisory Board discussed

Monte Paschi's request to delay its recapitalization on Thursday, the first day of a two-day meeting.

Asked about the beleaguered lender's situation, Draghi didn't answer, referring to the separation principle between ECB monetary-policy and supervision functions. He also declined to answer a question on press reports that Italy will ask for a 15 billion-euro (\$15.9 billion) loan from the European Stability Mechanism to help Monte Paschi and other weak banks, instead citing an ESM guideline on the issue.

Even so, addressing the country's political uncertainty he reaffirmed the central bank's intention to act as a stabilizing presence for the euro area.

"The underlying narrative of our monetary-policy decisions was exactly to maintain the extraordinary degree of monetary accommodation we have in place," Draghi said in response to a question on Italy's reliance on the ECB's stimulus. "The second purpose is to transmit a sense that the presence of the ECB on the markets will be there for a long time."

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Italy Says Thousands Of Nigerian Women Who Arrive As Migrants Are Forced To Work As Prostitutes (Kington, LAT)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Los Angeles Times](#)

By Tom Kington

A steep rise in the number of Nigerian prostitutes working in Italy is being linked to the arrival in the country of well-organized Nigerian mafias, which are using violence and religious rites to terrify trafficked women into submission, police say.

Police say their operations this year have revealed the presence in Italy of a host of Nigerian gangs with names such as the Black Axe, the Vikings, the Buccaneers, the Eiye and the Maphites.

The gangs have arrived in Italy as the number of Nigerian women sailing to the country from Libya has risen from 1,454 in 2014 to 10,624 between January and the end of November.

Of those, as many as 80% are forced to work as prostitutes, according to the International Organization for Migration.

With prices for sex with girls as young as 14 starting at around \$10, 1 in 2 street prostitutes in Italy today is Nigerian.

Seventeen members of the Black Axe mafia were arrested last month, including the group's "head of zone" for Italy, taken into custody in Verona, and the "minister of defense" in Palermo. The latter was said to be responsible for singling out errant members for machete attacks.

"Our probe showed how gangs like the Black Axe are running the whole prostitution pipeline, which brings trafficked women from Nigeria to Italy," said an investigator in Palermo who declined to be named because he was not allowed to speak on the record.

Women are usually fooled into believing they will be given regular jobs in Europe by traffickers who stage voodoo rites in which the women promise to pay back the cost of their travel, authorities said.

Upon arrival, police said, the women are told they must work as prostitutes until they pay off debts of about \$30,000.

The police official said former prostitutes often manage the women, but mafia members are on hand to punish them if they try to escape.

"If women rebel, it won't be their madams who punish them, but Black Axe," he said.

Anna, 40, who declined to give her last name because of the sensitivity of the topic, said she was forced into prostitution for three years after being told by traffickers she would pick fruit in Italy. She said she was warned that her mother in Nigeria would be hurt if she fled.

"I stayed on the street, pressured by my madam, to save my mother," she said in an interview. "My message to girls back in Nigeria is, 'Don't come.'"

Fabio Sorgoni, an official with the charity On the Road, which helps prostitutes in Italy, said Italian men are attracted by the youth and low price of the women. "They think these girls come from a culture where it is normal to be a prostitute," he said. "Ironically, that is what Germans used to say about Italian women who immigrated to Germany."

Sorgoni said Nigerian women lodged applications for asylum in Italy when they arrived and then worked as prostitutes while their paperwork wound through Italy's overwhelmed immigration bureaucracy. "They are also put to work inside migration centers in Italy," he said.

Police in Palermo first learned about the Black Axe mafia in 2014, when member Austine Johnbull was arrested after inflicting serious face wounds with an axe on a rival from another Nigerian gang.

Investigators applied their experience in chasing the Sicilian mafia, setting up microphones in meeting places, tailing suspects, trawling Facebook accounts, and, most important, finding a member ready to give evidence.

From the historic Palermo neighborhood of Ballaro, the Black Axe was building a drug and vice empire with 100 affiliates in the Palermo "forum" — its name for areas of operation in

Italy, authorities said. All members took on gang nicknames and greeted each other by crossing raised forearms.

New recruits, or “ignorants,” were held in apartments and beaten to test their courage, police said.

Authorities identified the head of the Palermo gang as Evans Sylvester, who was arrested. His sister ran a brothel, police said.

“The turncoat we used was a modern-day Buscetta,” said the police official, referring to Tommaso Buscetta, the first major Cosa Nostra turncoat in the 1980s.

He also said there were parallel Black Axe operations in Germany, France and Holland.

The official said the Black Axe had learned to coexist with Sicily’s traditional mafia clans. “The mafia here has no interest in the Nigerian community, but they do trade drugs with the Nigerian mafias, so it’s mutually beneficial,” he said.

In September, police in Turin, Bologna and Rome arrested 44 members of other Nigerian mafia clans, including the Eiye and the Maphites.

Investigators discovered mobsters were stabbing victims in the face or dousing them in acid to keep control over the Italian suburbs where they placed prostitutes and sold drugs.

During clan initiation ceremonies, new members were forced to drink a mixture of blood, gin and tapioca as they swore allegiance.

Unlike most mafia groups, which recruit on the streets, Nigeria’s mafias are often formed on the country’s university campuses, where they offer protection to rich students, nongovernmental organization officials have said.

Police said that members of the Eiye mafia would whistle like birds to identify themselves. They said the Maphites favored sharp suits and called bosses “Dons” in deference to the Italian mafia.

“The Maphites would hold meetings in smart hotels and pose as local community leaders, but wiretaps showed they were receiving orders from Nigeria and sending cash back there,” said Marco Sgarbi, a police official in Turin. “They are involved in the trafficking of the women from start to finish.”

To solve a dispute over control of the Maphites in 2013, a boss arrived from London for a summit, Sgarbi said. “He was likely the deputy head of the group at European level, responding to an overall boss in Nigeria — their structure is like a pyramid,” he added.

The boss was recorded stating that anyone disobeying the group would have a relative in Nigeria killed and that a senior Nigerian police official “is our best friend,” Sgarbi said.

The police official in Palermo said the round-up of Black Axe leaders would help “slow down” the Nigerian prostitution trade. “They will be disorientated, but we now need to see how capable the madams are at keeping order,” he said.

Vivian Wiwoloku, a Nigerian aid official in Palermo who helps trafficked women and has had his car firebombed twice, said he was not optimistic.

“As long as there is a recession in Nigeria, more girls will come,” he said.

Sorgoni, the official with On the Road, issued an appeal to Italian men who pay Nigerians for sex. “If you go to a prostitute, try to understand if they are a minor and whether they are doing this work of their own free will,” he said.

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In Secular France, Catholic Conservatism Makes A Comeback (McAuley, WP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Washington Post](#)

By James McAuley

CHARTRES, France — For many French voters, François Fillon is more than a leading contender for president in next year’s elections: He is viewed as a crusader in the throes of a holy war.

When Fillon handily won both rounds of France’s conservative primaries last month, he campaigned mostly on a genteel conservatism of economic restructuring and strengthened national security. But in a country that firmly defines itself as “secular” in its constitution, Fillon’s unexpected victory represented an astonishing prospect: the political reawakening of Catholic France after decades of slumber.

As right-wing and populist leaders across Europe — such as Viktor Orban in Hungary and Marine Le Pen in France — increasingly turn toward Christian values, Fillon has ignited a wave of nostalgia for a nation of traditional families and quaint village churches. It is a nation that he and many of his supporters say is under siege from the dual threats of multiculturalism and Islamist terrorism. As evidence, conservatives cite the slaying of an 85-year-old village priest in July by Islamic State-inspired militants, explaining it as an assault on the essence of France.

Fillon, the presidential nominee of the center-right party now known as the Republicans, has repeatedly pledged to defend “family values” — which has often translated into staunch opposition to same-sex marriage and, lately, to adoption by same-sex parents. When the fervent Roman Catholic responds to terrorist violence, he often does so in the lofty language of religious rapture. The war against the Islamic

State, he wrote in his recent book, is “a battle of the end times,” sounded with “trumpets of the apocalypse.”

In short, what he promises is a return to his nation’s roots. And in his eyes, those roots are fundamentally Catholic.

Although France is renowned for strict prohibitions on religious displays in public spaces — notably on certain types of veils worn by many Muslim women — it is also a country of some 45,000 Catholic churches and one whose public holidays are almost exclusively Christian in origin. France does not keep statistics on race or religion, but a vast majority of its citizens are said to be either practicing Catholics or agnostics from Catholic backgrounds.

Some insist that France would not exist without the Catholic Church: The nation’s oft-invoked creation myth begins, after all, with the baptism of Clovis I, who united the kingdom of the Franks in the 6th century. And if the French Revolution of 1789 sought to banish religion from public life, it never eradicated religion from private life.

“We have a secular state but not a secular society,” said Matthieu Rougé, pastor of Paris’s St. Ferdinand des Ternes Catholic Church and an expert in political theology.

“The majority of the French are recognized as cultural Catholics. They may have studied in a Catholic school, they marry in churches, and they baptize their children. They are Catholic,” he said. “All our streets, the names of our towns and villages — everything is related in some way to the Catholic faith.”

In provincial towns like Chartres — and in Fillon’s native northwest region — that ancient relationship is apparent everywhere. Anchored by a majestic medieval cathedral, Chartres is home to a relic said to be the tunic that the Virgin Mary wore at the birth of Jesus. In a country where a majority of the public opposed the “burkini” on grounds that it violated secular values, this fragment of cloth draws thousands of pilgrims every year.

Voters to define these values, Sandrine Mathieu explained that they had sent their children to local Catholic schools instead of public schools because “there they say, ‘Bonjour, madame.’”

These sentiments, analysts say, suggest the emergence of a new French conservatism increasingly focused on the concept of patrimony, an amorphous sense of cultural inheritance largely unrelated to matters of policy or the economy.

“These voters consider themselves as legitimate defenders,” said Denis Pelletier, a historian who specializes in Catholicism. “They are defending France. There is economic

liberalism there, but mostly there are traditional family values, authority and a sense of the moral order.”

Members of the clergy explain this increasing embrace of religion in the context of recent terrorist attacks, which they say have drawn many secular French Catholics back into churches for the first time in years.

“In a moment of uncertainty,” said Pierre Durieux, an official in the Catholic diocese of Lyon, “the Christian faith becomes a source of solace for so many. The church is a community that allows people to continue to explore their strong emotions, confront their fears, through ritual and prayer.”

For Steinmetz in Chartres, the church is the last line of defense in France’s war on terrorism.

“With Daesh,” she said, using an alternate name for the Islamic State, “we have to take back our country and guard its Catholic values. Because they want to kill us all.”

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French Far-right Chief Nixes Free Class For Kids Of Illegals (Ganley, AP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Associated Press](#)

By Elaine Ganley

PARIS (AP) – Far-right leader Marine Le Pen has declared that foreigners in France should go through a “waiting period” before benefiting from the country’s social services and that children whose parents are in France illegally shouldn’t be allowed free schooling.

Le Pen, a leading candidate in France’s spring presidential election, took on a prickly subject Thursday during her annual stroll through the Paris Christmas market on the Champs-Elysees Avenue.

France’s education minister issued a statement “forcefully condemning” Le Pen’s proposals.

Le Pen, the National Front leader, wants to stop what she calls “massive” immigration and is urging an exit from the European Union and the 19-nation eurozone currency.

Le Pen said she wants an end to free automatic schooling for children of illegal migrants and says foreigners working in France legally should pay taxes for a while before accessing social benefits.

She said she believes free schooling helps lure immigrants to France “like a suction.”

“There is no reason the French should pay for the schooling of children of people who break the law,” she said.

As for immigrants with legal status, "I think there is a certain amount of time for taxes from them before getting access to all the public services, like education, social security," she said after a stop at a stand selling Champagne.

Education Minister Najat Vallaud-Belkacem said the far-right leader was both ignorant of international accords signed by France that say no one can be refused an education and of France's own educational code, which makes schooling obligatory for "children of both sexes, French and foreign, between six and 16 years old."

In France, education is seen as the prime method of forming French citizens and integrating immigrants.

Le Pen's proposals – which did not appear fully defined – are a clear effort to find ways to cut the drain on the nation's social benefits system, and to counter a potentially formidable adversary, France's former prime minister and conservative candidate, Francois Fillon, who has reforming social benefits as one of his top goals.

Le Pen has been high in polls ahead of the first round of presidential voting in April, which winnows the field down to two finalists for the May runoff.

"Mr. Fillon has said we are a country in bankruptcy I think that national solidarity should firstly concentrate on and benefit the French," Le Pen said.

Among others seeking the presidency is Manuel Valls, who just stepped down as France's prime minister and is trying to capture the nomination at the left's January primary.

Unpopular Socialist President Francois Hollande has announced he will not seek a second term.

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Former French Official Convicted Of Tax Fraud (Morene, NYT)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[New York Times](#)

By Benoit Morene

PARIS — A former French official who led efforts to crack down on tax cheats was convicted on Thursday of tax fraud and money laundering.

A three-judge panel at a Paris criminal court sentenced Jérôme Cahuzac, who had served as President François Hollande's budget minister for less than a year, to three years in prison.

Mr. Cahuzac stepped down in 2013 after revelations that he had a secret bank account in Switzerland, and it later emerged that he was connected to several accounts worth millions of dollars in tax havens. A few days after he resigned, Mr. Cahuzac admitted that he had lied to Parliament about the accounts in Switzerland.

The judges' decision is another source of embarrassment for the troubled administration of Mr. Hollande, who has had exceptionally low approval ratings and recently announced that he would not seek re-election.

Mr. Cahuzac, 64, whom judges barred from holding a political office for five years, was convicted along with his former wife, Patricia Cahuzac, who was sentenced to two years in prison. The couple had paid €2.3 million or \$2.5 million, in back taxes.

Jean Veil, Mr. Cahuzac's lawyer, said that the ruling would be appealed, although the decision to carry on with the legal battle carried the risk of a sentence as long as seven years.

"We think that prison isn't really an appropriate punishment," Mr. Veil told the French radio network Europe 1. "He's already punished. He's punished because he's a pariah. He's someone who can't live in town anymore."

But Georges Fenech, a member of a parliamentary commission that investigated Mr. Cahuzac, told the French news network BFMTV that the sentence was appropriate. "This proves that no one is above the law," Mr. Fenech said.

Mr. Cahuzac previously acknowledged stashing money at banks in Singapore and Switzerland. During the trial, the prosecution was able to prove that about €2.7 million of the couple's €\$3.5 million fortune had moved through a bank account held by Ms. Cahuzac in the Isle of Man, a bank account that was never reported to the French authorities.

Judges at the court noted that Mr. Cahuzac had worked repeatedly to hide his assets, according to Agence France-Presse.

Prosecutors said they suspected that the amount of wealth that was hidden was far higher but that the couple had spent it to support their lavish lifestyle.

"It's a logical sentence, given the case," Xavier Normand-Bodard, the prosecution's lawyer, told reporters after the verdict was announced.

The ruling came after a highly publicized two-week trial in September, at which Mr. Cahuzac — a former cosmetic

surgeon who was known for his aggressive, confrontational style as a politician — was described by his lawyer as being in “exile by force” and as “not wanted in the public community anymore.”

François Reyl, the head of the Geneva bank that bears his surname, and Philippe Houman, a Frenchman who acted as an intermediary, were convicted on Thursday of assisting Mr. Cahuzac in transferring funds from an account in Switzerland to one in Singapore. The two were each given a suspended sentence of a year in prison and a €375,000 fine, and the Swiss bank was fined €1,875,000 for money laundering.

In addition, the judges fined Ms. Cahuzac €100,000. Mr. Cahuzac, Mr. Reyl and Mr. Houman were instructed to pay the same amount among themselves.

Mr. Cahuzac began sheltering some of the money the couple made from their successful hair transplant business in a UBS account in Switzerland in the 1990s, and those funds were later moved to Singapore.

Mr. Cahuzac was first elected to Parliament in 1997. He retained the family’s offshore accounts even after being appointed to lead a parliamentary finance commission in 2010.

Once a rising star of the Socialist Party, Mr. Cahuzac, whose sharp-tongued speech and stern rigor were dreaded by his political opponents and lauded by his allies, suffered a humbling fall from grace that included an admission that he had repeatedly lied before Parliament and on television about holding such accounts.

The confession, which stunned France, came after an investigation by Mediapart, an independent news website, asserted that Mr. Cahuzac had held an offshore account for roughly two decades.

The most devastating blow came when Mediapart obtained an audio recording in which Mr. Cahuzac mentioned the account. “I was caught in a spiral of lies,” Mr. Cahuzac wrote on his blog at the time.

The case became known as “the Cahuzac Affair,” and it cast a pall over a promise from the recently elected Mr. Hollande that France would be “exemplary” during his term, making a pointed contrast with the financial scandals that haunted the administration of his predecessor, Nicolas Sarkozy.

Mr. Hollande was put on the defensive amid speculation that he had been aware of Mr. Cahuzac’s financial situation before it became publicly known, and the president scrambled to try to restore the public’s confidence.

As a result, laws were approved in 2013 to address conflicts of interest for those in public office. Top officials were obligated to make their property assets known publicly, and

the law called for the creation of an independent anticorruption office and a national financial prosecutor’s office, which handled Mr. Cahuzac’s case.

In another case, Thomas Thevenoud, a junior minister under Mr. Hollande, is scheduled to go on trial next year. Mr. Thevenoud stepped down after it appeared that he and his wife had failed to declare income in previous years because of what he said was “fiscal phobia.”

A more highly anticipated trial is to begin this month, when Christine Lagarde, the managing director of the International Monetary Fund and a finance minister under Mr. Sarkozy, goes on trial. She is charged with committing “negligence by a governmental official” while overseeing a politically charged 2007 arbitration case. A conviction could result in a sentence of one year in prison and a fine of €15,000.

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ECB Extends But Scales Back Stimulus, Whipsawing Markets (Fairless, WSJ)

Bank’s move to buoy Europe’s economy comes days before Fed is expected to raise interest rates in U.S.

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Wall Street Journal](#)

By Tom Fairless

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European Central Bank Adds Half A Trillion Euros In Stimulus (McHugh, AP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Associated Press](#)

By David McHugh

FRANKFURT, Germany (AP) – The European Central Bank will pour another half-trillion euros (\$579 billion) in newly printed money into the eurozone economy to support its recovery as the currency union heads into what could be a tumultuous election year.

The bank’s 25-member governing council extended the duration of its bond-buying stimulus program by at least nine months, from March until December next year.

But the council startled markets Thursday by reducing the monthly amount of bonds it will buy after March, to 60 billion euros (\$64 billion) from 80 billion euros currently.

ECB President Mario Draghi said the reduction did not mean the bank was tapering, or phasing out, the stimulus.

He said there was “no question of tapering” and that such a phase-out of the program was not even discussed at the meeting.

Draghi said the central bank could increase the monthly purchases if needed and that there is still no firm end date for the stimulus program. He noted, however, that the economy could get by with less monthly stimulus now because the danger of deflation – falling prices that kill off growth and investment – had passed.

The bond purchases pump freshly created money into the banking system in hopes of increasing weak inflation and encouraging growth. The flood of cash also helps keep financial markets calmer as Europe faces elections in the Netherlands and France next year where anti-EU, populist candidates are expected to do well.

Draghi said stimulus was still needed despite a somewhat brighter economic picture because “uncertainty is everywhere... just look at the election calendar for next year.”

He said it was the central bank’s job to “keep a steady hand” in supporting the economy.

Stocks rose in response to the ECB’s actions, while the euro fell 1.3 percent against the dollar.

The stimulus program extension adds at least 540 billion euros to the existing 1.74 billion (\$1.87 trillion) effort. After December, the bank would likely not abruptly end the purchases, but start phasing them out.

How quickly that happens is important as it can roil markets. Monetary stimulus tends to boost stocks and weigh on borrowing rates.

Draghi is trying to avoid a so-called “taper tantrum” like the one set off by U.S. Federal Reserve head Ben Bernanke in 2013, when Bernanke mentioned the possibility of eventually ending Fed bond purchases. Stocks fell and bond market interest rates quickly rose – not what the Fed wanted to see.

Holger Schmieding, economist at Berenberg Bank, said that the ECB’s decisions – offering less stimulus but for longer – “should roughly offset each other.”

“After some volatility, the economic and financial impact should remain modest,” he said in a research note.

By extending its stimulus efforts, the ECB is moving in the opposite direction to that of the Fed. The U.S. central bank is contemplating another interest rate increase at its Dec. 13-14 meeting. Markets have been betting that President-elect Donald Trump will carry through on promises to spend more on infrastructure such as roads and bridges after he is inaugurated Jan. 20, boosting growth and inflation in the

months ahead. That would give the Fed more reason to raise rates.

Beyond the stimulus program, the ECB kept its key interest rate benchmarks unchanged. It left at zero its refinancing rate, at which it lends money to commercial banks, and minus 0.4 percent the rate on deposits it takes from banks.

Draghi had made clear that the bank was not seeing a convincing upturn in inflation. It aims for 2 percent annual inflation, considered best for growth and jobs, and right now inflation is only 0.6 percent annually. Economic growth is only modest at a quarterly rate of 0.3 percent in the July-September period.

On top of that, the euro could be facing serious political turbulence.

The British vote to leave the European Union and the election of Trump are considered to have boosted the prospects of anti-elite and anti-EU politicians. Next year could see a strong showing by anti-immigration politician Geert Wilders and his Party For Freedom in the Netherlands in March. In France, National Front leader Marine Le Pen is expected to make it past the first round of presidential voting in April, although she isn’t the favorite to win in the second round in May. She wants France, a member of the euro, to follow Britain in leaving the European Union.

There’s more. Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi resigned after voters rejected his proposed constitutional changes in a referendum Sunday. That means uncertainty about who will be the next prime minister, just as the government faces troubles with the country’s banks. The third-largest, Monte dei Paschi di Siena, may need a government-funded rescue soon.

So far, markets have taken Renzi’s downfall in stride. That hasn’t eliminated fears, however, that Italy may again become a source of trouble for the eurozone.

While the ECB’s bond purchases are aimed at raising inflation, they also have the effect of depressing borrowing rates for governments.

That has been key for the eurozone, where high borrowing costs for heavily indebted governments like Italy raised fears in 2011 that the eurozone might break up.

In order to extend the bond purchases, the ECB expanded the range of bonds it considers eligible. It said it would now buy those yielding less than minus 0.4 percent, meaning it would take some losses on those bonds. While the central bank tries to avoid unnecessary losses, its mission is to steer the economy, not make a profit.

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E.C.B. Extends Bond-Buying Program To Protect Eurozone Economy (Ewing, NYT)

Wednesday, December 7, 2016

[New York Times](#)

By Jack Ewing

FRANKFURT — The European Central Bank said on Thursday that it would buy large quantities of bonds and other assets for longer than planned but would cut the size of the purchases, a decision it insisted did not a signal that a much anticipated “tapering” of stimulus measures had begun.

“Tapering” is a loaded word in financial circles. By buying enormous amounts of bonds in recent months, the European Central Bank has kept market interest rates low, part of efforts to encourage lending and bolster economic growth in the 19-country eurozone. But by reducing its purchases over time, it could limit or reverse this effect.

It recalls the so-called taper tantrum in the United States in 2013 after Ben S. Bernanke, then the chairman of the Federal Reserve, suggested that the American central bank would begin reducing its asset purchases. Market turmoil followed as investors pulled money out of emerging markets and instead bought Treasury bonds in anticipation of higher interest rates.

“There is no question about tapering,” Mario Draghi, the president of the European Central Bank, said at a news conference. “Tapering has not been discussed today.”

The response on financial markets showed that investors did not believe Mr. Draghi’s rejection of the word, at least initially.

Although the central bank extended the time frame for asset purchases to the end of 2017 from March, investors focused on plans to reduce the asset purchases beginning in April to 60 billion euros, or about \$64 billion, from €80 billion.

Markets settled down after Mr. Draghi said that he defined tapering as “a process where purchases would go to zero.”

“That has not been discussed,” he said, adding: “There is no tapering in sight. The E.C.B. is going to stay in the markets.”

European stocks rose and the yields on eurozone government bonds receded after Mr. Draghi offered those reassurances. Analysts who had initially declared the beginning of tapering modified their views.

“At first glance, today’s decisions looked, walked and quacked like tapering,” Carsten Brzeski, chief German economist at ING-DiBa in Frankfurt, said in a note to clients. “Draghi gave his best to convince everyone that it is not tapering. We tend to believe him.”

Below are other issues that have raised concerns among some economists, investors and central bankers.

The reasoning behind the European Central Bank’s asset purchases is that they are one of the most effective ways to bring inflation in the eurozone closer to the official target of just under 2 percent. (In November, the annual inflation rate was 0.6 percent, a level considered unhealthy for the economy.)

Mr. Draghi said on Thursday that inflation would rise next year along with the price of oil. That is allowing the central bank to reduce the size of its asset purchases, which are a form of money printing.

But he also suggested the eurozone economy still was a long way from being in good health.

Signs of higher inflation have already prompted some economists to press for cuts to the bond buying, which critics say has distorted prices. When the European Central Bank ends the so-called quantitative easing program, they say, the shock to bond prices could destabilize the fragile eurozone economy.

The central bank’s “argument in favor of bond purchases no longer holds for 2017,” Clemens Fuest, president of the Ifo Institute, an economic research group in Munich, said in a statement. “The negative side effects of the E.C.B.’s bond purchases will come to the fore.”

As he has for years, Mr. Draghi beseeched leaders of eurozone countries to take steps to help their economies grow faster, warning that the European Central Bank cannot guarantee the health of the common currency area on its own.

But when Italian voters rejected constitutional overhauls on Sunday, they also demonstrated how difficult it was for leaders to effect change.

Resistance to overhauls in Italy, as well as in France, has strengthened the arguments of those who say that European Central Bank support for the eurozone economy has allowed national leaders to procrastinate rather than deal with the region’s problems, such as high government debt or laws that stifle entrepreneurship.

Mr. Draghi rejected those arguments on Thursday.

Investors are showing nervousness about economic and political stability in the eurozone after the Italian referendum, as anti-European Union sentiment rises in much of the bloc.

If investors demand higher premiums to buy government bonds, the increase in borrowing costs are likely to ripple through credit markets and make it more difficult for businesses in the eurozone to grow.

One of the biggest fears in the wake of the Italian vote, and the resignation on Wednesday of the country's prime minister, Matteo Renzi, was that political uncertainty would upset plans to pump fresh capital into struggling Italian banks.

Mr. Draghi said those banks could be fixed — the European Central Bank functions as the eurozone's supreme bank overseer, and it is ultimately responsible for the health of the area's banking system.

But Mr. Draghi also listed all the risks threatening global stability, including Britain's vote to exit the European Union and the election of Donald J. Trump in the United States. Mr. Draghi described the president-elect as having a "radical" new view of the world.

"I think what central banks can do," he said, "is keep a steady hand."

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ECB Expands Stimulus To \$2.4 Trillion As Monthly Purchases Slow (BLOOM)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Bloomberg News](#)

The European Central Bank expanded its quantitative-easing program to exceed 2.2 trillion euros (\$2.4 trillion) by the end of 2017, buying at a reduced monthly pace with the caveat that it can step up or prolong purchases if needed.

The Governing Council will extend the program from April at a slower speed of 60 billion euros (\$65 billion) a month from 80 billion euros currently, according to a statement in Frankfurt on Thursday. ECB President Mario Draghi will hold a press conference at 2:30 p.m. in Frankfurt, where he will also outline changes to the parameters of the quantitative-easing program.

If "the outlook becomes less favorable or if financial conditions become inconsistent with further progress toward a sustained adjustment of the path of inflation, the Governing Council intends to increase the program in terms of size and/or duration," it said in a statement.

The extension would add a total of 540 billion euros to its current 1.7 billion-euro stimulus, making the size of the program double what the ECB initially announced it in January 2015.

By extending bond purchases but reducing the monthly pace, the ECB may be trying to preserve its extraordinary monetary stimulus as political risks cloud the outlook for the euro area's recovery. Upsets including Brexit, the U.S. election and the Italian referendum might make governments reluctant to push through the adjustments needed to turn the euro area's cyclical recovery into a structural one. **Bonds Fall**

The euro strengthened immediately after the decision, before paring gains to trade little changed at \$1.0777 at 2:27 p.m. in Frankfurt. The yield on five-year German government notes rose 3 basis points to minus 0.333 percent.

Policy makers also kept the main refinancing rate at zero, the deposit rate at minus 0.4 percent and the marginal rate at 0.25 percent, as predicted by in a Bloomberg survey of economists.

"Anti-establishment movements create an atmosphere where it is very difficult for finance ministers and politicians to implement the necessary reforms, and this creates even more pressure on the ECB to gloss over the unsolved problems of the sovereign-debt crisis with a very loose monetary policy," Joerg Kraemer, chief economist at Commerzbank in Frankfurt, told Bloomberg TV before the decision. "The ECB is on the hooks of the politicians."

While policy makers including Draghi have said that they'll eventually return to a more conventional monetary stance, they've also pledged to do what's needed to reach their inflation goal.

At his press conference, Draghi will present updated economic forecasts that for the first time will extend to 2019. In September, the central bank forecast that inflation would accelerated to 1.6 percent in 2018.

Price growth was 0.6 percent last month, and is slowly picking up as the effect of an oil slump fades up. More than three-quarters of economists surveyed by Bloomberg predict inflation will reach the ECB's goal of just under 2 percent before Draghi's term expires in October 2019. Even so, he has said the outlook is reliant on maintaining the "extraordinary support of our monetary policy."

The ECB president will announce new tweaks to the institution's rules for QE during his press conference, as the ability to extend the program might depend on increasing the pool of eligible debt. Officials have previously made technical adjustments including raising the proportion of each bond issue they can buy, and expanding asset classes to include regional and corporate debt.

Draghi may also be quizzed on the potential fallout as the U.K. moves toward a formal request to leave the European Union, the resignation of Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi

after a failed referendum, and the health of Italian banks. Later on Thursday, the ECB's Supervisory Board is likely to discuss Banca Monte dei Paschi di Siena SpA's request for more time to complete its planned capital increase.

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EU Paves Way For Visa-Free Deals With Ukraine, Georgia (Norman, Van Tartwijk, WSJ)

Rules allowing visa-free access to be suspended more easily clear the path for new agreements

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Wall Street Journal](#)

By Laurence Norman And Maarten Van Tartwijk

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

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EU: Little Progress From Turkey On Visa Conditions (Cook, AP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Associated Press](#)

By Lorne Cook

BRUSSELS (AP) – The European Union said Thursday that Turkey has made virtually no progress on meeting conditions to earn visa-free travel for its citizens, a key part of their deal to prevent refugees reaching Europe.

"Seven benchmarks remain to be met by Turkey," the European Commission said. It's the same number as in the last progress report published in September.

Turkey has demanded visa waiver status this year, and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has threatened to open the floodgates for migrants to leave if the EU reneges on its promises.

The European Commission insists that it's up to Turkey to respect conditions that both sides have agreed upon.

A main sticking point is the requirement for Turkey to change its terrorism definitions so that journalists and Erdogan opponents aren't locked up indiscriminately.

But with bombings by the Islamic State group and Kurdish separatists a regular occurrence, Turkey's government can't afford to give any impression that it might be watering down anti-terror laws.

Still, EU Migration Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos said both sides "are continuing, in an engaged and committed dialogue, to find solutions on all remaining benchmarks."

After the announcement, Turkey's presidential spokesman, Ibrahim Kalin, expressed regret that by the end of 2016 the

EU hadn't delivered on its promise to deliver 3 billion euros in aid for Syrian refugees and lift the visa requirement for Turkish citizens.

But the European Commission says that 677 million euros (\$723 million) have flowed into Turkey to help it manage almost 3 million Syrian refugees who are sheltering there, and that a total of 1.3 billion euros has been "contracted" with Turkey. The EU has promised 3 billion euros (\$3.2 billion) by the end of next year, and a further 3 billion from 2018 if the first tranche is spent correctly.

Thursday's progress report means that Turkey is unlikely to be granted the visa waiver this year, and is certain to further ratchet up public tensions between Ankara and Brussels.

It's something the Europeans don't need since migrant arrivals to the Greek islands now average 90 per day, compared to thousands daily last year.

Sensitivities about the issue are high in Turkey, which has also been promised billions of euros for Syrian refugees on its territory and fast-track EU membership talks to stop refugees leaving and take back thousands more already in Greece.

When the European Parliament called last month for a freeze on accession talks, Erdogan said his country was being betrayed, even though the assembly has absolutely no legal say over the issue.

"If you go any further, those border gates will be opened," Erdogan warned.

Dominique Soguel in Istanbul contributed to this report.

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Turkey Takes Further Steps To Bolster Slumping Currency (Candemir, WSJ)

Government announces a \$72 billion fund to help local businesses hurt by the weakened lira

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Wall Street Journal](#)

By Yeliz Candemir

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

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Turkey's Leader Renounces Foreign Currencies To Boost Lira (AP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

Associated Press

ISTANBUL (AP) – Turkey's leader has renounced foreign currencies in favor of the ailing lira currency in keeping with his appeal to Turkish citizens to do the same, his spokesman said Thursday, as a new measure was unveiled to help struggling businesses.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan "exchanged all of the foreign currency in his accounts into Turkish liras," spokesman Ibrahim Kalin said.

Last week, Erdogan had urged his citizens to give up the dollar and euros at a time the economy is teetering. Erdogan called on Turkish citizens to convert savings held in foreign currencies into gold and Turkish lira to help boost the ailing currency, which recently dropped above 3.5 lira per dollar, the weakest exchange rate in more than a decade.

Turkish citizens often hold their money in dollars, euros and gold to mitigate the risk of a rapid devaluation of their currency. Many Turkish businesses have their debts denominated in dollars.

In the wake of Erdogan's call, small business owners have posted pictures of themselves on social media advertising free goods ranging from bread to small carpets for those who can prove the exchange of a significant dollar amount into Turkish lira.

Prime Minister Binali Yildirim announced the establishment of a fund of up to 250 billion lira (\$74 billion) to help alleviate cash shortages. He said the measure would help "normalize business across all sectors that fuel the economy, including small, medium and large enterprises, and exporters."

Both leaders have promoted the Turkish lira in recent days with Erdogan, suggesting last week that Turkey should trade with countries like Russia, Iran and China in local currencies.

The Turkish lira has been struggling in a year marked by political instability, including a failed coup attempt in July, bombings by Kurdish and Islamic State militants, and yo-yoing relations with the European Union and the United States.

Exchange risk is also a concern for Turkey due to its large current account deficit and high inflation rate. Foreign direct investment, which helps keep the economy afloat, has faltered in 2016. Tourism revenue, another mainstay of the economy, has also dropped dramatically.

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Cyberattacks, Terrorism Pose Grave Threats To The UK, Spy Chief Says (Gross, WSJ)

Head of Britain's foreign intelligence service says cyberwarfare, antidemocratic propaganda must be countered

Thursday, December 8, 2016

Wall Street Journal

By Jenny Gross

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

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Banks Mull Post-Brexit Switch From London To Paris (AFP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

AFP

London (AFP) – Major international banks are seriously exploring whether to shift operations from London to Paris in the wake of Brexit, according to a senior official at France's markets regulator.

"Large international banks... have already undertaken real due diligences and we have received a lot of practical questions regarding the way they are going to be managed from our perspective, with their relationship with the French regulators," Benoit de Juvigny, secretary general at the AMF, told BBC television late Wednesday.

He stressed however that the enquiries remained "informal" at this stage, as did similar steps being taken by consultants and lawyers.

Other financial centres said to be in the running include Amsterdam, Dublin, Frankfurt and Luxembourg.

Powerful lobby group the British Bankers' Association (BBA) has warned that international lenders with operations in the UK are ready to transfer some of their activities out of the country from early 2017, following Britain's shock referendum decision to leave the European Union.

Big banks have publicly voiced their fears about the impact of Brexit, including potential loss of access to the European single market.

However, both the AMF and the BBA declined to comment further. The Treasury did not respond when approached for comment.

De Juvigny noted that while London possessed “great expertise” in the field, his own city’s expertise should not be underestimated, adding he sees the prospect of regulating banks wishing to move across the Channel as “a welcome challenge”.

“Also it is a dangerous challenge because we could see some kind of new competition between countries, between regulators.”

– EU divorce looms –

Britain’s Conservative Prime Minister Theresa May has stated that she will formally trigger the two-year EU divorce process by the end of March 2017.

However, Brussels and London face the daunting prospect of gruelling negotiations on future trade deals with the EU and countries outside of the bloc.

EU “passporting” rights currently allow financial products approved by a single regulator in a member state to be sold in the entire EU.

But firms registered in the UK risk losing this access when Britain leaves the bloc, which could push some companies to move at least some of their activities to continental Europe.

A so-called “hard Brexit” would see Britain’s departure from the single market or tariff-free zone, while also ending the free movement of people.

“Banks will assess whether London is still a suitable base on the grounds that a hard Brexit means financial services firms such as banks, asset managers and insurers would lose their ability to ‘passport’ their products into the EU,” noted Russ Mould, investment director at stockbroker AJ Bell.

“This ‘passport’, first introduced in the early 1990s, has helped make London an ideal stepping point for global banks seeking access to the EU.

“Loss of passporting rights could limit access to the EU, persuading service providers they need a European base from which to operate in order to stay competitive,” said Mould,

– ‘Keep calm and negotiate’ –

Anastasia Nesvetailova, economics professor at City University London, told AFP that London offers unique advantages including the concentration of skills, capital and technology, and its common law regime.

“It will be difficult to replicate this unique cluster of factors out of London, at least in the near term,” she said.

“But what banks can achieve is in fact, further expansion. For many, leaving London post-Brexit may not involve closing down their London office, but downsizing.

“The result of this is that the City as a whole will be diminished, but individual banks and financial institutions will gain, economically and politically,” Nesvetailova added.

London remains eager to retain access to the single market, but Brussels has repeatedly insisted it cannot expect this while limiting immigration by European citizens.

The bloc’s chief Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier said Tuesday that London must broker its departure deal by October 2018, adding that time was running out.

Barnier also urged Britain to “keep calm and negotiate”, echoing the UK government’s motivational World War II motto “keep calm and carry on”.

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Nigel Farage Has Some Radical International Trade Ideas For Trump (Green, BLOOM)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Bloomberg News](#)

By Joshua Green

“I’ve been coming to this city quite regularly for quite a long time,” Nigel Farage said on Dec. 1, flashing a grin as he sipped coffee in a cafe at the Dirksen Senate Office Building in Washington. “Speeches, lunches, dinners with groups of Republicans.” He rolled his eyes. “Not this trip,” he said, laughing. “For the first time in 20 years, I’m a free man.” A tourist approached to request a selfie, which delighted Farage—it’s his thing. Three days after the election, Farage tweeted a shot of himself and Donald Trump roaring with laughter inside Trump’s gold-plated elevator that went viral. Now everyone wanted one.

Farage, who just stepped down as leader of the U.K. Independence Party, is only too happy to oblige. If Trump is the greatest beneficiary of his upset victory, Farage is a close second and may be enjoying it more. Ever since he appeared onstage with Trump at a Mississippi rally in August—“The man behind Brexit!” Trump exulted—Farage has become an unlikely hero to Trump-crazed Republicans. With an instinct for the spotlight as sharp as the president-elect’s, he was in Washington to roam the halls of Congress, dropping in on senators and representatives for celebratory visits, the way Tom Brady might stop by Jimmy Kimmel Live after winning the Super Bowl. “I’m catching up with some people,” Farage said. “And also meeting a few new ones.”

On his agenda was, as ever, the matter of advancing his own standing and political celebrity.

“Back in the United Kingdom, a lot of reporters want to know what’s happening, what the new team’s about, where it’s going to go,” he said. “Well, I think I probably can speak on that with more authority than most British people.”

But to curious Republicans in Congress, and soon to Trump himself, Farage was also advancing another idea—one that could potentially reshape global trade in a Trump-led world. “I’m trying to make the case,” he said, “that a big, positive signal from a Trump administration that says they want a bilateral trade deal with the United Kingdom, that comes relatively early, would really be very good news.”

Such a move would upend U.S. policy toward the U.K. and the European Union. In April, President Obama visited London to lay out the dire economic consequences he said would befall the U.K. if it voted to leave the EU in June’s referendum. “Maybe, at some point down the line, there might be a [bilateral] U.K.-U.S. trade agreement,” Obama said. “But it’s not going to happen anytime soon, because our focus is on negotiating with a big bloc—the European Union—to get a trade agreement done.” If Britons voted for Brexit, Obama warned, the U.K. would wind up a diminished partner, relegated to “the back of the queue.”

Farage’s proposal would move the U.K. to the front of the queue, sweep away the whole Obama-Clinton chessboard, roil the global economy, and, with great fanfare, imprint the Trump stamp on U.S. trade policy, possibly even before he’s sworn in—all things that would seem to appeal to the president-elect. And, if Trump were to carry through, Farage would have struck a mighty blow against “bloc-ism” and for nationalism. Some of Trump’s top advisers share his vision and say Farage’s proposal is sure to get a careful hearing. “His ideas will always be listened to seriously in a Trump White House,” said Steve Bannon, Trump’s senior counselor and chief strategist.

“They don’t know this guy and the rest of his gang. I do”

Until recently, the idea of Farage as an important politician on the global stage was hard to imagine. The former City of London metals trader turned anti-EU leader of UKIP was widely considered the Pied Piper for, as then-Prime Minister David Cameron put it in 2006, a band of “fruitcakes, loonies, and closet racists,” who couldn’t even get himself elected to the British Parliament. Farage reveled in the disdain.

One person who did take him seriously was Bannon, until recently head of the Breitbart News Network. “The great Bannon,” as Farage mock-ironically calls him, shared his antipathy to what both men view as sovereignty-leeching multilateral organizations such as NATO and the EU, and to the influx of foreign immigrants who they say threaten the health and vitality of their respective nations. Many of the

Washington speeches and dinners Farage conducted were organized by Bannon, who saw Farage as a fellow revolutionary and a tribune of a hard-right global uprising.

By the time the Brexit result shocked the world on June 23, Farage was well-known to the whole coterie of right-wing populist Republicans who’d gravitated to Trump. “They were all thrilled when Brexit happened,” Farage told me. “I got texts and letters from them all, plenty of congratulations. Bannon was over the moon.” Having made up his mind to step down from UKIP, Farage traveled to Cleveland for the Republican convention, to bask in his heightened status among his giddy American allies.

The connection to Trump, he claims, came not through Bannon but Mississippi Governor Phil Bryant, whom Farage met while drinking in Cleveland. “It was a bit odd, really,” Farage said. “I meet people in coffee bars mostly late at night—or bars, anyway. So I bump into the Mississippi delegation, and they invite me down. That then coincides with a big change in the Trump team”—Bannon and Kellyanne Conway were put in charge of the campaign on Aug. 17—“and suddenly Trump is calling himself Mr. Brexit, and I’m in Mississippi anyway. They wanted a bit of an authentic voice at a Trump rally, so that’s how it came to be.”

The appearance of a fringe British politician at a Trump rally in the Deep South drew dismissive chuckles from the U.S. political cognoscenti. Bannon recalled a New York Times reporter who appeared on MSNBC’s Morning Joe remarking that 99 percent of Mississippians would have no clue who this foreigner was in their midst. Bryant, according to Bannon, knew better. “The cosmopolitan elites in Washington and New York and the members of the mainstream media have no earthly idea of the symbolic power of Nigel Farage to the ‘deplorables’—those working-class men and women who delivered President-elect Trump his stunning victory,” Bannon said.

By all accounts, Trump himself recognized the symbolism better than most and adopted Farage as something between a talisman and a mascot. Soon, Trump was declaring that the election would be “Brexit times five” or “Brexit times 50” and mainlining the Farage-Bannon antiglobalist worldview from the stump. When Trump won, Farage was the first foreign politician to meet with him—no accident, say senior Trump officials. Shortly afterward Farage became the object of a startlingly unorthodox (though thoroughly Trumpian) public lobbying campaign conducted on Twitter to have him named the British ambassador to the U.S. “Many people would like to see @Nigel_Farage represent Great Britain as their Ambassador to the United States. He would do a great job!” Trump tweeted on Nov. 21. This forced an awkward response from a British government spokesman, who pointed out

meekly: "There is no vacancy. We already have an excellent ambassador to the U.S."

Farage, delighted by the breach of protocol, has done his best to stoke the resulting controversy while pretending to tamp it down. "It's up to you if you think 'Farage' and 'diplomat' go together in the same sentence," he said in Washington, with a sideways glance. "If you do, then that's fine. I would say, traditionally, no. But then, it is 2016!" Eyeing his interlocutor to see if his point had registered, Farage decided it had not. "As far as my role is concerned, well, it's quite bizarre, isn't it?" he said. "Traditionally the Conservative Party had great links with the Republican Party. That was blown up completely by Trump getting the nomination. Most of the cabinet, and most of the senior apparatchiks in No. 10, were quite abusive about him. So now we have a new British government—they don't know this guy and the rest of his gang. I do."

What, then, would Farage's role be in the Trump era? "What it's always been," he replied. "To be constructive and helpful in all things that I do."

In Washington, Farage also made a big show of discretion, declining to name which politicians he'd met with unless they first felt moved to share news of the meeting themselves. Some did. "Oh, look," his staffer, Matthew Richardson, said at one point. "Rand Paul's just tweeted your selfie." Thus freed from the demands of modesty, Farage confirmed that, yes, he had lobbied Paul on the idea of a bilateral agreement and gotten an encouraging reception. "I am unashamedly promoting the idea of completely resetting the U.S.-U.K. relationship," he said. "It would be a great thing to do in terms of trade. I also see Britain as a massively important bridge between America and the rest of NATO, because NATO itself needs to have a conversation about its future in the modern world." Paul spokesman Sergio Gor said, "Senator Rand Paul looks forward to supporting a robust post-EU trade deal with the United Kingdom. Nigel Farage will be an essential part in implementing a new treaty."

Still, Farage demurred when the discussion turned to Trump. He wouldn't share details of their Nov. 12 meeting, nor say if he'd be meeting with him again on this trip. "But who knows?" he added coyly. "We may make it up to New York."

Two days after we spoke, on Dec. 3, he did. Farage joined Trump at the annual costume party thrown by hedge fund manager Robert Mercer, the co-chief executive officer of Renaissance Technologies, at his mansion on Long Island. This year's theme was "villains and heroes," and Farage dressed up as Admiral Lord Horatio Nelson, scourge of France, with a vast bicorne hat. Afterward, at a hotel bar, his inhibitions melted away and he declared: "Nelson did it with

cannons and we did it with votes, all right? You can report that!"

Of course, there really isn't much doubt about what Farage is telling Trump and Bannon. Or Paul and the other senators he met with. As Farage put it over coffee, while flashing a lapel pin of interlocking U.S. and British flags, "I would love to hear noises coming out of America: 'Let's do a bilateral deal with the United Kingdom. It'll be easy and quick.' That sends a lot of signals, completely resets the relationship between our two countries. Good. It says to a bigger, wider world that 'bloc-ism' is over, and flexible bilateralism is the way forward. Again, good. What it also does is, hopefully, begin to embolden the British government into realizing that to be told by Brussels we're not allowed to negotiate anything until we've left is barmy. This is not a prison we're in! It's supposed to be a political union. A positive message coming from Trump will strengthen our hand with Europe, because what you'll start to hear are German car manufacturers and French Champagne producers saying to their governments and the EU, 'Stop being so ridiculous about the United Kingdom. Get on with this [disunion], because otherwise they're going to find a whole big new world out there.' Good, good, and good."

Caroline Freund, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, says a bilateral agreement could benefit both Farage and Trump. "From Farage's standpoint," she said, "this adds leverage to the U.K. in their divorce proceedings with the EU. But Trump would get a lot, too. There's a cost to cutting off existing agreements like the Trans-Pacific Partnership. He could show he's not completely anti-trade, while also negotiating the 'better' free-trade agreements he keeps promising—he'd have a lot of leverage here, because the U.K. really wants to balance out their break with Europe."

But more than that, Trump would be projecting U.S. primacy and weakening multilateral organizations, which is just fine with Farage, who's begun to worry about the U.K.'s Brexit resolve. "I suspect we will leave the Union," he said. "But what terms we'll leave on, I'm getting increasingly nervous about. Nervous that we'll sell out. Nervous that we'll get half a Brexit. If I'm wrong, and they do the job properly, then I will just quietly drift away. But if they make a mess of it, then maybe in two or three years' time, I'll have to get back and get involved again."

With that, Farage stood up and announced that he needed a smoke. His retinue fell in line behind him and marched out into the December cold. As Farage lit a cigarette, the latest sign of his growing U.S. influence arrived, as most things do these days, via social media. "Guess what?" Richardson, his aide, exclaimed. "Chuck Grassley just tweeted out your picture!"

—With Zachary Mider

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EU Proposes Sending Migrants Back To Greece (Pop, WSJ)

Move would put pressure on Athens to speed up asylum seeker returns to Turkey

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Wall Street Journal](#)

By Valentina Pop

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

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Germany Launches 150mn Euro Aid Package For Returning Migrants (AFP)

Friday, December 9, 2016

[AFP](#)

Berlin (AFP) – Germany has pledged to spend 150 million euros (\$189 million) helping migrants return home, the minister of development said in an interview published Friday.

The aid fund will benefit both failed asylum seekers and migrants who choose to return to their home countries.

“For the next three years, we will put aside 50 million euros a year for this return programme,” minister Gerd Mueller told Augsburg Allgemeine daily.

The funds will be made available to Iraqis, Afghans and migrants from the Balkans.

The aid will help those migrants “make a new start” in their home countries, Mueller said.

“We can offer them education, professional training, employment and social benefits.”

Since receiving 900,000 asylum requests in 2015, Germany has tightened up its borders and regulations for would be migrants.

Under pressure from her Christian Democratic Union party, Chancellor Angela Merkel has got tougher on immigration ahead of her bid to win a fourth term in next year’s elections, vowing never again to allow such a wave of arrivals from Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan.

Her previous “open door” policy towards refugees has drawn increasing criticism, in part due to a number of high profile crimes committed by recently-arrived migrants.

Last week a teenage Afghan asylum seeker was arrested on suspicion of the rape and murder of a German student.

Last month, German police arrested seven Afghan asylum seekers on suspicion of repeatedly raping an Iranian teenager in a refugee camp.

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Killing Of I.R.A. Splinter Group Figure Rattles Irish City (O’Shea, NYT)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[New York Times](#)

By Sinead O’Shea

DUBLIN — The police are investigating the gangland-style killing of a former senior figure in an Irish Republican Army splinter group who was ambushed from behind by two masked gunmen in the southwest city of Cork.

The victim, Aidan O’Driscoll, 37, known as “the Beast,” died in a hospital a few hours after the attack on Wednesday in Cork’s Blackpool neighborhood, where the assailants shot him once in the back and twice more in the head as he lay on the ground, witnesses said.

It was Ireland’s first such killing in four years and stunned the residents of Cork, who are unaccustomed to such violence.

Two burned cars were found nearby, believed to have been used by the assailants, who apparently set them afire to destroy evidence, a standard practice of the I.R.A. during the height of its political violence.

Mr. O’Driscoll was long linked to criminal elements, leading to numerous theories about the identities of his killers. But the police said on Thursday that it was premature to draw any conclusions.

He was known to have enemies among drug dealers, gang members, and within the outlawed I.R.A. splinter group he had once briefly helped lead, the Real I.R.A.

The group derived its name from having rejected the formal disarmament of the I.R.A. after the 1998 Good Friday agreement aimed at ending the strife in Northern Ireland.

Mr. O’Driscoll first made headlines in 2005 when he was sentenced to three years in prison for membership in the Real I.R.A. The conviction was overturned in 2008, but he was reported to have grown close to Alan Ryan, a former Real I.R.A. leader, during his imprisonment. The two began to collaborate when Mr. Ryan began a violent campaign against drug dealing gangs in Dublin.

The Real I.R.A. justified the violence as an attempt to rid Dublin of drug dealers, but some viewed it as extortion. Drug dealers were forced to surrender hundreds of thousands of euros to avoid retribution. Mr. Ryan was shot to death in 2012.

Mr. O'Driscoll was then believed to have been appointed head of the organization, but he was forced out within a year. He was shot in both legs by fellow Real I.R.A. members who had accused him of skimming profits from smuggling and other crimes.

In 2015, he was arrested and questioned about what the authorities called the crucifixion of a trader from Limerick after a dispute over a business deal. The trader's feet were stapled to the ground with a nail gun. Mr. O'Driscoll denied involvement and was never charged.

Mr. O'Driscoll's nickname is believed to have been derived from his days as a soccer player in the Gaelic Athletic Association. He had been a well-liked member of Delanys, the local club in Cork.

The club secretary, Denis O'Flaherty, said Mr. O'Driscoll had been a highly committed and "very talented player."

He also said fellow members were astonished at news of the killing, describing it as "more like something that would happen in Dublin."

Others expressed similar shock. A local member of Parliament, Mick Barry, described the Blackpool area of Cork as a "relatively quiet working-class community" where such crimes rarely happen.

"This man was gunned down on a street where children play and near where people go to work," he said. "People feel very strongly that there should be no more retaliation and blood spilled."

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61-Year-Old German Identified As Oakland Fire Victim (AP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Associated Press](#)

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) – A 61-year-old German man who made his friends feel celebrated is believed to be the oldest victim of the fire that engulfed a dance party inside an Oakland warehouse.

Federal officials investigating the blaze that killed 36 people planned to bring in engineers to examine the building's electrical system, as they try to pinpoint the cause of the fire. Many of the victims were musicians and artists in their 20s and 30s. The youngest was 17, the music-loving son of a sheriff's deputy.

Officials have identified all but one of the victims and were notifying families.

WELCOMING HOST

Wolfgang Renner, 61, made friends feel celebrated, a friend said.

He is the oldest victim publicly identified.

Renner's girlfriend, Michelle Colette Sylvan is missing.

"Wolfgang was about as free of an individual as anyone is likely to ever meet," their friend Robert Janca said in a statement to KRON-TV. "When we were close, it was a joy to go and visit him as he was a capable host who made all of his friends feel welcome and celebrated."

Janca called Sylvan "his lovely, wildly creative partner" and "a potent visionary."

"The world is a decidedly less colorful one without them," he said. "So long dear souls. Thank you for the treasures you shared. We will see you in Valhalla and in the interim we will celebrate your rich lives as you would undoubtedly have wanted us to."

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EAST ASIA & PACIFIC

US Official Warns Of North Korean Nuclear Capabilities (Baldor, AP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Associated Press](#)

By Lolita C. Baldor

WASHINGTON (AP) – North Korea now has the capability to launch a nuclear weapon, a senior U.S. military official said Thursday, adding that while the U.S. believes Pyongyang can mount a warhead on a missile, it's not clear that it can hit a target.

The official said it appears that North Korea can mount a nuclear warhead on a missile, but may not have the re-entry capabilities for a strategic strike. That would include the ability of the weapon to get back through the atmosphere without burning up and the ability to hit the intended target. The official said North Korea continues to try and overcome those limitations.

The Pentagon continues to revise its contingency plans regarding a North Korean strike, said the official, who was not authorized to discuss the issue publicly so spoke on condition

of anonymity. The military routinely develops plans for all threat possibilities.

U.S. officials have steadily expanded their assessments of Pyongyang's nuclear abilities. Adm. William Gortney, then-head of U.S. Northern Command, said in March that Pyongyang may have figured out how to make a nuclear warhead small enough to fit on a long-range missile.

Under Kim Jong Un, who rose to power following his father's death in 2011, North Korea has seen steady progress in its nuclear and missile programs, including two nuclear tests this year.

The country recently claimed a series of technical breakthroughs in its goal of developing a long-range nuclear missile capable of reaching the continental United States.

North Korea is now "fully equipped with nuclear attack capability," leader Kim announced proudly after the August launch of a submarine-launched missile.

He was exaggerating, but the strings of tests indicate that North Korea may have medium-range missiles capable of striking American military bases in the Pacific in the next couple years, experts say. Some believe Pyongyang may be able to hit the western United States as early as 2020.

South Korean defense officials say North Korea doesn't yet have such a weapon, but some civilian experts have said they believe the North has the technology to mount warheads on shorter-range Rodong and Scud missiles that can strike South Korea and Japan.

"I think that they're struggling with getting the (intercontinental ballistic missile) program up and operational," U.S. Gen. Vincent Brooks, the head of U.S. forces in Korea, said in Senate hearings earlier this year. But "over time, I believe we're going to see them acquire these capabilities if they're not stopped."

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N.Korea Capable Of Launching Nuke, Does Not Master Targeting: US Official (AFP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[AFP](#)

Washington (AFP) – North Korea has developed the capability to pair a nuclear warhead with a missile and launch it, but has not mastered bringing the weapon back from space and onto a target, a senior US defense official said Thursday.

Pyongyang has conducted a series of missile launches in the wake of its fourth nuclear test in January, to the consternation of regional countries and many in the international community.

While experts say the North is thought to have succeeded in making nuclear warheads small enough to arm Scud missiles, it is unclear if they can put a weapon on a bigger rocket that travels further and deploys a warhead from space.

"Truthfully, they have the capability right now to be able to deliver a nuclear weapon, they are just not sure about re-entry, that's why they continue to test their systems out there," the official said.

He added that he believed the North Koreans can already "mate" a missile with a warhead.

But "they are not sure of the re-entry capability for a strategic strike, so they are endeavoring to try and overcome that."

In the wake of ramped-up testing by North Korea's leader Kim Jong-Un, the United States is deploying an advanced missile defense system in South Korea.

Despite strong objections from China and Russia, the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system will be ready within about 10 months, the Pentagon says.

North Korea's continued nuclear testing is generating renewed concern in the US military, and the Pentagon has numerous contingency plans to more assertively try to rein in the country's atomic capabilities.

Something we are "very much leaning into (is) being more prepared for the future (in) North Korea," the official said.

"It is the threat that keeps me awake at night. You've heard other senior leaders say the same thing, primarily because we don't know what the 'Dear Leader' in North Korea really is after."

The official noted that the United States and its allies have little leverage over isolationist North Korea.

"We are in a very tenuous situation with not a lot of leverage, not a lot of initiative in terms of negotiations," the official said.

"So as you might imagine, we are preparing for contingency operations to the degree we need to."

The official said the United States has had backup military plans at the ready since the 1953 armistice between the North and South.

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North Korean Delegation Back From Paying Respects To Castro (AP)

Friday, December 9, 2016

Associated Press

PYONGYANG, North Korea (AP) — A delegation of North Korean officials headed by one of Kim Jong Un's chief lieutenants returned to Pyongyang on Friday after visiting Cuba to pay respects to Fidel Castro, whom North Korea has called a "great comrade."

The delegation, led by Choe Ryong Hae, also took the opportunity to do some rare diplomatic spadework with South American leaders.

Choe, one of the North's most powerful officials under leader Kim Jong Un, met with the presidents of Bolivia, Venezuela and Nicaragua while in Havana, according to the North's state-run media. Details of the meetings were not known, though the state media reports said the presidents praised the North and its socialist policies.

Choe was met at Pyongyang's airport by Cuba's ambassador.

Though he has been the focus of numerous rumors speculating whether he is in or out of favor, Choe has emerged as one of the most visible officials in the Kim Jong Un regime. Among other trips abroad, he made a surprise trip as head of a delegation to the 2014 Asian Games, held in Incheon, South Korea, and this year went to the Rio Olympics.

Kim Jong Un, who assumed office in late 2011 after the death of his father, Kim Jong Il, has yet to travel abroad or officially meet any foreign heads of state.

North Korea has made a point out of showing its solidarity with Cuba since Castro's Nov. 25 death, going so far as to declare a three-day mourning period in his honor.

South Korean media have suggested the North's high-profile response to Castro's death might be at least in part a reflection of concern in Pyongyang that Havana may be more willing to develop relations with Seoul now that the era of Fidel Castro is over.

While the two countries shared a common enemy in Washington throughout the years, Raul Castro, Fidel's brother and successor, has already begun a rapprochement with President Barack Obama.

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South Korean Legislature Votes To Impeach President Park Geun-Hye (Stiles, LAT)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

Los Angeles Times

By Matt Stiles

South Korea's national legislature on Friday voted to impeach President Park Geun-hye, the latest and most dramatic development in a mushrooming political scandal that has sent millions into the streets in protest.

The decision, supported by members of Park's own conservative ruling party, suspends the president's power in favor of the prime minister, Hwang Kyo-ahn.

Hwang will assume a caretaker role as head of state while a constitutional court decides whether to remove Park permanently, a process that could take months.

"With the impeachment motion passing the national assembly, we have solved a lot of the chaos of the nation," said National Assembly Speaker Chung Sye-kyun after the vote.

The impeachment caps Park's rapid descent in recent weeks after allegations that a longtime confidant — a woman who had no official role in the government — accessed classified material and used her influence to extort donations from large business conglomerates.

Controversy about the case, which has roiled presidential politics here and engulfed the nation's news coverage, prompted South Koreans to join massive and historic public vigils in recent weeks.

The protests started small but have swelled over the last several weekends, with as many as 2.3 million taking the streets across the country last week to call for Park's ouster.

The president had been set to leave office in February 2018 after an election in December. Her approval ratings have remained in single digits in recent weeks.

Despite the political pressure to resign, it was far from a certainty that the legislature would vote to impeach Park. The opposition parties do not have enough members in the National Assembly to reach the two-thirds vote they needed to remove Park, requiring some support from her party. Adding to the drama, Friday was to be the lawmakers' last scheduled workday of 2016.

Opposition leaders had expected defections from the ruling party against Park, whose father was a military dictator who ruled South Korea in the 1970s.

The scandal centers on the longtime confidant, the daughter of a deceased cult leader with his own close ties to the president.

The confidant, Choi Soon-sil, remains jailed on an array of charges. As a result of the scandal, two presidential aides have been accused of abusing their power, and a music video director is accused of using ties to Choi to win lucrative contracts from state agencies and private companies.

Prosecutors have said Park is a suspect in the case, though she enjoys immunity from prosecution in standard criminal cases as president. She would probably retain that immunity as the court decides her fate.

Park has acknowledged making management mistakes in her office but has denied acting outside the public's interest or doing anything to enrich herself.

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South Korea Parliament Votes To Impeach President Park Geun-Hye (Sang-Hun, NYT)

Friday, December 9, 2016

[New York Times](#)

By Choe Sang-Hun

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korea's Parliament voted on Friday to impeach President Park Geun-hye, an aloof conservative who took a hard line against North Korea and rose to power with strong support from those who revered her father, the military dictator Park Chung-hee.

The vote against Ms. Park, the nation's first female leader, followed weeks of damaging disclosures in a corruption scandal that has all but paralyzed the government and produced the largest street protests in the nation's history. Her powers will now be suspended as the Constitutional Court considers whether to remove her from office.

Ms. Park has been accused of allowing a shadowy confidante, the daughter of a religious sect leader, to exercise remarkable influence on matters ranging from choosing top government officials to her wardrobe, and of helping her extort tens of millions of dollars from South Korean companies. The scandal, which gained national attention less than two months ago, has cast a harsh light on collusion between the presidency and big business in one of Asia's most dynamic economies.

A total of 234 lawmakers voted for impeachment, well over the required two-thirds threshold in the 300-seat Parliament. The vote was by secret ballot, but the outcome indicated that nearly half of the 128 lawmakers in Ms. Park's party, Saenuri, had joined the opposition in moving to oust her.

Parliament's motion for impeachment, accusing Ms. Park of "extensive and serious violations of the Constitution and the law," will now be taken up by the Constitutional Court, which has six months to decide whether the charges are true and merit her ouster.

Prime Minister Hwang Kyo-ahn, a former prosecutor and staunch defender of Ms. Park, will serve as acting president in the meantime. If the court votes to remove Ms. Park, South Korea will hold an election for a new president in 60 days.

The political turmoil ushers in a period of uncertainty as South Korea faces a slowing economy, a growing nuclear threat from North Korea and a more assertive China. Ms. Park had adopted a tough stance toward the North, focusing on stronger sanctions, and had agreed to deploy an American advanced missile defense system that infuriated the Chinese.

Her unpopularity increases the chances of a liberal candidate winning the next election, possibly upending her North Korea approach and steering the country closer to China.

Domestically, her undoing provides the latest example of how corruption and influence-peddling remain entrenched at the top echelons of political and corporate life in South Korea.

The nexus of industry and political power has fueled South Korea's transformation from a war-torn agrarian country into a global economic powerhouse, yet the ties between government and business have yielded recurring corruption scandals.

Ms. Park, 64, came to power in early 2013, backed mostly by older Koreans who had hoped she would be a contemporary version of her father, often viewed as the modernizer of South Korea.

Instead, she became the least popular leader since the country began democratizing in the late 1980s, according to recent polls. Critics said she was authoritarian and used state power to muzzle critics while shielded by a coterie of advisers.

The vote for impeachment in the National Assembly, South Korea's Parliament, was a victory both for the opposition and the huge crowds of South Koreans who filled central Seoul for the past six weekends demanding that she resign immediately or face impeachment. Recent surveys showed that a vast majority of South Koreans agreed with the demonstrators.

"It is a victory of the people's will and Korea's democracy," said Kang Won-taek, a professor of political science at Seoul National University. "It is Korea's glorious revolution, achieved without blood and without any serious violence."

The last time South Koreans took to the streets to kick out an unpopular leader, in 1960, they had to fight bloody battles with police officers armed with rifles.

That uprising forced Syngman Rhee, the country's founding and authoritarian president, to resign and flee into exile in Hawaii. Vice President Lee Ki-poong, a Rhee confidant who was at the center of a corruption scandal, and his family

ended their lives in a group suicide as mobs approached their home in Seoul.

In subsequent decades, when South Koreans demanded more democracy, their military dictators, including Ms. Park's father, brutally suppressed them through martial law, torturing and even executing their leaders.

In 1987, violence erupted again as people took to the streets to demand free presidential elections, forcing the military government to back down.

This time, in a sign of how far South Korea's democracy has matured, peaceful crowds achieved their goal without a single arrest. Increasingly large numbers of protesters gathered in the capital, including about 1.7 million people on Saturday — the largest protest in South Korean history.

The protesters sang and danced to rock music and put flower stickers on police buses. They marched, some pushing baby carriages, while uniformed officers stood aside. And they neared Ms. Park's presidential compound, chanting that she should step down immediately or face impeachment.

Ms. Park became the first South Korean president to suffer such a fate since 2004, when the National Assembly moved to impeach Roh Moo-hyun for violating election law. Two months later, the Constitutional Court ruled that Mr. Roh's offense was too minor to justify impeachment and restored him to office. But Ms. Park faces much more serious accusations.

Still, it is difficult to predict when and how the Constitutional Court will rule on Ms. Park's fate. The process will buy time for Ms. Park's embattled party to recover from the scandal and prepare for the next presidential election if the court decides to formally unseat her.

If a liberal candidate wins the next election, the plan for the American missile deployment could be in trouble. Although none of the politicians cited as potential presidential candidates has specified that they would reverse the plan if elected, liberals have criticized the deployment, saying that South Korea should pursue a more balanced diplomacy between Washington and Beijing.

That may present a challenge for the incoming administration of Donald J. Trump, as he deliberates over whether to adjust Washington's approach toward North Korea's advancing nuclear-missile program.

Ms. Park joins the ranks of South Korean leaders who have been disgraced near the end of their terms, with their relatives or aides implicated in corruption scandals. An exception was Ms. Park's father, who was assassinated in 1979 at the height of his dictatorial power and before anyone dared to bring corruption charges against him.

His and subsequent governments had favored a handful of family-owned conglomerates with tax benefits, lucrative business licenses and buy-Korea and anti-labor policies. In return, the businesses were accused of returning the favors with bribes and suspicious donations.

Through the years, top corporations have been rocked by recurring corruption scandals, including the one that implicated Ms. Park and her confidante, Choi Soon-sil.

In 1988, business tycoons were hauled into a parliamentary hearing to be questioned about millions of dollars they gave to a foundation controlled by the military dictator Chun Doo-hwan.

The scene repeated this week, when nine business leaders, including Jay Y. Lee, the vice chairman of Samsung, and Chung Mong-koo, the Hyundai chairman, appeared at another parliamentary hearing to be questioned about millions of dollars they gave to two foundations controlled by Ms. Choi.

Ms. Choi has been indicted on charges of leveraging her influence with Ms. Park to extort the money from the businesses. Prosecutors have also identified Ms. Park as a criminal suspect, a first for a president, though she cannot be indicted while in office.

The businessmen admitted giving the money, confirming that the requests had come directly from Ms. Park or her aides.

Hur Chang-soo, chairman of GS Group and the head of the Federation of Korean Industries, the pro-business lobby group that coordinated the donations, put the situation this way: "It is difficult for businesses to say no to a request from the government. That's the reality in South Korea."

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Park Geun-Hye Impeached By South Korean National Assembly (Cheng, WSJ)

Decision on removal will come from Constitutional Court Friday, December 9, 2016

[Wall Street Journal](#)

By Jonathan Cheng

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

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South Korea's Parliament Impeaches President Park Geun-Hye Over Corruption Scandal (Fifield, Seo, WP)

Friday, December 9, 2016

[Washington Post](#)

By Anna Fifield And Yoonjung Seo

South Korea's National Assembly has voted by a huge margin to impeach President Park Geun-hye over her role in a corruption and influence-peddling scandal, forcing her to immediately hand over the running of the country to a caretaker prime minister.

The Constitutional Court now has six months to decide whether to uphold the impeachment motion, creating a power vacuum in South Korea at the same time as the United States goes through its own presidential transition.

A total of 234 lawmakers voted in favor of the impeachment motion, well beyond the two-thirds majority, or 200 votes, that proponents of impeachment needed to oust the president. Only 56 lawmakers in the 300-seat assembly voted against impeaching Park.

Representatives in Park's conservative Saenuri party had no choice but to listen to the people, said Kim Dong-choon, professor of social sciences at Sungkonghoe University. Hundreds of thousands have been demonstrating in central Seoul for weeks, calling on Park to step down, and her approval ratings have fallen to 5 percent.

[S. Korean president would face immediate suspension if impeachment bill passes]

"Most of the cabinet members have been appointed by Park so their legitimacy will be questioned by this impeachment," Kim said. "The government won't be able to make important policy decisions and the power will shift to the National Assembly."

The scandal centers on allegations that the famously aloof Park — the country's first female president and daughter of military strongman Park Chung-hee, who ruled South Korea in the 1960s and 1970s — took advice from a secret confidante on a wide variety of topics, including North Korean policy and her wardrobe.

Prosecutors said that the confidante, Choi Soon-sil, a lifelong friend and daughter of a shadowy cult leader, used that relationship to enrich herself by at least \$70 million and get advantages for her family. Choi has been indicted on charges, including abuse of power and extortion, and is in detention.

Prosecutors have said the president appeared to have been an accomplice and want to question her about her role in the case, but she has refused. She is immune from prosecution while president but could be charged once she leaves office.

Park will be only the second president to be impeached since South Korea democratized in 1987. Roh Moo-hyun, a progressive, was impeached in 2004 for minor election law violations but, after deliberating for two months, the Constitutional Court overturned the motion. While it found that

Roh had indeed breached the law, it ruled that the charges were not serious enough to warrant his removal.

South Korea's political crisis could become a trigger for bigger change

The conservative-leaning court will have 180 days to consider Park's case if the impeachment vote is successful, but the process will likely be complicated. Two justices are set to resign within the first three months of the year and analysts think it unlikely that the prime minister would act to replace them during a time of limbo.

That would mean six of the remaining seven judges would have to vote in favor of upholding the motion.

Park's duties will now fall to prime minister Hwang Kyo-ahn, a political independent and former justice minister. But Hwang has, in a way, been caught up in the furore engulfing the president.

As the scandal widened, Park last month said she would replace Hwang with a senior official from former progressive president Roh's administration, a move intended to both clear the decks and to placate the left-wing opposition parties.

But they were instead incensed that they had not been consulted and Park was forced to withdraw her nominee. That means Hwang has continued in his position, even attending the APEC forum in Peru since Park did not want to travel during the crisis.

South Korea's president offers to resign if demanded by lawmakers

Ahead of the vote, opposition lawmakers were busy Friday morning lobbying members of Park's Saenuri party to support the motion.

"We believe that there will be overwhelming support for impeachment, but you never know what will happen until the last minute," Keum Tae-sup, spokesman for the Democratic party, said in a radio interview. "We will not let down our guard until very the end."

There is some support within Park's Saenuri party for the impeachment, but the question is how many lawmakers are prepared to vote with the opposition.

"Citizens have been asking in Gwanghwamun Plaza for justice and to uphold sound values," said Hwang Young-cheul, a lawmaker in the Saenuri party, referring to the huge protests that have been taking place in Seoul every Saturday night. "We've heard their demands and will keep them in our hearts when we head to the vote," Hwang said.

Demonstrations were taking place outside the assembly during the vote. Groups of protesters were holding up banners saying, "Park, immediate resignation!" A smaller

group of about 50 protesters was chanting "Against impeachment" and waving South Korean flags.

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South Korea Votes To Impeachment President (USAT)

Friday, December 9, 2016

[USA Today](#)

South Korean lawmakers on Friday voted to impeach President Park Geun-hye, the country's first female leader amid protests over an influence-peddling scandal that drew millions into the streets.

Once formal documents are handed over to the presidential Blue House later Friday, Park will be stripped of her power and Prime Minister Hwang Kyo-ahn will assume leadership until the country's Constitutional Court rules on whether Park must permanently step down.

The court has up to 180 days to decide. Park will be formally removed from office if six of the court's nine justices support her impeachment, and the country would then hold a presidential election within 60 days.

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South Korean President Is Impeached In Stunning Fall (Klug, Tong-Hyung, Kim, AP)

Friday, December 9, 2016

[Associated Press](#)

By Foster Klug, Kim Tong-Hyung, And Hyung-Jin Kim

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) – South Korean lawmakers on Friday voted to impeach President Park Geun-hye, a stunning and swift fall for the country's first female leader amid protests that drew millions into the streets in united fury.

Once formal documents are handed over to the presidential Blue House later Friday, Park will be stripped of her power and Prime Minister Hwang Kyo-ahn will assume leadership until the country's Constitutional Court rules on whether Park must permanently step down.

The court has up to 180 days to decide. Park will be formally removed from office if six of the court's nine justices support her impeachment, and the country would then hold a presidential election within 60 days.

National Assembly speaker Chung Sye-kyun said the bill on Park's impeachment was passed by a vote of 236 for and 56 opposed, with 9 invalid votes and abstentions. That well surpassed the necessary two-thirds support in the 300-seat assembly. The opposition needed help from members of Park's party to get the needed votes, and it got it.

Relatives of the victims from a 2014 ferry disaster that killed more than 300 and was blamed in part on government incompetence and corruption, who were in the parliament observing the vote, cheered and clapped after the outcome was announced. Most lawmakers left the hall quietly, though some could be seen taking selfies as they waited to vote.

Once called the "Queen of Elections" for her ability to pull off wins for her party, Park has been surrounded in the presidential Blue House in recent weeks by millions of South Koreans who have taken to the streets in protest. They are furious over what prosecutors say was collusion by Park with a longtime friend to extort money from companies and to give that confidante extraordinary sway over government decisions.

Her approval ratings had plunged to 4 percent, the lowest among South Korean leaders since democracy came in the late 1980s, and even elderly conservatives who once made up her political base have distanced themselves from her. An opinion survey released Thursday showed about 78 percent of respondents supported Park's impeachment.

South Korean lawmakers last voted to impeach a president in 2004, when they accused late liberal President Roh Moo-hyun of minor election law violations and incompetence. The court restored Roh's powers about two months later, ruling that his wrongdoings weren't serious enough to justify his unseating.

The chances of the court reinstating Park are considered low because her charges are much graver. However, some legal experts say the court might need more than a couple of months to decide. This is because Park's case is much more complicated than Roh's, and because her lawyers will likely press the court not to uphold the impeachment unless the suspicions against her are proven.

Friday's vote was a remarkable fall for Park, the daughter of slain military dictator Park Chung-hee who convincingly beat her liberal opponent in 2012. Park's single, five-year term was originally set to end Feb. 24, 2018.

The political turmoil around Park comes after years of frustration over a leadership style that inspired comparisons to her father's. Critics saw in Park an unwillingness to tolerate dissent as her government cracked down on press freedom, pushed to dissolve a leftist party and allowed aggressive police suppression of anti-government protests, which saw the death of an activist in 2016.

She also was heavily criticized over her government's handling of the 2014 ferry sinking, a disaster partially blamed on official incompetence and corruption.

Park has repeatedly apologized over the public anger caused by the latest scandal, but has denied any legal wrongdoings. She attempted to avoid impeachment last month by making a conditional offer to step down if parliament comes up with a stable power-transfer plan, but the overture was dismissed by opposition lawmakers as a stalling ploy.

Talking with leaders of her conservative ruling party on Tuesday, Park said she would make “every available effort” to prepare for the court’s impeachment review.

In indicting Park’s longtime friend, Choi Soon-sil, and two former presidential aides last month, state prosecutors said they believed the president was “collusively involved” in criminal activities by the suspects. Choi and the two former aides were accused of bullying large companies into providing tens of millions of dollars and favors to foundations and businesses Choi controlled, and enabling Choi to interfere with state affairs.

Park’s lawyer has called the accusations groundless and said she would only cooperate with an independent probe led by a special prosecutor.

Park first met Choi in the 1970s, around the time Park was acting as first lady after her mother was killed during a 1974 assassination attempt on her father. Choi’s father, a shadowy figure named Choi Tae-min who was a Buddhist monk, a religious cult leader and a Christian pastor at different times, emerged as Park’s mentor.

The Choi clan has long been suspected of building a fortune by using their connections with Park to extort companies and government organizations. Choi’s ex-husband is also a former close aide of Park’s.

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China Exports Rise For First Time Since March (Magnier, WSJ)

November trade data add to signs of stability in China's economy

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Wall Street Journal](#)

By Mark Magnier

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

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China Trade In November Rebounds From Slump (McDonald, AP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Associated Press](#)

By Joe McDonald

BEIJING (AP) – China’s exports grew in November for the first time in nine months while imports also rose in a sign global and domestic demand are recovering.

Exports rose 0.1 percent to \$19.7 billion, an improvement over October’s 7.3 percent contraction, customs data showed Thursday. Imports rose 6.7 percent to \$15.2 billion, up from the previous month’s 1.4 percent decline.

The trade slump has added to pressure on communist leaders to prop up weak economic growth and avoid politically dangerous job losses.

“Better-than-expected trade data out of China today reflects both an uptick in global demand as well as the continued strength of the domestic economy,” said Julian Evans-Pritchard of Capital Economics in a report.

Growth in the world’s second-largest economy held steady at 6.7 percent over a year earlier in the quarter ending in September, shored up by twin booms in credit and real estate sales. Forecasters expect growth to weaken as regulators tighten lending controls and try to cool housing costs.

China’s global trade surplus was \$44.6 billion, while its surplus with the United States was \$23.1 billion, a figure that might help to fuel pressure for trade controls under U.S. President-elect Donald Trump, who has threatened to raise tariffs on Chinese goods.

“We remain cautious on the export outlook, given the still unconvincing global demand recovery and policy uncertainty in the U.S. after Mr. Trump’s election win,” Louis Kuijs of Oxford Economics said in a report.

November’s trade gains were even stronger when measured in China’s currency, which has weakened against the dollar. In yuan terms, exports rose 5.9 percent from a year earlier while imports jumped 13 percent.

Still, despite the latest improvement, exports for the first 11 months of the 2016 are down 7.5 percent from a year ago. In 2015, exports fell 2.8 percent for the full year.

“The medium-term outlook for Chinese trade remains challenging,” said Evans-Pritchard. “While global demand has recovered somewhat recently, lower trend growth in many developed and emerging economies means that further upside is probably limited.”

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Chinese Takeover Of Aixtron Collapses After U.S. Ban (Wilkes, WSJ)

The contentious €670 million offer for the semiconductor company was blocked by President Obama on national security grounds

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Wall Street Journal](#)

By William Wilkes

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

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Report: Tibetan Buddhist Monk Self-immolates In West China (AP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Associated Press](#)

BEIJING (AP) – A U.S.-backed radio station says a Tibetan Buddhist monk has set himself on fire in western China in what appeared to be the latest such radical protest against Beijing's rule.

Radio Free Asia says the unidentified monk set himself alight on a road outside the town of Machu in a traditionally Tibetan area of Gansu province at around 7:00 p.m. Thursday.

Police who arrived shortly afterward took the monk away and there was no immediate word on his condition.

The incident brings to at least 146 the number of Tibetans who have self-immolated in recent years, 125 of whom have died according to monitoring groups.

Eyewitnesses have been quoted as saying many cried out for Tibetan independence or prayed for the return of the Dalai Lama, Tibet's exiled Buddhist leader.

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Tsunami Warnings Are Cancelled After Big Pacific Earthquake (AP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) – Tsunami warnings for several Pacific islands, including those in Hawaii, were canceled Friday after authorities determined that a powerful magnitude 7.7 earthquake that struck near the Solomon Islands did not pose a broad tsunami threat.

The Pacific Tsunami Warning Center said waves of up to 3 meters (10 feet) were still possible along the coast of the Solomon Islands and smaller tsunami waves could hit Papua New Guinea.

There were reports of some power outages in the Solomon Islands, although there were no immediate reports of widespread damage or injuries from the quake.

The U.S. Geological Survey said the quake hit about 200 kilometers (120 miles) southeast of Honiara, the capital of the Solomon Islands. The epicenter was relatively deep at 48 kilometers (30 miles) below the surface. Deeper quakes generally cause less damage on the ground.

The Solomon Islands are located in the Pacific's geologically active "Ring of Fire."

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Hong Kong's Leader Says He Won't Run For Another Term (AP)

Friday, December 9, 2016

[Associated Press](#)

HONG KONG (AP) — Hong Kong's Beijing-backed leader, Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying, says he won't run again for the job after his current term ends next year, citing unspecified family reasons.

Leung, who was chosen by a panel of Beijing-friendly tycoons and other Hong Kong elites, made the surprise announcement Friday.

He is deeply unpopular in Hong Kong because of the hard-line stance his government has taken against pro-democracy activists.

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UN Calls On Myanmar's Suu Kyi To Visit Crisis-Hit Rakhine (AFP)

Friday, December 9, 2016

AFP

Yangon (AFP) – The UN has urged Myanmar's de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi to visit northern Rakhine state, where the army is accused of carrying out a brutal crackdown on the Muslim Rohingya minority.

The Nobel peace prize winner has faced growing international criticism for not stopping the military's campaign, which has pushed more than 20,000 Rohingya over the border to Bangladesh, bringing tales of mass rape, murder and arson.

The crackdown was launched in response to deadly raids on police posts in October.

Malaysia has accused the army of "genocide" – charges Myanmar officials have vehemently denied.

Suu Kyi has described the situation as "under control" and asked the international community to stop stoking the "fires of resentment".

In a statement released in New York on Thursday, UN special adviser on Myanmar Vijay Nambiar appealed directly to the peace icon to intervene.

"The adoption of a generally defensive rather than proactive approach to providing security to the local population, have caused frustration locally and disappointment internationally," he said.

"I also appeal to Daw Suu to visit Maungdaw and Buthidaung and reassure the civilian population there that they will be protected," he added, referring to the locked down area in Rakhine.

The bloodshed presents the biggest challenge to Suu Kyi since her party won Myanmar's first democratic elections in a generation last year.

It has galvanised Muslim nations around the region, with protesters decrying the latest crackdown as the culmination of years discrimination and abuse suffered by the stateless Rohingya.

On Sunday Malaysia's Prime Minister Najib Razak taunted Suu Kyi, who the former junta kept under house arrest for almost 20 years, before a crowd of some 5,000 protesters in Kuala Lumpur.

"What's the use of Aung San Suu Kyi having a Nobel prize?" he asked the protesters.

"The world cannot sit and watch genocide taking place."

Activists say Buddhist-majority Myanmar's stateless Muslim Rohingya minority are among the most persecuted in the world.

More than 120,000 have been trapped in squalid displacement camps since the last major outbreak of violence erupted in Rakhine in 2012.

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Indonesia's Aceh Quake Death Toll Climbs Past 100 (Rachman, WSJ)

Rescuers descend on region following deadly magnitude 6.5 temblor

Thursday, December 8, 2016

Wall Street Journal

By Anita Rachman

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

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Aid Groups Descend On Indonesia Quake Zone; Deaths Reach 102 (Bakkara, Wright, AP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

Associated Press

By Binsar Bakkara And Stephen Wright

MEUREUDU, Indonesia (AP) – Humanitarian organizations descended on Indonesia's Aceh province Thursday as the local disaster agency called for urgent food supplies and officials raced to assess the full extent of damage from an earthquake that killed more than 100 people.

Volunteers and nearly 1,500 rescue personnel concentrated their search on the hard-hit town of Meureudu in Pidie Jaya district near the epicenter of the magnitude 6.5 quake that hit before dawn Wednesday. But the small number of heavy excavators on the scene meant progress was slow. Humanitarian assessment teams fanned out to other areas of the district.

National Disaster Mitigation Agency spokesman Sutopo Purwo Nugroho said the death toll had risen to 102 and warned it could increase. Search teams were using devices that detect mobile phone signals within a 100-meter (yard) radius to help guide their efforts as they scoured the rubble. The disaster agency said more than 750 people were injured.

"We have to move faster to search and rescue possible survivors," said Iskander Ali, a Pidie Jaya official.

Those killed included very young children and the elderly. Mohammad Jafar, 60, said his daughter, granddaughter and grandson died in the quake but he was resigned to it as "God's will."

He was getting ready for morning prayers when the earthquake hit. He said he and his wife managed to push their way out through the debris. Another man said he found his 9-year-old daughter alive beneath a broken wall at his neighbor's house.

Thousands of people are homeless or afraid to return to their houses. Nugroho said more than 11,000 people have been displaced and are staying at shelters and mosques or with relatives. About 10,500 homes were damaged and dozens of mosques and shop houses collapsed.

Killer quakes occur regularly in the region, where many live with the terrifying memory of a giant Dec. 26, 2004, earthquake that struck off Sumatra. The magnitude-9.1 quake triggered a devastating tsunami that killed more than 100,000 Acehese.

Sulaiman, a Disaster Mitigation Agency official in Aceh, said staple foods for women and babies are most urgently needed. He said medicines are sufficient because assistance is coming from the army, police, state-run companies and local governments.

"What's badly needed now are staple foods such as rice, cooking oil, salted fish and other foods," said Sulaiman. He said people had complained about a lack of clean water, but the problem has been tackled and electricity supply is returning to normal in many areas.

Nugroho, at a news conference in Jakarta, listed as urgent food and clothing, specialist doctors for victims suffering fractures, medical equipment, temporary shelters and heavy excavation equipment.

The Indonesian government sent 50 tons of urgent aid to Aceh, including 10 generators, tents, folding beds, baby supplies and body bags.

"Every aid and civil society organization is piling into the area with as many boxes of rice, instant noodles, blankets and other aid as they can shift," said Paul Dillon, a spokesman for the International Organization for Migration, which has an assessment team in northern Aceh.

It will take at least two more days before there's a fuller picture of how many people are displaced, he said.

The military is setting up an emergency field hospital and sending two dozen doctors, and the Health Ministry is sending a medical team and medicines. The Red Cross sent aid such as water trucks on Wednesday and humanitarian group CARE is leading an assessment team of four international aid groups to avoid duplication of efforts. Aid groups and others are also appealing for donations.

Pope Francis, who was speaking at St. Peter's Square for a Catholic holiday, said he wanted people to know he was

praying for the victims of the earthquake, their loved ones and those left homeless.

The U.S. Geological Survey said the earthquake was centered about 19 kilometers (12 miles) southeast of Sigli, a town near the northern tip of Sumatra, at a depth of 17 kilometers (11 miles). It did not generate a tsunami. Aftershocks have rattled the area.

The world's largest archipelago, Indonesia is prone to earthquakes due to its location on the Pacific "Ring of Fire," an arc of volcanoes and fault lines in the Pacific Basin. The 2004 quake and tsunami killed a total of 230,000 people in a dozen countries, most of them in Aceh.

Wright reported from Jakarta. Associated Press writers Niniek Karmini and Ali Kotarumalos in Jakarta contributed to this report.

This story has been corrected to show that the name of the Aceh disaster mitigation agency official is Sulaiman instead of Iskander.

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US Marine Pilot Dead After Japan Fighter Crash (AFP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

AFP

Tokyo (AFP) – A US Marine Corps pilot whose F/A-18 crashed into the Pacific Ocean has been confirmed dead, a US official said Thursday.

Japanese rescuers earlier said they had found the missing pilot, whose plane crashed off the coast of Japan on Wednesday, but they would not say if he was alive.

Marine Corps spokeswoman Captain Sarah Burns said the pilot had been "pronounced deceased," and she identified him as Captain Jake Frederick.

"Our deepest condolences go out to the family and friends of the pilot. The cause of the crash is still unknown," Burns said.

Earlier Thursday, Japanese and US rescuers said they had expanded their search following the accident, which

happened some 90 kilometres (56 miles) off the coast of southwestern Kochi prefecture.

Japan dispatched four ships and eight planes to assist in the rescue operation, it said.

Another jet was also flying on the same mission, Japan's defence ministry said.

The crashed plane was assigned to the US Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, one of the main US military bases in Japan, which hosts tens of thousands of US military personnel.

The accident came as US Defence Secretary Ashton Carter visited Japan as part of his last Asian tour.

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Japan Ratifies Pacific Trade Pact That Trump Plans To Dump (AP)

Friday, December 9, 2016

Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe won parliamentary approval Friday for ratification of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, despite U.S. President-elect Donald Trump's plan to withdraw from the 12-nation trade pact.

Upper house lawmakers approved the TPP on Friday, heeding Abe's calls to push ahead with it despite Trump's rejection of the free-trade initiative championed by President Barack Obama.

Abe's ruling Liberal Democratic Party has an ample majority in both houses of parliament. Ratification of needed regulatory revisions by the Cabinet is expected soon.

The market opening measures required by the trade pact are seen as a way for Abe to push through difficult reforms of the agricultural and health sectors. So far, Abe has made scant progress on a slew of changes he has proposed to help improve Japan's lagging productivity and competitiveness.

Trump has vowed to take steps to exit the pact right after he takes office.

A U.S. withdrawal would kill the trade pact unless its terms are revised. The agreement between the dozen members requires both the U.S. and Japan to join to attain the required 85 percent of the group's total GDP since the U.S. economy accounts for 60 percent of that total, and Japan less than 20 percent.

After expending political capital to fight vested interests fearful of market opening and reforms likely to be required by the trade pact, Abe and other leaders in Asia have bemoaned the impending loss of the U.S. as TPP flag bearer.

"We want to carry this out and expect others will follow suit," Abe recently told a parliamentary committee.

An opposition lawmaker, Eri Tokunaga, derided Abe's insistence on going ahead with ratification as "egocentric."

"There is basically zero chance of this coming into effect since the next president, Trump, plans to leave it," Tokunaga told fellow lawmakers Friday.

Leaders in New Zealand and several other countries have said they still hope to find a way to rescue the initiative.

The TPP was meant to help give the U.S. a leading role in setting trade rules reaching beyond tariffs and other conventional trade barriers. It's possible demise could spur faster progress on another, much less discussed trade agreement called the RCEP, or Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. That trade grouping includes no countries from the Americas but all the big hitters in Asia: China, India, Japan, South Korea as well as Australia, New Zealand and the 10 members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

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SOUTH & CENTRAL ASIA

Defense Secretary Carter Makes Surprise Visit To Afghanistan (Burns, AP)

Friday, December 9, 2016

Associated Press

By Robert Burns

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan (AP) — U.S. Defense Secretary Ash Carter on Friday made an unannounced visit to Afghanistan to consult with military commanders and deliver a pre-holiday pep talk to U.S. troops.

It is Carter's last planned trip to Afghanistan before handing off his Pentagon responsibilities to his designated successor, retired Marine Gen. James Mattis. Carter is scheduled to meet later in the day with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani.

The U.S. has about 10,000 troops in Afghanistan to train and advise Afghan security forces combatting a resilient Taliban insurgency. U.S. special operations forces are hunting down al-Qaida and Islamic State militants.

Carter's visit comes amid concerns that despite improvements in Afghan government defenses, Taliban forces are gaining leverage and are continuing to use neighboring Pakistan as a sanctuary. By U.S. estimates, the Afghan government controls slightly less than two-thirds of the country's population.

The Taliban holds sway over about 10 percent, and the remainder of the population is “contested.”

U.S. commanders have praised Afghan soldiers for taking the lead in battles against the less-well equipped Taliban, but they have been suffering heavy casualties across the country.

Prior to Carter’s arrival, his press secretary, Peter Cook, said Carter wants to get a full rundown on operations. “In his meetings with senior Afghan officials, the secretary will discuss the growing capabilities and resilience demonstrated by Afghan security forces in recent months,” Cook said. “He will also discuss ongoing efforts to continue building Afghan combat capacity including aviation.”

President Barack Obama had planned to reduce U.S. troop numbers to about 1,000 by the time he left office in January, but he scrapped that approach in the face of Taliban gains.

The U.S. military has been in Afghanistan since it led an invasion force in October 2001 to overthrow the Taliban regime. The U.S. has suffered more than 2,200 deaths in Afghanistan, including more than 1,800 killed in action, since the war began.

President-elect Donald Trump has not said how he will approach the Afghanistan problem but has denounced what he calls U.S. nation-building projects.

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Sri Lanka To Sell 80% Stake In Strategically Placed Harbor To Chinese (Fairclough, Jayasinghe, WSJ)

Port of Hambantota on country’s southern coast lies along important trade route linking Middle East and Asia
Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Wall Street Journal](#)

By Gordon Fairclough And Uditha Jayasinghe

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

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He Was The Voice Of A Generation In Pakistan. Then Pop Singer Junaid Jamshed Found God (Bengali, Sahi, LAT)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Los Angeles Times](#)

By Shashank Bengali And Aoun Sahi

He burst into the national imagination with a stylish mane and sparkling eyes, riding a motorcycle through green fields and singing a patriotic pop song set to lively synthesizer beats.

Junaid Jamshed was the voice of a generation of Pakistanis in the 1990s, as the country emerged from a decade of Islamist policies that had stifled liberal music and culture. His band’s song “Dil Dil Pakistan” (“Heart Heart Pakistan”) became a second national anthem, its upbeat video aired endlessly on television in an era before satellite channels or YouTube.

But Jamshed was uncomfortable with fame, and after a decade as a pop icon he ditched his stonewashed jeans for clerical robes and joined an Islamist evangelical movement. The transformation astonished his fans. But in many ways Jamshed’s life encapsulated the long struggle in Pakistan — an overwhelmingly Muslim nation of 180 million people — between secularism and orthodox Islam.

An earlier version of this story misspelled music fan Siddique Farooqi’s last name as Farooqui.

The 52-year-old Jamshed was returning from a preaching tour Wednesday when the twin-engine Pakistan International Airlines plane he was flying in crashed into a hillside, killing all 48 passengers and crew members aboard.

As Pakistani authorities opened an investigation into the crash, Jamshed’s death set off a wave of nostalgia for his pop career and his band, Vital Signs, the country’s first commercially successful music act. The fresh-faced foursome provided the soundtrack to an era of social and economic liberalism that began after another plane crash, in 1988, killed the pro-Islamist military ruler Gen. Mohammad Zia ul-Haq. 1999 album by Jamshed

“After that whole decade of Zia, suddenly everything was open,” said Fasi Zaka, a newspaper columnist and radio host. “We had huge hope for the future and felt that things could only go up from there.

“The way these guys captured the cultural zeitgeist of the moment, it’s hard to underestimate that,” he said. “In the consciousness of a whole generation of Pakistanis, Junaid Jamshed has been an icon.”

Out of the Islamist laws and strict morality of the Zia days, “Dil Dil Pakistan” was a ray of light. A traditional tune about love of country — the opening lyric is “Such land and sky, where

to go but here?” — it featured Jamshed’s soulful voice and a jaunty Western beat that few Pakistanis had ever heard.

“We still remember that pop singer with the clean-shaven face, wearing leather jackets and jeans, with a soft and melodious voice,” said Farrukh Bashir, a senior producer with Pakistani state-run television who knew Jamshed since 1988. “He influenced a generation of youth during the last days of dictatorship of Zia. He revived pop music in Pakistan.”

The band touched the hearts of young Pakistanis with songs such as “Saanwli Saloni,” an ode to dark-skinned women in a culture where fair skin is seen as more beautiful. Its sound reached across the Pakistani diaspora, winning fans among the children of immigrants in the United States and Britain.

“Growing up as a first-generation Pakistani American, it was Junaid Jamshed who made me proud to listen to and follow the pop music scene from my parents’ homeland,” said Siddique Farooqi, a 36-year-old marketing director in Long Island, N.Y.

Farooqi, who was 8 on a visit to Pakistan when he first heard Jamshed, said the country had “lost a national treasure.”

The son of an Air Force officer, Jamshed moved on to pursue a solo career. But a decade after his debut, the country’s musical tastes were changing and Jamshed began to struggle financially. He disappeared from the pop music scene in 2001.

In the consciousness of a whole generation of Pakistanis, Junaid Jamshed has been an icon.

— Fasi Zaka, columnist and radio host “Dil Dil Pakistan” (unofficial video)

Roughly two years later he resurfaced as a prominent member of Tablighi Jamaat, an extremely conservative Sunni Muslim missionary movement. He still sang, but only naats, plaintive poems that praise the Prophet Muhammad, set to faint orchestral accompaniment.

He found a new fan base and a new career as an Islamic entrepreneur, selling CDs of his religious songs, podcasts, pilgrimages to Mecca and even a clothing line featuring modest fashions for men and women.

Longtime admirers struggled to reconcile the fresh-faced pop icon with the bearded evangelist.

“Most people I know really came to dislike him and saw him as a hypocrite,” said Tooba Masood, a journalist in the port city of Karachi. “He didn’t use any women to model his clothes. He used mannequins, because he felt it was wrong for women to model.”

Suddenly, a heartthrob who once had women throwing themselves at his feet began making headlines for what one

commentator called “moderate misogyny.” He was criticized for arguing that females shouldn’t drive and for saying: “A woman is a diamond. Diamonds are meant to be hidden.”

In 2014, a flippant remark about the Prophet Muhammad’s wife — Jamshed said she faked an illness to get the prophet’s attention — spurred blasphemy allegations from hard-line religious groups that forced him to flee temporarily to London.

His death brought a new surprise for many former fans: Flying alongside him was a woman described in media reports as his second wife, with whom he had three children. Polygamy is legal for Muslim males in Pakistan but widely seen as a sign of hard-core conservatism.

The reaction to his death has underscored the gulf between secular and religious Pakistanis. On social media, old fans have reminisced about his music and ignored his turn toward Islam, while devout Muslims have praised him for leaving “a lucrative music career for the sake of Allah.”

Jamshed voiced no regrets about renouncing his earlier career. About a decade ago, Masood and her brother ran into Jamshed at the airport in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and asked for his autograph, saying they loved “Dil Dil Pakistan.”

“He said something like, ‘Please forget I used to sing,’” Masood recalled. “And he walked away.”

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WESTERN HEMISPHERE

Biden Says World Will Look To Liberal Trudeau (Gillies, AP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

Associated Press

By Rob Gillies

OTTAWA, Ontario (AP) – Outgoing U.S. Vice President Joe Biden hailed Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and German Chancellor Angela Merkel as genuine leaders during a time when they are in short supply at a state dinner in his honor in Canada on Thursday night.

Biden said he’s never since Europeans engaged in as much self-doubt as they are now and said there are more challenges to the liberal international order in any time since the end of World War II.

“The world is going to spend a lot of time looking to you Mr. Prime Minister,” Biden told a crowd of Canadian dignitaries. “Viva la Canada because we need you very, very badly.”

Biden noted there’s a lot of soul searching going in the United States and Europe.

“There are periods when the number of genuine leaders are on a continent are in short supply and when they are in heavy supply,” Biden said. “We’re going to get through this period because we are Americans and Canadians.”

Biden will meet again with Trudeau on Friday and also speak to Canada’s 10 premiers about climate change, which he called the most “consequential issue of our generation.”

Trudeau’s Liberal government is poised to agree with the provinces on a carbon tax. His government is worried what the new Trump administration will mean for North American efforts to combat climate change. Trump has tweeted that “global warming was created by and for the Chinese in order to make U.S. manufacturing non-competitive.”

Biden said he knew Justin’s father, late Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau. Biden said Pierre reached out to him after Biden lost his wife and daughter in a car accident. Trudeau looked touched when Biden said “You’re a successful father when your children turn out better than you.”

Biden also joked about the young Trudeau’s looks.

“I remember when I was eye candy,” Biden said to laughs.

Trudeau also paid tribute Biden in a week of tributes for the 47th vice president. Biden was honored for more than two hours by Republicans and Democrats in the Senate on Wednesday. Biden also made news this week when he said he’s not ruling out running for president in 2020.

It’s the second state dinner for the two countries this year. Obama hosted Trudeau for a state dinner in March. Obama also visited Ottawa in June and spoke in the Canadian Parliament.

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Canada Wonders, If U.S. Balks, Is Carbon Pricing Still The Answer (Austen, NYT)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

New York Times

By Ian Austen

OTTAWA — When Prime Minister Justin Trudeau meets on Friday with the leaders of Canada’s provinces and territories to work out a national carbon pricing plan, Donald J. Trump will also be in the room, in a manner of speaking.

The president-elect has expressed skepticism about climate change, support for the fossil fuel industry and a desire to pull the United States out of the Paris climate accord. That has raised a big question for Canada: Can it move forward with a carbon policy if America is headed in the opposite direction?

Mr. Trudeau certainly wants to push ahead. His government wants every province and territory to adopt a plan to reduce carbon emissions by putting a price on them — either through a tax on fossil fuels or a cap-and-trade system of emission allowances for industry. If they refuse to do one or the other voluntarily, he has warned, the national government will impose a plan on them.

Many of Mr. Trudeau’s political rivals argue that it would be irresponsible to move ahead now with carbon pricing in Canada if the United States will not be doing the same thing. But carbon-tax proponents say the opposite, that Canada could gain a competitive advantage by acting before its much larger neighbor.

The only regional leader who has balked publicly is Brad Wall, the premier of Saskatchewan. He has emerged as the effective head of an informal group that says having Mr. Trump in the White House must mean no carbon taxes in Canada.

Carbon pricing “is very risky for us to do, especially when our biggest trading partner is not going to do it,” Mr. Wall said in an interview last week. “It does not mean that we’re not concerned, or we don’t want to move on climate change. I just think there’s an orthodoxy that’s grown up around carbon pricing: ‘If you don’t care about carbon pricing, you don’t care about the earth.’”

But next door to Saskatchewan, in the oil-producing province of Alberta, Shannon Phillips, the environment minister, is equally adamant that Mr. Trump’s election makes no difference to Canada’s decision. “On Nov. 7, the American price on carbon was something like zero,” she said. “So Nov. 8 changes very little.”

Mr. Trudeau said in early October that the provinces would have to introduce a minimum carbon price of 10 Canadian dollars per metric ton (about \$6.80 a ton) starting in 2018. Over the next five years, that would quintuple.

Several provinces are already well down that road. The carbon emissions tax in British Columbia is now about 30 Canadian dollars per metric ton, and Christy Clark, the premier, has said it will be raised. Quebec, Ontario and Manitoba have all agreed to cap-and-trade systems linked to that of California; in Quebec, that has created an effective carbon price of about 19 Canadian dollars a ton.

Mr. Wall, who leads the conservative Saskatchewan Party, initially objected to carbon pricing in part to protect his province's relatively small coal mining industry and its coal-fired power plants. The province has been trying to deal with carbon from those plants a different way, by physically capturing and storing it, an effort that has proved costly and is off to a slow start. Even so, Mr. Wall got the Trudeau government to agree to let some of the coal-fired plants keep operating after a national phaseout date of 2030, as long as the province substantially lowers its overall emissions from power plants.

Now Mr. Wall's chief worry is the Bakken oil field, which straddles the American border. If Saskatchewan has a carbon tax and the United States does not, Mr. Wall said, the oil companies working the field "will literally go a mile and drill in North Dakota."

Several economists say that worry is misplaced. Aside from ignoring Saskatchewan's advantages over North Dakota, most notably its pipeline network, they said Mr. Wall was exaggerating the impact of carbon taxes on investment decisions.

For the oil industry, "the carbon price is really a rounding error," said Andrew Leach, an environmental economist at the University of Alberta in Edmonton. "I don't mean to say that it's nothing," he added, noting that some oil operations will feel its effects more than others. "But relative to oil prices, it's small."

Mr. Leach, who was part of a group that proposed climate measures to the provincial government of Alberta, estimates that they will add about \$2.50 to \$3 in American dollars to the price of a barrel of crude oil from Alberta's oil sands, after adjusting for tax write-offs.

The main opposition party in the federal Parliament, the Conservatives, say that carbon pricing will jeopardize the future of Canadian industry, which generally exports most of its production to the United States.

"By far, the United States is our biggest trade and investment partner, and they are also our biggest competitor," said Ed Fast, a former cabinet minister who is now the Conservative spokesman in Parliament on climate issues. "Carbon pricing at this time is going to be devastating to our economy. Some people are in denial."

Before Mr. Trudeau's election in November 2015, the Conservative-led government under Prime Minister Stephen Harper withdrew the country from international commitments on climate issues, saying they were unrealistic. Mr. Trudeau campaigned on a promise to reverse that policy.

Like Mr. Wall, Mr. Fast would prefer to focus on cutting emissions with new technology rather than with taxes or cap-and-trade. But proponents of carbon pricing say the new technologies will only be developed and used if carbon prices force companies to act.

Dave Sawyer, an economist with EnviroEconomics, a consulting firm in Ottawa, said that long before the American election, policy makers in Canada were assuming that the United States would not move ahead soon on carbon pricing.

"So what has Trump changed? Not a lot," Mr. Sawyer said.

He noted that most of the existing provincial carbon policies were intended to not have much effect on industrial plants. "You're imposing costs on a new factory," he said, adding that by doing so, the provinces were pushing new factories to be more efficient and keep other operating costs lower, potentially giving them an edge over plants in the United States.

Elyse Allan, chief executive of General Electric Canada, told an energy-industry group shortly after the election of Mr. Trump that carbon pricing was "now a fact of life in Canada" and would swiftly force productivity improvements.

"When viewed through this lens," Ms. Allan said, "carbon pricing moves from threat to opportunity."

Mr. Sawyer said the advent of a Trump administration would not force Canada to change course on climate policy, but it might slow the pace a bit.

"Canada has moved rapidly in the last two years at the federal and provincial level at implementing a whole series of stringent policies," he said. "So Canada's gotten a little bit ahead of everyone else right now. It doesn't mean stopping, it doesn't mean getting a little more aggressive. Canada has to pause and take stock, basically."

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Cuba's Surge In Tourism Keeps Food Off Residents' Plates (Ahmed, NYT)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

New York Times

By Azam Ahmed

HAVANA — For Lisset Felipe, privation is a standard facet of Cuban life, a struggle shared by nearly all, whether they're enduring blackouts or hunting for toilet paper.

But this year has been different, in an even more fundamental way, she said. She has not bought a single onion this year, nor a green pepper, both staples of the Cuban diet. Garlic, she said, is a rarity, while avocado, a treat she enjoyed once in a while, is all but absent from her table.

"It's a disaster," said Ms. Felipe, 42, who sells air-conditioners for the government. "We never lived luxuriously, but the comfort we once had doesn't exist anymore."

The changes in Cuba in recent years have often hinted at a new era of possibilities: a slowly opening economy, warming relations with the United States after decades of isolation, a flood of tourists meant to lift the fortunes of Cubans long marooned on the outskirts of modern prosperity.

But the record arrival of nearly 3.5 million visitors to Cuba last year has caused a surging demand for food, causing ripple effects that are upsetting the very promise of Fidel Castro's Cuba.

Tourists are quite literally eating Cuba's lunch. Thanks in part to the United States embargo, but also to poor planning by the island's government, goods that Cubans have long relied on are going to well-heeled tourists and the hundreds of private restaurants that cater to them, leading to soaring prices and empty shelves.

Without supplies to match the increased appetite, some foods have become so expensive that even basic staples are becoming unaffordable for regular Cubans.

"The private tourism industry is in direct competition for good supplies with the general population," said Richard Feinberg, a professor at the University of California, San Diego, and specialist on the Cuban economy. "There are a lot of unanticipated consequences and distortions."

There has long been a divide between Cubans and tourists, with beach resorts and Havana hotels effectively reserved for outsiders willing to shell out money for a more comfortable version of Cuba. But with the country pinning its hopes on tourism, welcoming a surge of new travelers to feed the anemic economy, a more basic inequality has emerged amid the nation's experiment with capitalism.

Rising prices for staples like onions and peppers, or for modest luxuries like pineapples and limes, have left many unable to afford them. Beer and soda can be hard to find, often snapped up in bulk by restaurants.

It is a startling evolution in Cuba, where a shared future has been a pillar of the revolution's promise. While the influx of new money from tourists and other visitors has been a boon for the island's growing private sector, most Cubans still work within the state-run economy and struggle to make ends meet.

President Raúl Castro has acknowledged the surge in agricultural prices and moved to cap them. In a speech in April, he said the government would look into the causes of the soaring costs and crack down on middlemen for price

gouging, with limits on what people could charge for certain fruits and vegetables.

"We cannot sit with our hands crossed before the unscrupulous manner of middlemen who only think of earning more," he told party members, according to local news reports.

But the government price ceilings seem to have done little to provide good, affordable produce for Cubans. Instead, they have simply moved goods to the commercial market, where farmers and vendors can fetch higher prices, or to the black market.

Havana offers stark examples of this growing chasm.

At two state-run markets, where the government sets prices, the shelves this past week were monuments to starch — sweet potatoes, yucca, rice, beans and bananas, plus a few malformed watermelons with pallid flesh.

As for tomatoes, green peppers, onions, cucumbers, garlic or lettuce — to say nothing of avocados, pineapples or cilantro — there were only promises.

"Try back Saturday for tomatoes," one vendor offered. It was more of question than a suggestion.

But at a nearby co-op market, where vendors have more freedom to set their prices, the fruits and vegetables missing from the state-run stalls were elegantly stacked in abundance. Rarities like grapes, celery, ginger and an array of spices competed for shoppers' attentions.

The market has become the playground of the private restaurants that have sprung up to serve visitors. They employ cadres of buyers to scour the city each day for fruits, vegetables and nonperishable goods, bearing budgets that overwhelm those of the average household.

"Almost all of our buyers are paladares," said one vendor, Ruben Martínez, using the Cuban name for private restaurants, which include about 1,700 establishments across the country. "They are the ones who can afford to pay more for the quality."

By Cuban standards, the prices were astronomic. Several Cuban residents said simply buying a pound of onions and a pound of tomatoes at the prices charged that day would consume 10 percent or so of a standard government salary of about \$25 a month.

"I don't even bother going to those places," said Yainelys Rodriguez, 39, sitting in a park in Havana while her daughter climbed a slide. "We eat rice and beans and a boiled egg most days, maybe a little pork."

Mrs. Rodriguez's family is on the lower end of the income ladder, so she supplements earnings with the odd cleaning

job she can find. With that, she cares for her two children and an infirm mother.

Trying to buy tomatoes, she said, "is an insult."

Another mother, Leticia Alvarez Cañada, described what it was like to prepare decent meals for her family with prices so high. "We have to be magicians," she said.

The struggle is somewhat easier now that she is in the private sector and no longer working for the government, she said. She quit her job as a nurse to start a small business selling fried pork skin and other snacks from a cart. Now she earns about 10 times more every month.

"The prices have just gone crazy in the last few years," said Mrs. Cañada, 41. "There's just no equilibrium between the prices and the salaries."

While many Cubans have long been hardened to the reality of going without, never more than during what they call the "Special Period" after the collapse of the Soviet Union, a new dynamic that has emerged in recent months threatens the nation's future, experts warn.

"The government has consistently failed to invest properly in the agriculture sector," said Juan Alejandro Triana, an economist at the University of Havana. "We don't just have to feed 11 million people anymore. We have to feed more than 14 million."

"In the next five years, if we don't do something about it, food will become a national security issue here," he added.

The government gives Cubans ration books to help provide staples like rice, beans and sugar, but they do not cover items like fresh produce. Tractors and trucks are limited and routinely break down, often causing the produce to spoil en route. Inefficiency, red tape and corruption at the local level also stymie productivity, while a lack of fertilizer reduces yield (though it keeps produce organic, by default).

Economists also argue that setting price ceilings can discourage farmers and sellers. If prices are set so low they cannot turn a profit, they argue, why bother working? Most will try to redirect their goods to the private or black market.

"From the point of view of the farmer, what would you do?" asked Dr. Feinberg, the California professor. "When the differentials are that great, it requires a really selfless or foolish person to play by the rules."

Paladares sometimes go directly to farms to buy goods, and even provide farmers seeds for specialty products that do not ordinarily grow in Cuba, like arugula, cherry tomatoes and zucchini.

Most acknowledge that they distort the market in some ways, and this year the government stopped issuing licenses for

new restaurants in Havana. But some restaurant owners argue that it is the government's responsibility to create better supply.

"It's true, the prices keep going up and up," said Laura Fernandez, a manager at El Cocinero, a former peanut-oil factory converted into a high-priced restaurant. "But that's not just the fault of the private sector. There is generally a lot of chaos and disorder in the market."

On the outskirts of Havana, Miguel Salcines has cultivated a beautiful farm. Rows of tidy crops stretch toward the edge of his modest 25 acres, where he employs about 130 people.

Though he grows standard products on behalf of the government, there is no product he is more excited about than his new zucchini. A farmer for nearly 50 years, he had never grown the crop before, but planted a batch two months ago.

Now, the vegetables are coming into shape, the spots of bright orange flowers visible amid the green plumage. He knows this crop is not for the regular market, or for the government. It is like the arugula he grows.

It is for the tourist market and, by extension, the future.

"We are talking about an elite market," he said. "The Cuban markets are a market of necessity."

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Mexican Leftist Senators Defend Battering Trump Pinata (AP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) – Senators from Mexico's leftist Democratic Revolution Party are defending a private party at which they took turns whacking a pinata in the shape of U.S. President-elect Donald J. Trump.

Pinatas are a traditional part of Christmas festivities in Mexico, and the party's leader in the Senate says it was just a bit of holiday fun.

In a video, Sen. Miguel Barbosa can be heard telling his colleagues to "send a greeting to Donald" before hitting the figure with a stick.

Those present also chorused an anti-gay chant traditionally yelled by Mexican soccer fans that has made the national team subject to fines.

A former Mexican ambassador to the U.S. calls the incident "regrettable." Arturo Sarukhan writes that "we need professionalism, seriousness and statesmanship to face the challenges that are coming."

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Mexico General Says Army Not Happy With Law-Enforcement Role (AP)

Friday, December 9, 2016

[Associated Press](#)

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Mexico's top military officer said Thursday that the army is uncomfortable with the law-enforcement role it was given a decade ago when the government launched an offensive against drug cartels.

The defense secretary, Gen. Salvador Cienfuegos, said the army's presence was supposed to be temporary while new police forces were built, but that hasn't happened.

Many local police in Mexico are corrupt, poorly trained or unreliable.

"We would love the police forces to do their job ... but they don't," Cienfuegos said.

"Ten years ago it was decided that the police should be rebuilt, and we still haven't seen that reconstruction," he said. "To sum it up, there are a large number of deaths that shouldn't be happening, there is a lack of commitment on the part of a lot of sectors. This isn't something that can be solved with bullets; it takes other measures and there hasn't been decisive action on budgets to make that happen."

The army has both been the target of attacks by criminals but also has been accused of killing unarmed suspected cartel gunmen.

Cienfuegos said at a year-end meeting that the army needs clearer rules to govern its work in supporting civilian law enforcement, like rules of engagement and the appropriate use of force. Congress has been considering legislation, but has not yet passed it.

"If you want us to go back to our bases, fine, I'll be the first to raise both my hands," Cienfuegos said. "We didn't ask to be here. We don't like it here. None of us here today went go to school to chase criminals."

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Bolivian Official Breaks Silence About Air Crash In Colombia (AP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Associated Press](#)

LA PAZ, Bolivia (AP) — A Bolivian aviation official who signed off on the flight plan for a chartered aircraft that crashed in the Andes is breaking her silence and accusing her bosses of trying to stage a cover-up.

In a letter made public Thursday, Celia Castedo said she didn't have the authority to stop the doomed flight from Santa Cruz, Bolivia, to Medellin, Colombia.

The crash killed 71 people, including members of a Brazilian soccer team heading to the finals of the Copa Sudamericana tournament.

Castedo said that a day after the Nov. 28 crash her superiors pressured her to modify an internal report that she claims details how she warned the airline that the short-range jetliner didn't have enough fuel to safely make that long a flight.

Bolivian officials have said Castedo has been suspended from her post while she is being investigated for her role in the crash. She has sought asylum in Brazil.

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SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Ghana's Opposition Candidate 'Confident' He's Won (AFP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[AFP](#)

Accra (AFP) — Ghana's opposition candidate Nana Akufo-Addo told a cheering crowd on Thursday he was "confident" he's won the presidential election, despite the official results not yet being released.

Speaking to a rowdy crowd of New Patriotic Party (NPP) supporters gathered at his private residence, Akufo-Addo said he believed he had defeated long-time rival and incumbent John Mahama.

"We the NPP are quietly confident that we have won a famous and historic victory," Akufo-Addo said, calling for his

supporters to be patient and peaceful while the electoral agency tallies the results.

"It's going to be an anxious time, I know, until the results are formally declared, but we have been through this before and we should be able to go through it again," Akufo-Addo said.

"We will await the electoral commission to give us the formal, final details.

"This is a time we will have to remain very calm and very focussed – the eyes of the world are on us."

The election had been blighted by sporadic outbursts of violence in a country otherwise known as a beacon of freedom and democracy in Africa.

Ghana closed most of its voting stations on Wednesday evening, but the Electoral Commission has been slow to release the results, with local media reporting that the NPP has secured the lead over Mahama's National Democratic Congress (NDC) party.

The Electoral Commission said on Thursday evening that they had received preliminary results from 90 of out 275 constituencies, but only published the results for 25 of them.

"Please be patient," commission head Charlotte Osei said at a press conference. "Accuracy is more important than speed."

Both PeaceFM and CitiFM claimed Akufo-Addo was leading the vote count.

Election observers have called on the commission to publish the results faster in order to lay to rest suspicions that the vote may be rigged.

Akufo-Addo, 72, is likely making his final bid for the presidency after two previous failed attempts while Mahama, 58, is running for a second term of office.

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11 More Political Prisoners Released In Gambia (AP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Associated Press](#)

BANJUL, Gambia (AP) – In Gambia, 11 more people who were jailed for peacefully protesting have now been released on bail, said a human rights group.

They were the last of those arrested after demonstrations in April and May of this year. Their release comes a week after Gambia's longtime ruler lost elections and agreed to step aside after 22 years in power.

President-elect Adama Barrow has vowed to release all political prisoners and already 31 others have been released on bail since the Dec. 1 vote.

Sabrina Mahtani, West Africa researcher with Amnesty International, said Thursday that the release of the prisoners is "another step forward for justice" in Gambia. She said people should not forget other Gambian political prisoners still languishing in jail.

Outgoing President Yahya Jammeh is accused of arresting, jailing and killing his opponents to solidify his hold on power.

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Gambia's New Leader Claims Military's Support (AFP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[AFP](#)

Banjul (Gambia) (AFP) – Gambia's President-elect Adama Barrow vowed Thursday to set up a South Africa-style truth commission as he claimed the army's support after his surprise election in the west African nation.

Barrow, whose shock victory this month ended the 22-year rule of Yahya Jammeh, said the country's chief of the defence staff had called to pledge the army's backing.

"He said the security of this nation is assured by the armed forces," said the 51-year-old estate agent. "He said he was loyal to President Yahya (Jammeh) because he was the elected president.

"He said now that I am elected in to office by the Gambian people, he will support me," he added.

Barrow was elected as president of the smallest country in West Africa after he beat incumbent President Yahya Jammeh in the December 1 polls.

Asked if he will prosecute those accused of human rights violations over the last 22 years, Barrow said: "We will look at what was happening in the past.

A "Truth and Reconciliation Commission is very important here and we have seen it happened in South Africa. We will establish a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to look at the past."

The UN envoy to West Africa Mohamed Ibn Chambers said last week that the United Nations will help the incoming government to establish such a commission.

Barrow said he had not yet met the outgoing president, but said his officials were working on the arrangements.

“This transition issue is a new thing in Gambia and both teams (the ruling party and opposition) are not experienced on it,” he said, adding that he hoped to set a date for his inauguration “very soon.”

Latest official figures gave Barrow 43.29 percent of the votes in the presidential election, while Jammeh took 39.64 percent. The turnout was at 59 percent.

Meanwhile Thursday a Gambian appeal court granted bail to 11 political activists detained since April for holding rare protests, a judicial source said.

Their lawyer Antouman Gaye noted that they were members of the United Democratic Party (UDP), of which Barrow was the presidential candidate.

UDP founder and leader Ousainou Darboe, who was jailed in July for taking part in a protest, was freed on bail with 18 others on Monday, as part of their ongoing appeal against three-year sentences.

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Somali Political Leaders OK Presidential Polls For Dec. 28 (Guled, AP)

Friday, December 9, 2016

[Associated Press](#)

By Abdi Guled

MOGADISHU, Somalia (AP) – Somalia’s political leaders say they have agreed to hold presidential polls on Dec. 28 after three delays and amid allegations of bribery, fraud and voter intimidation.

Presidential polls had been pushed back to Nov. 30, but the electoral commission last month announced they would be in December instead.

In a statement issued after political stakeholders met late Thursday, Somali leaders said they expected a new parliament to elect a speaker on Dec. 22 before parliament members elect a president Dec. 28.

The delays reflect the challenges of holding elections in this Horn of Africa nation riven by clan rivalries and threatened by Islamic extremists, al-Shabab, opposed to Western-style democracy.

Somalia’s president is not elected by popular vote. Some 14,000 delegates selected by their clans elect parliament members, who elect the president.

Officials have said voting for members of the upper house is almost complete, while that for the lower house is just past the halfway mark.

Somalia has been trying to rebuild after recently establishing its first functioning central government since 1991, when warlords overthrew a longtime dictator and plunged the impoverished nation into chaos.

The election delays have worried some in the international community, which has expressed interest in having the votes carried out this year.

But some clans and candidates have continued to file complaints over the process. Allegations of corruption and manipulation abound, leading to warnings by the electoral commission that some elected seats may be nullified because of allegations that candidates paid bribes to sway voters.

Opposition leaders have insisted that the ongoing process to elect lawmakers is marred by fraud in favor of the current administration’s hand-picked members.

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Angola Awaits Successor To Long-Ruling Leader Dos Santos (AFP)

Friday, December 9, 2016

[AFP](#)

Luanda (AFP) – Angola is expected to formally announce the end of President Jose Eduardo Dos Santos’ controversial 37-year rule Saturday, and name a successor to lead the ailing African oil-producing country.

News of the veteran leader’s impending retirement, announced on state radio on December 2, has made front page news in Angolan newspapers all week.

But the ruling Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), in power since 1975, has officially remained silent on the matter.

On Saturday, on the 60th anniversary of its founding, the party is expected to confirm that Dos Santos, 74, will not seek another term as president in the 2017 party elections.

It will also likely announce that he will be succeeded as head of the party by his current defence minister, Joao Lourenco, 62.

Angola does not directly elect a president, but rather the leader of the winning party automatically becomes head of state.

In all likelihood, the retired general Lourenco will succeed Dos Santos — one of the longest ruling leaders in Africa — after the party elections next August.

The departure, announced in a closed-door meeting of the MPLA's central committee last week, does not come as a complete surprise.

Dos Santos himself announced in March his intention to end his political career.

"President Dos Santos had been planning to step down in 2018," said Alex Vines, Africa program director at the British think tank Chatham House.

"But I think a combination of Angola's economic conditions and less good health brought his plans forward."

After years of spectacular growth thanks to an oil boom, like many crude-producing nations Angola has suffered a sudden downturn in the last two years due to a prolonged drop in oil prices.

Last week, national oil company Sonangol, managed by Dos Santos' daughter Isabel, announced it would not be paying out dividends to the state this year — a first for the country's main source of foreign currency.

– 'Nothing will change' –

While it will be a new page in the history of Angola, the departure of the former Marxist guerrilla fighter is unlikely to shake up the running of the country.

This is to the chagrin of critics who have been denouncing Dos Santos' "dictatorship" for years.

"Nothing will change with people who, when they could have, didn't dare — whether out of fear or self-interest — to make a difference," said journalist William Tonnet, a critic of Dos Santos.

Expected successor Lourenco is an ex-artillery general who was trained in the former Soviet Union. He is seen as a true son of his party, as is interior minister Bornito de Sousa, who is expected to become his deputy.

"These are two apparatchiks, two pure products of the party who remain under its control," said Benjamin Auge of the French Institute of International Relations.

"The room to manoeuvre will be extremely limited. They will defend the president's record, without starting a revolution."

However, Angola-watchers notice both men do not have ties to the oil industry, a sector considered to be closely guarded by the president's family.

"Joao Lourenco is one of those rare leaders in the MPLA who hasn't dirtied his hands in this corruption business," said activist Nuno Alvaro Dala, who was recently convicted and then pardoned for an alleged coup attempt.

Some have suggested that Dos Santos's retirement was purposefully instigated by a hostile faction within the MPLA.

The announcement could be "the expression of discontent within the party, particularly over the position of the president's children," said Didier Peclard, a professor at the University of Geneva.

"If that were the case, then hypothetically it could be a way of precipitating a transition."

Award-winning journalist and writer Rafael Marques refuses to believe this, and disputes the idea of a more palatable faction within the inner circle of the MPLA.

"Angolans will move from one dictator to the next," he said. "Change is not coming tomorrow."

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Zuma Defies Calls To Quit As Rural Premier Bloc Has His Back (BLOOMPOL)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Bloomberg Politics](#)

South African President Jacob Zuma has warded off calls to resign over the scandals that have marred his administration and spread dissent in the ruling party largely thanks to a bloc of politicians known as the "premier league" that has his back.

With urban voters deserting the ruling African National Congress, Zuma, 74, is increasingly counting on the backing of the premiers of three rural provinces. When cabinet ministers pressed Zuma to resign at the party's National Executive Committee last month, Free State Premier Ace Magashule said they should either quit or be fired, according to two people who attended the meeting. Magashule didn't answer calls seeking comment.

"There is a reciprocal relationship between Zuma and the three premiers," said Mcebisi Ndletyana, a politics professor at the University of Johannesburg. "They were propped up by Jacob Zuma so there is a certain level of personal loyalty to him." Both Magashule and David Mabuza of Mpumalanga province became premiers within days of each other in May 2009 after Zuma took office as president.

Some analysts see the lobby formed by the premiers and their allies in the ANC's youth and women wings as powerful

enough to determine not only how long Zuma will stay in office but who will succeed him. The front-runners in the contest are the president's ex-wife, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, 67, and Cyril Ramaphosa, the 64-year-old deputy president who's backed by the nation's biggest labor federation. **Succession Battle**

"It's a virtual alternative superstructure within the ANC in which some of the provinces and the leagues – youth, women, veterans – combine their forces to constitute the major force lining up for the succession battle," said Susan Booysen, a professor at the University of the Witwatersrand's School of Governance in Johannesburg.

Besides Magashule and Mabuza, the group includes the premier of North West province, Supra Mahumapelo. The three men deny they're in a battle for control of the ANC, which Nelson Mandela led to power at the end of white minority rule in 1994. They say they represent South Africa's "maize corridor," because their poorer, rural regions rely on corn production.

"There is nothing called the 'premier league,'" Mabuza said in an interview. "The fear emanates from our past, that we always approached things in the past in a factional way, and people believe if these three are grouping together, probably they want to approach things in the same factional way." **Grassroots Work**

The three provinces, with about 29.5 percent of the ANC's membership according to the party's latest figures, are closely allied to the leadership in Zuma's home province of KwaZulu-Natal, which represents 20.5 percent and should send the most delegates to the conference that chooses a new leader in December next year.

"They seem to be well-based in the grassroots structures of the ANC, compared to their opponents who prefer to play in the media space," said Ralph Mathekga, a political analyst at the Mapungubwe Institute of Strategic Reflection in Johannesburg. "The 'premier league' tends to do the hard work on the ground."

Local elections in August confirmed the ANC's growing dependence on its rural base. While the party's support ebbed across the urban-rural divide, it lost most in the cities, ceding control of the capital, Pretoria, and the main economic hub of Johannesburg in the nation's richest province, Gauteng. The loss of metropolitan areas, which also included Nelson Mandela Bay in the Eastern Cape, strengthens the hands of rural leaders inside the party.

"They are now pushing to take power from the metros," Booysen said. "We know that the metros are decidedly anti-Zuma."

Credit Risk

Zuma's seven years in office as president has been marred by a succession of scandals and policy missteps that have weighed on the rand and put the nation's investment-grade credit rating at risk. A year ago he backtracked on a decision to replace Nhlanhla Nene as finance minister with a then little-known lawmaker after the rand and government bonds plunged.

The Constitutional Court found in March that he'd breached his oath of office by refusing to comply with a directive from the nation's graft ombudsman to repay taxpayer money spent on upgrading his private home.

Before stepping down as the nation's graft ombudsman in October, Thuli Madonsela called for a judicial inquiry into allegations that Zuma allowed the Gupta family, who are his friends and in business with one of his sons, to influence cabinet appointments and state contracts. Both Zuma and the Guptas deny any wrongdoing.

Through it all the "premier league" has stuck by Zuma.

ANC Control

Its goal is "to capture the ANC itself and try and control it," said Solly Mapaila, deputy secretary-general of the South African Communist Party, an ANC ally that has criticized Zuma.

When Tourism Minister Derek Hanekom and several other cabinet members urged Zuma to step down at the party's National Executive Committee, they were echoing complaints by civil-rights groups and opposition parties that he isn't fit to hold office.

Zuma responded by saying a western plot and opposition collaborators were behind the bid to oust him, a line analysts say is attractive to the "premier league" and the ANC's youth and women's wings.

"They represent a sentiment of new nationalism that the ANC pushes very hard," said Booysen. It's a new "patriotism, of anti-Western, anti-foreigner sentiment."

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Britain's Finance Chief Sees More Trade With South Africa (AP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) – The finance chief of Britain says he sees big opportunities to build on trade ties with South Africa, which is Britain's biggest export market in Africa.

Philip Hammond, whose title is chancellor of the exchequer, spoke Thursday in Cape Town during an overseas tour to

reassure global partners ahead of Britain's planned departure from the European Union.

"We see huge opportunities to build on what is already a very substantial collaboration, the U.K. is the biggest investor in South Africa's economy, a key trade partner," said Hammond, while visiting a project to encourage financial technology startups. "As we look to the global economy to see our future in the wider world, we certainly want to build on those established platforms that we have both for investment and for trade."

Bilateral trade between Britain and South Africa reached nearly 8 billion pounds in 2015.

After South Africa, Hammond is to visit Japan and South Korea.

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Liberia Asks UN To Extend Mission For Another Year (AFP)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[AFP](#)

Monrovia (AFP) – Liberia's government has asked the United Nations to extend its peacekeeping mission in the west African country for another year, until the next president takes office.

"Liberia's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Lewis Brown, on behalf of his Government, is proposing one year for the extension of the United Nation's Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)," the president's office said in a press release sent to AFP on Thursday.

Liberians will be going to the polls next year to elect a new president, as Ellen Johnson Sirleaf ends her second and final term.

Government forces and rebel groups raped, maimed and massacred hundreds of thousands of people during two conflicts between 1989 and 2003.

UN peacekeepers, first deployed in October 2003, largely ensured the country's security until the end of June when they handed over responsibilities to retrained domestic forces.

Only 1,800 of the UNMIL forces, which peaked at 15,000, remain ahead of a UN Security Council decision in December on whether to pull out its remaining personnel.

"The country has made substantial progress but there is still a long way to go," Brown said in the government statement.

In September, UN assistant secretary-general for peacekeeping operations, El Ghassim Wane, said that "peace remains fragile" in the African nation.

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Nigeria Looks To Farming As Oil Boom Fades And Hunger Sets In (BLOOM)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[Bloomberg News](#)

Nigeria is turning to farming as dwindling oil income has driven the economy to the brink of its first full-year contraction in more than two decades and more people go hungry.

The government plans to capitalize the state-owned Bank of Agriculture Ltd. with 1 trillion naira (\$3.2 billion) so it can lend to farming projects at less than half the commercial rate. It's also working with the African Development Bank and World Bank to set up staple crop-processing zones with the electricity and roads needed to attract more private-sector money.

The West African nation, which grew almost all the food it consumed and topped global palm-oil and ground-nut production in the 1960s, ignored farming when petrodollars started flowing, leaving it dependent on crude for 90 percent of export earnings and the bulk of government revenue.

The nation spent more than 1 trillion naira importing food last year, according to the statistics bureau's data on foreign trade, and an income squeeze caused by the fall in crude prices and output is forcing the government to diversify its economy. Poor yields and war disrupting agriculture in the northeast has left 37 percent of children in Nigeria malnourished, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Audu Ogbah said. The country is Africa's most-populous with 180 million people.

"It's only agriculture that's going to feed us and employ more of us, not oil," Ogbah said in an interview on Dec. 5.

Nigeria is sub-Saharan Africa's biggest importer of wheat, sugar and rice, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Other food imports range from fruit to tomato paste. Exporting Surplus

Farming in Nigeria, which consists mostly of crops such as cocoa, of which it is the world's fourth-largest producer, cassava, rice and palm oil, makes up about a quarter of the economy, and employs 70 percent of the working population,

according to the World Bank. The industry expanded in the first nine months of 2016, while factory output and mining, which includes oil, shrank. Gross domestic product will probably contract 1.7 percent this year, according to the International Monetary Fund.

The government aims to use its farming campaign to kill two birds with one stone – achieve self-sufficiency for most consumed foods and boost its foreign-currency position by reducing imports and exporting surplus farm produce.

“It’s time to return to the farms, and never ignore agriculture again,” said Muyi Ladoja, the chief executive officer of Real Plantation, which has 3,000 hectares (7,410 acres) of palm-oil plantations at its 13,000-hectare farm in Nigeria’s southern Cross Rivers State. “The potential is there and still huge.”

The processing zones the government is setting up with the AfDB will help to reduce the cost of doing business for food-manufacturing companies, the Abidjan-based lender’s president, Akinwumi Adesina, said in an interview on Dec. 5. Palm-oil companies including Presco Plc, PZ Wilmar and Real Plantation Ltd. as well as as rice producers like Dangote and Alluvial Group are expanding to plug supply deficits even as dire infrastructure could make it tough to meaningfully boost output. ‘Beyond Money’

“It goes beyond money,” Musa Tarimbuka, divisional head of agriculture at Fidelity Bank Plc in Lagos, said by phone. “The government has to address many more things about post-harvest losses, infrastructure, improving farmers’ knowledge and getting the qualified personnel to manage these programs rather than politicizing them.”

The government will distribute 110 subsidized rice mills with a capacity of between 30,000 and 60,000 metric tons each, according to Ogbah. This comes in addition to a Central Bank of Nigeria-backed deal of loans in the rice-growing north western states of Kebbi and Zamfara to supply millers in Lagos, the nation’s commercial hub, that could help cut imports of the cereal by about 10 percent this year, Ogbah said. Nigeria consumes about 5.2 million tons of rice per year, of which 2.1 million tons is imported, according to data from the USDA.

“There are challenges such as inadequate infrastructure in Nigeria, which makes the cost of production very expensive,” Dimieari Von Kemedi, managing director of rice producer Alluvial Group said, by phone from Delta State. “Investments nevertheless are increasing in Nigeria’s agriculture, and will increase at an even faster rate if government can help fix these infrastructure and access to credit problems.”

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Giraffes, Towering And Otherworldly, Are “Vulnerable” To Extinction (Healy, NYT)

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[New York Times](#)

By Patrick Healy

The majestic giraffe, the world’s tallest land mammal and a prime attraction at zoos worldwide, is threatened with extinction because of illegal hunting and a loss of its habitat, according to a report published on Thursday by an international monitoring group.

The giraffe population has declined by 40 percent over the past three decades and now stands at about 97,600, according to the findings by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, which designates endangered species.

While the largest giraffe populations reside in national parks and reserves, those protected areas have proved to be inadequate, one of several alarming conclusions about the animals’ future in the group’s latest Red List of Threatened Species report.

“While global attention has been on threats to elephants and rhinos, giraffes have been off the radar, and we’ve been losing them in significant numbers,” said Liz Bennett, the vice president for species conservation for the Wildlife Conservation Society, which was not involved in the report. “People and governments need to start acting to save giraffes, fast.”

With their heights of up to 20 feet and their stunning necks, which are typically about six feet long, giraffes have long been the stuff of dreams — for children who love to draw them and for adults who retain an awe for the otherworldly creatures. Their tongues can extend a foot or more, making feeding times an especially popular sight at zoos and on safari.

Yet the animals’ rare size and regal visage have made them a prime target of poachers in Africa, who drop steel-wire snares from tree canopies or stalk and shoot giraffes with rifles, wildlife experts say.

The threat to giraffes is so great that the Red List upgraded the species from the “least concern” category to “vulnerable,” skipping over the intermediary “near-threatened” designation. Graver categories include “critically endangered,” “extinct in the wild” and, ultimately, “extinct.”

The animals are divided into nine subspecies; according to the Red List report, five have decreasing populations, three are on the increase, and one is stable.

One bright spot: The numbers of West African giraffes are on the rise, numbering about 400 now, up from 50 in the 1990s. This remains the smallest of the subspecies.

Asked if it was possible for giraffes to become extinct in the wild in the next 20 years if nothing is done, Derek Lee, an ecologist who contributed to the Red List report, paused for several moments during a phone interview on Thursday from Tanzania. He then said, "I think we'd see drastic declines at the very least."

Giraffes are found mostly in southern and eastern Africa, with smaller populations in West and Central Africa. Some of those populations are particularly vulnerable because of war and other civil unrest in countries on the Continent, like Sudan.

Poaching and the loss of habitat are "equally dangerous threats that vary in degree from place to place," said Dr. Lee, who is a founder of the Wild Nature Institute. While governments and organizations could take stronger actions against poaching by enforcing laws and animal protection rules, habitat loss can be harder to stop because it involves curbing economic activity, such as land development, mining and scavenging.

"These are problems everywhere for giraffes," Dr. Lee said. "You need to stop both threats."

The threat to giraffes is not expected to affect their numbers at zoos in New York and other cities around the world, wildlife specialists said, because zookeepers have a good record helping the animals with reproduction.

Still, zoo leaders are likely to consider changing signs at their exhibits to stress the animals' vulnerability to extinction as a way to raise public awareness.

"That would be the best way to get the word out to people that we need to do more to protect these animals," said Dr. Bennett of the conservation society, which runs the Bronx Zoo, the New York Aquarium and other zoos in the city.

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NETWORK TV NEWS COVERAGE

ABC: John Glenn-Death. [ABC World News Tonight](#) (12/8, lead story, 2:30, Muir, 14.63M) reported, "Good evening, and it's great to have you with us here on a Thursday night. And we begin with the passing of a true American hero. Former astronaut, war hero and US senator from Ohio, John Glenn, has died. The first American to orbit the Earth. He was the last surviving member of the original Mercury Seven astronauts. A symbol of the American spirit. His nearly five-hour flight solidifying America's place in the Space Race with the Soviet Union, giving the country a

much-needed victory at the time. Once asked how he'd like to be remembered, Glenn said he'll, quote, 'leave that to the other people.' And so, we begin with ABC's David Wright." ABC (Wright) added, "He was a pioneer and a patriot. Launched into history with this iconic sendoff from mission control." Unidentified Speaker: "Godspeed, John Glenn." Wright: "Later, John Glenn confessed he actually didn't hear that phrase as Friendship 7 lifted off." John Glenn, astronaut: "Zero-G, and I feel fine. Capsule is turning around. Oh, that view is tremendous." Wright: "At the height of the Space Race, John Glenn was the first American to orbit the Earth." Glenn: "This is Friendship 7, reading you loud and clear." Wright: "Glenn was easily the most famous of those seven original astronauts. That's him, second in from the right. A decorated Marine Corps pilot in two wars, his wingman in Korea was baseball legend Ted Williams." Glenn: "Say again your instructions, please, over." Wright: "The world held its breath for his mission. When he splashed down safely after three orbits, he was an American hero." Unidentified Speaker: "Welcome to Washington. Welcome back to this planet." Wright: "Colonel Glenn later quit the space program for a career in politics. In the US Senate, he distinguished himself on nuclear arms control issues, in particular. He was still a sitting senator when, at age 77, he returned to space aboard the space shuttle Discovery." Unidentified Speaker: "And liftoff of Discovery, with a crew of six astronaut heroes and one American legend." Wright: "The mission, to study weightlessness on the elderly. John Glenn, now the oldest astronaut ever to orbit. That mission inspired seniors around the world." Glenn: "One thing I promised Annie the day we were married, in addition to our wedding vows, of course, was that I would do everything I could to keep life from being boring." Wright: "Boring, his life was not. In his later years, John Glenn liked to joke that science has yet to come up with a cure for the common birthday. He had 95 of them. Godspeed. David Wright, ABC News, New York."

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ABC: Severe Weather-Snow. [ABC World News Tonight](#) (12/8, story 2, 1:45, Muir, 14.63M) reported, "In the meantime, we move on tonight and to the other news. The deadly storms hitting at this hour. Two separate systems. Pileups across several states. At least three people killed in a massive pileup on I-96 in Michigan. Up to 40 vehicles involved in that chain reaction crash in whiteout conditions there. Heavy snow falling in Buffalo, New York, up to three feet of snow expected. The map tonight showing the arctic blast from the Rockies all the way to the East. Some wind chills plunging to 20 degrees below zero. ABC's Phillip Mena is in Michigan." ABC (Mena) added, "Tonight, along the Great Lakes, the first major snowstorm of the year is wreaking havoc for drivers. A mangled mess of up to 70 tractor trailers

and cars on Interstate 90, just west of Erie, Pennsylvania.” **Unidentified Speaker:** “Watched the guy climb out of this seat.” **Mena:** “Towing company owner Paul Pardo right there, as first responders race to pull victims from the wreckage. Roads going from clear to whiteout in an instant, bringing wrecks all along the Great Lakes, from Ohio to western New York, where snowfall over two inches an hour made it hard to even walk.” **Unidentified Speaker:** “This is a skating rink. Just saw two more go in a ditch.” **Mena:** “On Interstate 96, east of Lansing, Michigan, at least three people were killed in this 40-vehicle, chain-reaction crash that left some of the injured trapped in their cars. The storms, fueled by that arctic blast, moving over the Great Lakes.” **Unidentified Speaker:** “Look at it spin.” **Unidentified Speaker:** “Guys, that’s reaching.” **Mena:** “Powerful enough to spawn this water spout over Lake Erie. That bitter cold air spreading south and east tonight. And David, I’m right by that Michigan highway. Part of the road has reopened, but officials are still asking drivers to stay off of these icy roads. It is going to freeze again tonight, David.” **Muir:** “All right, good advice, Phil, thanks.”

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ABC: Weather Tracking. [ABC World News Tonight](#) (12/8, story 3, 0:45, Muir, 14.63M) reported, “Let’s get right to meteorologist Rob Marciano. He’s in Springville, New York, with more on this system. Rob?” **ABC (Marciano)** added, “David, the snow, as you can see, is blowing sideways. Already a foot on the ground, which means in parking lots like, this mounds are piling up well over my head. Check out the radar. All the Great Lakes, all very warm, all open for business with lake effect. Now Cleveland, you are in it and will continue to be. To the west we go. Portland, winter storm warning up there as that Pacific storm moves into this arctic air, which is going to hang around. Look at the numbers. Tomorrow morning is going to feel like minus 25 in North Dakota, minus two in Minneapolis, nine in Indianapolis, and 20 in Birmingham. That cold does stick around. Lake effect snow warnings here, David, until Saturday.” **Muir:** “Til Saturday. Rob Marciano, perhaps ‘til April.”

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ABC: South Carolina-Prison Break. [ABC World News Tonight](#) (12/8, story 4, 1:25, Muir, 14.63M) reported, “In the meantime, we move next tonight to the dramatic prison break in South Carolina. The new images coming in this evening. Michael Williamson, serving life in prison, breaking free, caught on surveillance here at a Walmart hours after escaping from a maximum security facility. He’s accused of stabbing a female police officer there, and then trying to break into an elementary school later. And you’ll see the new images of that, right here tonight. ABC’s Linzie Janis with how this ends.” **ABC (Janis)** added, “Tonight, that massive 14-

hour manhunt. It’s after dark when authorities discover Michael Allen Williamson is missing from the South Carolina maximum security prison where he was serving a life sentence, possibly escaping in a food truck. The dangerous criminal, convicted of armed robbery and assault with intent to kill, traveled 80 miles to a Walmart, where he is seen in this surveillance image, and is allegedly caught shoplifting. That’s when authorities say he stabs a 26-year-old female officer in the arm and shoulder.” **Unidentified Speaker:** “Officer stabbed at 1326 Bush River Road. Location is Walmart.” **Janis:** “Then, this morning, this exclusive surveillance video shows Williamson trying to get into an elementary school, but the school is locked, and moments later, officers are able to capture him. And David, that officer who was stabbed at Walmart is recovering well and she has been released from the hospital. David?” **Muir:** “That’s encouraging. Linzie Janis with us. Linzie, thank you.”

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ABC: Georgia Police Shooting-Second Officer Dead. [ABC World News Tonight](#) (12/8, story 5, 0:20, Muir, 14.63M) reported, “Also tonight, new developments in the deadly police shooting in Americus, Georgia. Late today, we learned the second officer shot has now died, as well. The intense manhunt for the suspect coming to an end this morning, the SWAT team swarming a home. The suspect, barricaded inside. Police say he took his own life. The two officers were killed responding to a domestic dispute.”

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ABC: Nevada-Armed Student Shot. [ABC World News Tonight](#) (12/8, story 6, 1:35, Muir, 14.63M) reported, “We turn next here to the heated debate over the shooting of a high school student in Nevada. He had a knife. Students were terrified all around him. The 14-year-old boy is seen on camera swinging that large knife, threatening classmates, critically wounded by a school officer. ABC’s Matt Gutman reports tonight, there are growing questions, did the officer have any other options?” **ABC (Gutman)** added, “Tonight, as Reno police investigate a school resource officer’s shooting of this knife-wielding teen –” **Unidentified Speaker:** “Bro, he just shot the kid.” **Gutman:** “– the 14-year-old’s family is saying what you see here wasn’t a thwarted lone wolf attack, but a case of self-defense gone wrong.” **David R. Houston,** family’s attorney: “This should have been a situation that was obviously subject to control by non-lethal means.” **Gutman:** “The family saying the 14-year-old was a troubled boy with special needs.” **Houston:** “You had a very mentally unhinged student attempting to keep people away from him by swinging knives in the air.” **Gutman:** “His father posting on Facebook that his son was merely defending himself against bullies. As the boy slashes at the air, lunging at students, you

can hear voices yell, back up. Seconds later, that officer fires. Today, the school's superintendent commending the response." **Traci Davis**, superintendent, Washoe County School District: "Both of those plans worked flawlessly." **Gutman**: "That boy's lawyer saying he could lose a lung and suffer brain damage. All day, we've been asking the Reno police department whether that school resource officer had non-lethal means at his disposal. So far, David, no response." **Muir**: "Matt Gutman, thank you."

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ABC: Trump-Carrier Jobs. [ABC World News Tonight](#) (12/8, story 7, 1:55, Muir, 14.63M) reported, "Next tonight, President-elect Donald Trump visiting survivors and first responders of the attack at Ohio State University. Mr. Trump also making headlines tonight after launching a new war of words against the union leader at Carrier, the company Mr. Trump just visited to announce more than 1,000 jobs had been saved. That union leader had said the victory wasn't quite what it seemed. Here's ABC's Tom Llamas." **ABC (Llamas)** added, "Tonight, President-elect Donald Trump at Ohio State University, meeting with victims of last week's harrowing campus knife attack by a suspected terrorist." **Donald Trump**, President-elect of the United States: "These were really brave people." **Llamas**: "It comes amid a new battle over another high profile trip: Trump's visit to the Carrier plant. And his announcement he'd convinced the company not to send Indiana factory jobs to Mexico." **Trump**: "And now they're keeping, actually, the number is over 1,100 people, which is so great. Which is so great." **Llamas**: "Turns out, it's really 800 jobs slated for Mexico that were saved, not 1,100. Six hundred Carrier jobs at that factory are still going across the border. Chuck Jones, the union leader representing those workers, says Trump, quote, 'lied his a--off.'" **Chuck Jones**, union leader: "If you are dealing with people's livelihoods, you sure as the world ought to know what the numbers are." **Llamas**: "Less than 20 minutes later, the President-elect firing off these tweets: 'Chuck Jones has done a terrible job representing workers. No wonder companies flee! 'Spend more time working, less time talking. Reduce dues.'" **Jones**: "He overreacted, President-elect Trump did." **Llamas**: "Jones says he's now getting death threats. It's the second time this week Trump has used Twitter to lash out at a critic. One hour after the CEO of Boeing was quoted questioning the President-elect's approach to China, Trump tweeting: 'Boeing is building a brand new 747 Air Force One for future presidents, but costs are out of control. Cancel order!'"

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ABC: Trump-Transition. [ABC World News Tonight](#) (12/8, story 8, 0:30, Llamas, 14.63M) reported, "The

President-elect's battle with the Carrier union leader comes as he picks fast food executive Andrew Puzder for secretary of labor." **Unidentified Speaker**: "Grass-fed beef." **Llamas**: "Puzder's company owns Hardee's and Carl's Jr., best known for these racy ads. He's a vocal opponent of raising the minimum wage to \$10.10 and of expanding overtime pay eligibility to four million Americans. Puzder himself is a millionaire, one of nine millionaires and billionaires named to the Trump Cabinet so far."

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ABC: Trump-The Apprentice. [ABC World News Tonight](#) (12/8, story 9, 0:35, Muir, 14.63M) reported, "And Tom Llamas with us live tonight in Iowa. And Tom, millions of Americans knew Donald Trump long before the presidency from his time with 'The Apprentice.' And you have news tonight, he's going to stay connected to that TV show, even as president?" **ABC (Llamas)** added, "David, MGM, which holds a majority stake in 'The Apprentice,' telling us tonight that the President-elect will remain an executive producer of 'Celebrity Apprentice' while he's in the White House. And a spokeswoman for Trump telling us that we're going to learn additional details of all of his business interests at a news conference next Thursday. David?" **Muir**: "Tom Llamas, our thanks to you again tonight."

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ABC: Hillary Clinton-Harry Reid Tribute. [ABC World News Tonight](#) (12/8, story 10, 0:50, Muir, 14.63M) reported, "Hillary Clinton, meanwhile, is back in the news tonight, in Washington but admittedly, not as she hoped. Secretary Clinton was on Capitol Hill for the first time since losing the election, speaking at a tribute to retiring Senator Harry Reid. It was a rare appearance in public for Mrs. Clinton since the election, and even she used humor to address all of those selfies with supporters she bumped into along the way, even in the woods." **Hillary Clinton**, former Secretary of State: "This is not exactly the speech at the capital I hoped to be giving after the election. But after a few weeks of taking selfies in the woods, I thought it would be a good idea to come out, and I am very grateful." **Muir**: "Mrs. Clinton also taking on the serious subject of fake news after the election, saying it can have, quote, real-world consequences, putting the lives of ordinary people at risk."

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ABC: Aleppo-Syrian Regime Regaining Ground. [ABC World News Tonight](#) (12/8, story 11, 1:55, Muir, 14.63M) reported, "Overseas tonight, and inside Aleppo with our team. The devastated city at the center of Syria's nearly six-year-old civil war. Our team, in fact, in the middle of a fierce fire fight. Syrian forces, backed by Russia, appear on

the verge of seizing total control of rebel-held territory. ABC's Alex Marquardt shows us the carved-out tunnels being used in this fight." ABC (**Marquardt**) added, "For the rebels holding out in Aleppo, this is their desperate last stand. We saw the battle unfold in the historic old city. The government forces have regained most of the territory that the rebels controlled in Aleppo, but as you can see and hear, the fight for this city is very much taking place right in its heart. From the magnificent but battered citadel, Assad regime forces poured heavy fire down onto rebel positions. The rebels firing right back. The fight intensifying, so we backed off the front, through the maze of alleyways and across a square. We're trying to get out of here because now the rebels are lobbing mortars. This World Heritage Site, once a jewel of this country, now a ravaged battlefield. These tunnels have been knocked through the walls so that we don't have to walk in the street and avoid snipers. And here, we find the last shopkeeper in the old city. But his only customers these days, soldiers. He tells us there are just five civilian families left in the old city. A victory for the Assad regime here would be their greatest in years. But after their crippling siege and merciless bombardment, it would come at an extraordinary cost. Alex Marquardt, ABC News, Aleppo." Muir: "Our thanks to Alex and the team in Syria tonight."

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ABC: Earthquakes-California, Solomon Islands. [ABC World News Tonight](#) (12/8, story 12, 0:15, Muir, 14.63M) reported, "To the index, and a pair of earthquakes striking today. In northern California, a magnitude 6.5 quake centered about 104 miles from the town of Ferndale. No injuries reported. And off the Solomon Islands, a 7.8 quake. A tsunami watch was issued for Hawaii. It's now been canceled."

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ABC: American Life Expectancy Down. [ABC World News Tonight](#) (12/8, story 13, 0:20, Muir, 14.63M) reported, "For the first time in more than 20 years, Americans are not living longer. Life expectancy dipping slightly for the first time since 1993, from 78.9 to 78.8 years. No single factor, but researchers pointed to a rise in unintentional injuries, which include traffic accidents and drug overdoses, and increase in obesity-related diseases."

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CBS: John Glenn-Death. The [CBS Evening News](#) (12/8, lead story, 4:15, Pelley, 11.17M) reported, "John Glenn, the last of the Mercury Seven astronauts, the first American to orbit the Earth, died late today. He was 95. Back in 1962, America was losing the Space Race. The Soviets had already sent a man into orbit, and just six months after

that, they detonated the world's largest atom bomb. So the pressure and excitement were sky high that February day when Glenn, America's knight in shining spacesuit, compressed himself into Friendship 7. School children held their breath watching black-and-white TVs, Grand Central Terminal stopped in its tracks, eyes glued to a big screen, and President Kennedy waited to exhale at the White House." **Unidentified Speaker:** "Three, two, one, zero, ignition." **Pelley:** "Minutes later, Glenn reported, 'Zero-G, and I feel fine.' It would be his signature catch phrase for the rest of his life – a life of many orbits, remembered now by Nancy Cordes." **Cordes:** "From the cosmos to Capitol Hill, and then back again." **Unidentified Speaker:** "Godspeed, John Glenn." **Cordes:** "John Glenn was an astronaut, a politician, and a patriot." **John Glenn, astronaut:** "I had, I guess you could say, 47 years of federal service. I had 24 years in the Senate, 23 years in the Marine Corps, and space program, and we're proud of this country and what it provides for people. And it's a – I still think we're the example for the rest of the world." **Cordes:** "On February 20, 1962, John Glenn famously became the first American to orbit the Earth." **Glenn:** "Oh, that view is tremendous!" **Cordes:** "When he came back, Glenn became a national hero and received a ticker tape parade in New York City, the largest since World War II." **Glenn:** "I got on this project because it'd probably be near to heaven I'd ever get, and I wanted to make the most of it." **Cordes:** "Years before he made history aboard his Friendship 7 spacecraft, Glenn flew fighter planes for the Marine Corps, racking up 149 missions during World War II and Korea. During his four terms in the Senate, Glenn was a key player in democratic politics, but his hero status didn't translate into national political appeal." **Glenn:** "I believe this nation of ours can be number one in this world." **Cordes:** "And his bid for the presidency in 1984 never really got off the ground. Glenn's political career took another hit in the late 80s, when he and four other senators, known add the 'Keating Five' were investigated for accepting hefty campaign contributions from savings and loan owner Charles Keating. Senator Glenn was eventually cleared of wrongdoing, but a Senate commission found he used, quote, 'poor judgment.' After serving nearly a quarter century on Capitol Hill, Glenn retired from politics in 1998. That same year, nearly 40 years after his first NASA journey, Glenn returned to the stars." **Unidentified Speaker:** "Liftoff of Discovery with a crew of six astronaut heroes and one American legend." **Cordes:** "At the age of 77, the first American to orbit the Earth made history once again, becoming the oldest human ever to travel into space. The nation's senior astronaut returned to Earth with a message for other Americans his age." **Glenn:** "I think too often people set their lives by the calendar. Old folks have ambitions and dreams, too, like everybody else. And why don't they work for them? Why don't they go for it? Don't sit

on the couch some place. That's my attitude." **Cordes:** "And Glenn followed his own advice, staying politically active until the end, publicly opposing the decision to end the space shuttle program. President Obama awarded him the Medal of Freedom in 2012." **Unidentified Speaker:** "John Glenn has streaked through three days." **Cordes:** "Now, as a nation bids farewell to a true hero, Americans for one last time can wish John Glenn, Godspeed." **Unidentified Speaker:** "Godspeed, John Glenn." **Cordes:** "Glenn's famous spacecraft, the Friendship 7, now resides here at the Smithsonian's Air and Space Museum. The White House said today that journey lifted the hopes of a nation, and President-elect Trump, Scott, called him a great pioneer." **Pelley:** "Nancy Cordes for us tonight. Nancy, thank you."

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CBS: Severe Weather-Snow. The [CBS Evening News](#) (12/8, story 2, 1:55, Pelley, 11.17M) reported, "The dangerously cold weather turned deadly today. Blinding snowstorms caused major pileups in the Midwest, and Omar Villafranca is in the deep freeze." CBS ([Villafranca](#)) added, "A snow squall and slick roads are being blamed for the deadly pileup of mangled cars, trucks, and 18-wheelers. Three people were killed, and 11 people injured, after dozens of vehicles careened off of Michigan's I-96, just south of Lansing. Three hundred miles east in Lake County, Ohio, another pileup with as many as 50 vehicles occurred after a truck jackknifed due to icy road conditions. Further east, in upstate New York, the moving system dropped nearly 17 inches of thick, sticky, lake-effect snow an hour north of Syracuse. Roads quickly became treacherous, testing the skills of any driver who dared to get behind the wheel. North Dakota residents are still cleaning up after the one-two punch of snow and howling wind tore through the state. Icy roads were too slippery for even the toughest four-wheelers. Dan Boschee's truck slid into a ditch, but luckily his dad, Reid, showed up to pull him back on track. Tim Kunz of Ace 24-hour Towing, started working earlier this week pulling dozens of cars and even big-rig trucks off the roads around Bismarck." **Unidentified Speaker:** "The guys that are empty, it's been the wind. The wind pushes the trailer off, and then they get jackknifed and stuck." **Villafranca:** "Since Monday, tow trucks have pulled roughly 400 stranded or damaged vehicles into this lot alone. Scott, they expect to stay busy, because there is more snow and sub-zero temperatures in the forecast." **Pelley:** "Omar Villafranca in Bismarck for us."

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CBS: Weather Tracking. The [CBS Evening News](#) (12/8, story 3, 1:00, Pelley, 11.17M) reported, "Now, let's go to Eric Fisher, the chief meteorologist of our Boston station, WBZ. Eric, what's next?" CBS ([Fisher](#)) added, "Well, Scott,

the remarkable thing here is that in November, we had widespread record warmth nearly over all of North America. At the same time, we had major snow and cold across Siberia and Russia. Now, all that air, which was kind of cooking in the dark and the cold, is moving right up over the pole and coming right down into the same areas that were warmest last month. It's a complete 180 in the pattern. How could we be talking about? Low temperatures, certainly sub-zeros, in the northern Plains, the 20s all the way down to Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia tonight. By Saturday morning, we could be seeing 20s all the way down into North Florida. So freeze warnings will likely be needed there. At the same time, another winter storm moving into the Northwest, and this one right now not bringing just mountain snow, but low-land snow. We're getting snowfall into the cities of Seattle and Portland this evening. And, Scott, as we look toward next week, another blast of cold, and it might be even colder than what we're seeing right now." **Pelley:** "Eric Fisher of the great WBZ. Eric, thanks very much."

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CBS: Trump-Carrier Jobs. The [CBS Evening News](#) (12/8, story 4, 1:45, Pelley, 11.17M) reported, "Today, Donald Trump made another Cabinet appointment that shows he is turning America in a new direction. He's nominating a labor secretary who believes that wages are often too high. This comes a day after naming one of the EPA's biggest critics the agency's new administrator. Also today, Dean Reynolds reports the President-elect got into a Twitter battle with a labor boss." CBS ([Reynolds](#)) added, "The President-elect made his second visit to Ohio since his election, and while his stop in Columbus involved soothing the survivors of last week's attack at Ohio State, getting back at any and all critics was still on his mind. The latest to draw Mr. Trump's wrath was Chuck Jones, an Indianapolis union president who had the crust to say that Mr. Trump exaggerated the number of jobs he saved last week at the Carrier Company." **Chuck Jones,** Indianapolis union president: "If, in fact, it was an oversight, you know, it was a big mistake, not knowing how many people's livelihoods you're negotiating to keep here in this country." **Reynolds:** "The President-elect claimed he'd saved 1,100 jobs at Carrier." **Donald Trump,** President-elect of the United States: "By the way, that number's going to go up very substantially." **Reynolds:** "As CBS News reported last week, the actual number is 800 jobs saved. But Mr. Trump did not like being corrected. 'Chuck Jones,' he tweeted, 'has done a terrible job representing workers.' And, 'If United Steelworkers 1999 was any good, they would have kept those jobs in Indiana. Spend more time working, less time talking.' But Jones said his members felt betrayed." **Jones:** "They're upset because they got their hopes up that

they were going to be able to provide for their families for a while, to have it that hope ripped away.”

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CBS: Trump-Transition. The [CBS Evening News](#) (12/8, story 5, 0:50, Reynolds, 11.17M) reported, “Continuing on the workers’ front, Mr. Trump named as his new labor secretary, Andrew Puzder, a fast-food chain CEO and anti-regulation crusader who says raising the minimum wage is bad for business.” **Andrew Puzder**, fast-food chain CEO: “We are not dependent on the government at our company for any particular benefits, so I don’t really think American businesses should be.” **Reynolds**: “Now, in the late 1980s, Andrew Puzder’s then-wife alleged in divorce proceedings that he had physically abused her, and her attorney at the time told us today he had evidence of physical abuse. But, Scott, today, she gave CBS News an email which she said she sent to Puzder just last week which states that she made the whole thing up.”

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CBS: Trump-The Apprentice. The [CBS Evening News](#) (12/8, story 6, 0:30, Pelley, 11.17M) reported, “Dean, you’ve also learned something today about the President-elect’s reality show, ‘The Apprentice.’” CBS (**Reynolds**) added, “Yes, he’s going to continue, apparently, as executive producer of NBC’s show, which will hit the airwaves again next month. It’s not known how much he will be paid for this or what it will mean to have a sitting president on the payroll of a TV show. Scott?” **Pelley**: “Dean Reynolds, thanks.”

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CBS: Aleppo-Syrian Regime Regaining Ground. The [CBS Evening News](#) (12/8, story 7, 2:10, Pelley, 11.17M) reported, “In Syria, the battle for Aleppo has become a rout. Government forces, backed by Russia, have retaken three-quarters of the territory held by rebels. Today, one local politician warned that 150,000 civilians face extermination if they aren’t given safe passage out. Debora Patta is in Aleppo.” CBS (**Patta**) added, “Seven-year-old Abdul Ghani Tarab was eating lunch when a shell hit his home two weeks ago. Shrapnel tore through his body as Syrian and Russian bombs continued to rain down. His parents told us there was only one very basic makeshift clinic still working. It wasn’t equipped to help their son. ‘I felt dead inside. I’m his father,’ he said, ‘and I was helpless.’ ‘He would moan and call for help,’ his mother told us. It took two weeks to get Tarab out of eastern Aleppo to a proper hospital. After being systematically targeted by Syrian military strikes, there are no longer any working hospitals in rebel parts of the city. Medical supplies are all but gone. Doctors and nurses under immense pressure to save as many lives as they possibly

can. Often, they cannot. Overnight, 150 injured people were evacuated from Aleppo’s old city in the opposition-held east, but there are still thousands of civilians trapped inside, in need of urgent medical attention, the kind that is only available in the government-controlled west. Tarab begs for water, but he can’t have any. He is finally about to get life-saving surgery, something he couldn’t get until now. Since the Russian announcement that the Syrians have stopped military operations in eastern Aleppo to allow for civilian evacuation, we can tell you, Scott, that things have quieted down but we’ll have to see if it holds long enough for people to get out safely.” **Pelley**: “Debora Patta in Aleppo. Debora, thank you.”

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CBS: Health-E-Cigarette Warnings. The [CBS Evening News](#) (12/8, story 8, 1:55, Pelley, 11.17M) reported, “The nation’s top doctor is sounding an alarm on e-cigarettes. Here’s our top doctor, Jon LaPook.” CBS (**LaPook**) added, “Seventeen-year-old Tyra Nicola started using e-cigarettes three years ago as a high school freshman.” **Unidentified Speaker**: “I thought they were just water vapor, and a majority of my friends thought the same thing.” **LaPook**: “Dr. Vivek Murthy is the surgeon general.” **Dr. Vivek Murthy**, Surgeon General: “When I’ve traveled the country, Jon, I’ve realized that many people are confused about e-cigarettes. They don’t recognize that these aren’t harmless products.” **LaPook**: “E-cigarettes contain nicotine but not the cancer-causing tar present in traditional cigarettes. Nicotine is a highly addictive drug, and today’s report warns it may harm the developing adolescent brain.” **Murthy**: “The bottom line is that there is no safe use of tobacco products for kids, and those include e-cigarettes.” **LaPook**: “E-cigarette companies have rapidly increased advertising spending from \$6.4 million in 2011 to \$115 million in 2014. Regular e-cigarette use among high school students increased from less than two percent in 2011 to 16 percent last year.” **Murthy**: “What we’ve seen is that the vast majority of kids, seven out of 10, are actually seeing these advertisements. Whether that’s intentional or unintentional, that tells us that we’re not doing a good enough job at protecting kids.” **LaPook**: “Do you think that bubblegum flavor for e-cigarettes is unintentional? Isn’t it targeted right to kids?” **Murthy**: “Well, we do know that flavors have a powerful impact on kids. In fact, 81 percent of kids, when asked why they use e-cigarettes, cite flavors.” **LaPook**: “Dr. Murthy says more research is needed on whether e-cigarettes are a gateway to traditional cigarettes. Industry groups are criticizing today’s report because it does not highlight the possible role e-cigarettes may have in helping people stop smoking.” **Pelley**: “Dr. Jon LaPook. Thank you, doc.”

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CBS: Georgia Police Shooting-Second Officer Dead. The CBS Evening News (12/8, story 9, 0:25, Pelley, 11.17M) reported, "Late today, a second police officer died of wounds suffered in an attack yesterday in Americus, Georgia. Officers Nicholas Smarr and Jody Smith were shot while responding to a domestic disturbance call. The suspect, Minguell Lembrick, fled. He was discovered today hiding in a nearby home. The police say that he shot himself to death as the SWAT team prepared to move in."

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CBS: American Life Expectancy Down. The CBS Evening News (12/8, story 10, 0:20, Pelley, 11.17M) reported, "For the first time in more than 20 years, the life expectancy of Americans has declined to an average 78.8 years. For men, it's fallen to 76.3 years, and for women, it's down to 81.2 years. Heart disease is still the number one killer, but accidental deaths are up."

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NBC: John Glenn-Death. NBC Nightly News (12/8, lead story, 3:40, Hall, 16.61M) reported, "Good evening. I'm Tamron Hall, in for Lester. He was the last of America's first astronauts. John Glenn, the former astronaut and US senator has died in Ohio at the age of 95. Tonight, he is being remembered not just for what he accomplished, but also for what he helped the nation believe about dreaming beyond the stars. Tributes are pouring in tonight, including from President Obama, who said, 'The last of America's first astronauts has left us, but propelled by their example, we know that our future here on Earth compels us to keep reaching for the heavens. On behalf of a grateful nation, Godspeed, John Glenn.' Tom Costello has more on his extraordinary life." NBC (Costello) added, "John Glenn was more than an American hero. For more than half his life, he was a 20th century icon, perhaps best known for what happened on February 20th, 1962." Unidentified Speaker: "Three, two, one, zero." Costello: "The first American to orbit the Earth and put America back in the Space Race with the Soviet Union." John Glenn, astronaut: "Roger, zero-G, and I feel fine. Oh, that view is tremendous." Costello: "The late TJ O'Malley was at the NASA controls that day." Unidentified Speaker: "Range operations, go." Costello: "Until he died, he kept the button he pushed to send Glenn into orbit." Unidentified Speaker: "I hit that engine start button and said, 'May the good lord ride all the way.'" Unidentified Speaker: "Godspeed, John Glenn." Costello: "John Glenn returned to a hero's welcome. And invitations to address Congress." Glenn: "As our knowledge of this universe in which we live increases, may God grant us the wisdom and guidance to use it wisely." Costello: "John Glenn's roots were always firmly planted in Ohio. He was born in Cambridge, went to a

local college, and married his childhood sweetheart Annie. He flew combat missions in World War II, then shot down three MiGs in Korea. And in 1957, a coast-to-coast supersonic record, Los Angeles to New York in less than three and a half hours. Then, the early days of the Astronaut Corps, later immortalized in the movie 'The Right Stuff.'" Frank Van Riper, Glenn biographer: "Glenn was someone who could walk down the street in mid-town Manhattan, and literally have cabbies say, 'Hey, John, how you doing?'" Costello: "After a career in business, Glenn was elected to the US Senate from his home state of Ohio in 1974." Unidentified Speaker: "John Glenn needs you." Costello: "And made an unsuccessful run for the presidency in 1984. Then, in 1998, NASA came calling again. At the age of 77, John Glenn got his wish to return to space aboard the shuttle Discovery." Unidentified Speaker: "Booster ignition, and liftoff of Discovery." Costello: "Astronaut Steve Robinson was on the same mission." Steve Robinson, astronaut: "He savored the whole thing. And he didn't make a big poetic deal about it at all. John Glenn was the most honest and straightforward and clear-thinking individual you can imagine." Costello: "A lifetime of achievement and national service, honored with both the Congressional Gold Medal and the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the country's highest civilian awards." Costello: "John Herschel Glenn, pilot, astronaut, businessman, politician husband, and father. And an American original. Tom Costello, NBC News, Washington."

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NBC: Severe Weather-Snow. NBC Nightly News (12/8, story 2, 2:05, Hall, 16.61M) reported, "We make a turn now to dangerous blasts of winter weather and a deadly pileup today in Michigan, in treacherous whiteout conditions as the so-called 'Siberian Express' sends temperatures plunging. In a moment, Al Roker is here, but first we get details from NBC's Kristen Dahlgren." NBC (Dahlgren) added, "In Michigan today, the deep freeze turned deadly." Unidentified Speaker: "We have OnStar reporting a 30-vehicle crash, with injuries." Dahlgren: "Three people killed, when dozens of cars piled up in whiteout conditions. Traffic snarled for miles." Unidentified Speaker: "Almost collided into an SUV myself." Dahlgren: "Survivors lucky to walk away from the tangled mess." Unidentified Speaker: "The ground was getting wet, compounded with the quick snow squall and white-out, I think were all contributing factors." Dahlgren: "Another multi-vehicle accident near Erie, Pennsylvania shut down parts of Interstate 90 and sent several people to the hospital. In upstate New York, a funnel cloud. Along with blowing snow and slippery roads." Unidentified Speaker: "We had to drive really slow." Dahlgren: "Even the professionals had trouble. Some areas could see more than two feet of this lake-effect snow." Unidentified Speaker: "I'm

going back and I'm going to get back in the house where it's warm." **Dahlgren**: "Out west, another storm system. Places like Salem and Portland, Oregon under a blanket of snow and ice. Schools and city offices closed and flights canceled. An arctic blast hitting hard across much of the country. Walla Walla, Washington, just 16 degrees this morning. Boulder dropped to three, and Casper, Wyoming, a bone chilling 30 below. That's 44 degrees lower than normal. And it's far from over. The polar vortex could plunge temperatures even lower next week. Tonight, the snow piles are growing, along with the realization winter is just getting started. And some places here in upstate New York have already seen more than a foot of snow, Tamron. As for those major pileups, crews say they will be working well into the night to get those cleaned up." **Hall**: "All right, Kristen, thank you very much."

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NBC: Weather Tracking. [NBC Nightly News](#) (12/8, story 3, 1:00, Hall, 16.61M) reported, "Al Roker is here monitoring the forecast. And Al, it's cold but it's about to get dangerous for a lot of people." **NBC (Roker)** added, "That's right. And we've got to get rid of this lake-effect snow that's coming across all five Great Lakes and dumping a lot of snow in a very quick period of time. Through Saturday morning, we expect to see, off the leeward side of Lake Superior, one to two feet. Same in Lake Erie. Up to two feet or more for Lake Ontario. Plus, we've got another big storm coming onshore in the Pacific Northwest. With rain and snow, it's going to be a fast-mover. It's going to continue across the country. So for Minneapolis, Omaha, Green Bay, Chicago, Cleveland, into New York City by Sunday morning, bringing snow and rain and slick roads. An air mass that begins up in Siberia makes its way down into the Plains, 20 to 30 degrees below average, coldest on Wednesday. Next Wednesday in Chicago, six, 34 in Nashville. Thursday in New York City, 29 degrees. And Tamron, winter doesn't start officially for another 13 days." **Hall**: "All right, Al, thank you very much."

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NBC: Georgia Police Shooting-Second Officer Dead. [NBC Nightly News](#) (12/8, story 4, 2:00, Hall, 16.61M) reported, "There is breaking news tonight from Georgia, where we've learned a second police officer has died after an altercation that sent authorities on a massive manhunt to catch a killer. It all came to a dramatic and violent end today. We get more now from NBC's Kerry Sanders." **NBC (Sanders)** added, "Tonight, a Georgia community in mourning. Shortly after Americus, Georgia Police Officer Nick Smarr's flag-draped coffin arrived at the funeral home, word that a second officer had now died. Georgia Southwestern State University Officer Jody Smith, who had clung to life for a day, died in the intensive care unit. The two, best friends."

Chief Mark Scott, Americus, Georgia Police Department: "Jody was there for Nick. He heard him dispatched to that call, he knew he was nearby, and he responded." **Sanders**: "The two cops were childhood buddies, went to the police academy together. Both killed by Minquell Lembrick. Late this morning, following an intensive manhunt, a dramatic conclusion. Twenty-six hours after the gunman shot both officers and went on the run, it ended with a self-inflicted gunshot. The cop killer, desperate and holed up in the back room of a house only three miles from the initial shooting, committed suicide. Lembrick had a lengthy record, 32 pages long." **Vernon Keenan**, Georgia Bureau of Investigation: "He was a convicted felon in possession of a firearm, and he wreaked havoc on this community." **Sanders**: "Investigators say both Smarr and Smith each got off one shot even after they were blindsided by the gunman while responding to a domestic dispute call. The police chief says the incident was captured on a body cam." **Scott**: "It tells us they both did exactly what they were trying to do and what they were supposed to do." **Sanders**: "Both officers were to be married soon. Officer Jody Smith, engaged to his best friend Officer Nick Smarr's sister. Tonight, their families and fiancées here at the hospital are devastated. Tamron?" **Hall**: "Kerry Sanders, thank you."

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NBC: Nevada-Armed Student Shot. [NBC Nightly News](#) (12/8, story 5, 2:00, Hall, 16.61M) reported, "A student remains in critical condition after his alleged role in a terrifying incident at a Nevada high school. Video appears to show him swinging knives before he was shot by a campus police officer, who is now on routine administrative leave. As our Stephanie Gosk explains, it has reignited the debate over how to best protect our nation's schools." **NBC (Gosk)** added, "The scary scene at Hug High School in Reno, police say, started as a fight between students. In a cell phone video, a 14-year-old freshman with a bloodied face swung two knives as students circled and an armed school officer confronted him. The officer fired a single shot. The 14-year-old dropped to the ground." **Unidentified Speaker**: "He just shot the kid." **Gosk**: "Amy Hacinto has two daughters at the high school." **Unidentified Speaker**: "I think the cop did what he needed to do to protect the other students that were around that were in danger at the time." **Gosk**: "Today, the superintendent commended the medical and safety response." **Unidentified Speaker**: "Both of those plans worked flawlessly." **Gosk**: "But a lawyer for the family of the injured student is raising questions about the use of lethal force: 'We believe options were available to law enforcement that were not pursued.' The incident here in Reno fuels an ongoing debate over the level of security needed in our schools, on the rise since the 1999 shooting at Columbine High School. Forty-three percent

of public schools now have some form of security personnel; 16,700 high schools have armed officers at least once a week. This man's son is a friend of the student who was shot." **Unidentified Speaker:** "I think the police are way out of line for having lethal rounds at school." **Gosk:** "But he had knives. He was threatening kids, potentially." **Unidentified Speaker:** "Four thousand volts of electricity from a Taser gun would have dropped that kid." **Gosk:** "Protecting students in moments like this is everyone's priority. But as violence on campuses increases, we still don't agree on the best way to do it. Stephanie Gosk, NBC News, Reno, Nevada."

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NBC: Trump-Transition. NBC Nightly News (12/8, story 6, 1:05, Hall, 16.61M) reported, "Now, to the presidential transition. Another major Cabinet pick from President-elect Trump is drawing scrutiny tonight. This time, his nominee to lead the Labor Department. Meantime, there is new fall-out after the President-elect went after a union boss on social media. NBC's Katy Tur has all the latest." NBC (Tur) added, "On high in Trump Tower, the President-elect is filling out his Cabinet. Today, with an eye on jobs, jobs, jobs. Fast-food billionaire Andrew Puzder is Trump's pick for labor secretary, and another potentially problematic confirmation. The CEO of Carl's Jr. and Hardee's, Puzder said raising the federal minimum wage means cutting jobs." **Andrew Puzder,** CEO of Carl's Jr. and Hardee's: "When you raise the cost of hiring low-skilled and young workers, you really price them out of their jobs." **Tur:** "Puzder is also open to automation, telling Business Insider last spring, machines, unlike people, never take a vacation, they never show up late, and never file suit. Some Democrats called it a war on labor." **Sen. Chuck Schumer,** Senate Minority Leader: "The President-elect's heading in the direction of the bosses, not of the workers."

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NBC: Trump-Carrier Jobs. NBC Nightly News (12/8, story 7, 0:50, Tur, 16.61M) reported, "This, as Trump, who sold himself as a champion of the American worker, is attacking a union leader, tweeting Chuck Jones 'has done a terrible job representing workers,' after Jones accused Trump of lying when he said he saved Carrier jobs from going to Mexico." **Chuck Jones,** United Steelworkers, Local 1999: "The people were probably with the understanding they were going to have a job. Because Trump, Pence, or nobody else said 550 jobs are going to Mexico. We had to announce that the next day so that people would understand." **Tur:** "Trump bragged he saved more than 1,100 jobs, while Jones, who says he's now being threatened by Trump supporters, said the number is closer to 800. Carrier agrees. On the factory floor, mixed emotions. For Jasmine Jones, disappointment after learning her job wouldn't be saved." **Unidentified**

Speaker: "It's like a bombshell. So yeah, it's very disappointing."

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NBC: Trump-The Apprentice. NBC Nightly News (12/8, story 8, 0:20, Tur, 16.61M) reported, "Earlier today, Donald Trump visited Ohio State to meet with the victims of the stabbing there. Tonight, he'll continue his thank-you tour here in Iowa. This, as MGM confirms that Donald Trump will remain as an executive producer of 'The Apprentice' when it returns to air next year. Tamron?" **Hall:** "Katy, thank you very much."

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NBC: Hillary Clinton-Harry Reid Tribute. NBC Nightly News (12/8, story 9, 0:20, Hall, 16.61M) reported, "Hillary Clinton was back in the public eye today after mostly laying low post-election. Clinton received a standing ovation from former Senate colleagues at an event for retiring Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid. She called fake news an epidemic that needs to be addressed and got a laugh when she joked about her recent photo on a hike in the woods."

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NBC: Health-Mumps Outbreaks. NBC Nightly News (12/8, story 10, 2:00, Hall, 16.61M) reported, "We are back now with a health alert. Cases of mumps have hit a 10-year high according to the CDC, and it's spreading on college campuses just as kids are buckling down for finals. And now, new concerns it could spread even more when the students come home for the holidays. Here's NBC's Anne Thompson." **NBC (Thompson)** added, "The mumps virus, the new scourge of American schools. From college campuses in New York --" **Unidentified Speaker:** "Obviously don't share drinks." **Thompson:** "-- to elementary schools outside Dallas." **Unidentified Speaker:** "Mumps is highly contagious, so yes, it's kind of a new wrinkle." **Thompson:** "This mumps outbreak covers almost every state -- 3,832 cases and counting, nearly triple the number last year. With flu-like symptoms and tell-tale swollen glands, mumps is spread by infected saliva, where young people live, play, and learn in close quarters." **Dr. Buddy Creech,** Vanderbilt University Medical Center: "They're sometimes started by those who are under-vaccinated or maybe even unvaccinated, and they're sustained by those who have some waning immunity to the vaccine protection that we're able to afford." **Thompson:** "The vaccine works. The CDC says one dose is 78 percent effective and two doses, 88 percent. But over time, the effectiveness may diminish." **Creech:** "So when you think about college students, it's been 10, 15 years since they had their kindergarten dose of vaccine." **Thompson:** "The University of Missouri is urging its students to get a third dose of the vaccine. It's seen 193 cases this semester, including

freshman Claire Colby.” **Unidentified Speaker:** “My face was swollen, I had a fever.” **Thompson:** “Mumps don’t respond to antibiotics. Claire was confined to her dorm room for five days. Her roommate moved out.” **Unidentified Speaker:** “I think more than anything people are just scared about getting sick because no one has time to get sick right now.” **Thompson:** “To stop the spread, along with vaccinations, doctors say cover your sneeze and cough and wash your hands, to ensure a healthy end to the year. Anne Thompson, NBC News, New York.”

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NBC: In-Flight Phone Calls Proposal. NBC Nightly News (12/8, story 11, 0:25, Hall, 16.61M) reported, “A new debate erupting tonight over whether passengers should be able to make phone calls during flights. The Transportation Department is reportedly proposing rules that would allow each airline to decide whether passengers can make in-flight phone calls, but it would also require airlines to tell customers before they buy a ticket, in case they don’t want to overhear cell phone conversation at 30,000 feet.”

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NBC: American Life Expectancy Down. NBC Nightly News (12/8, story 12, 0:25, Hall, 16.61M) reported, “For the first time in decades, life expectancy has fallen in the US. Americans are now expected to live, on average, 78.8 years, that according to the CDC. That’s a drop of more than a month, the first significant decline since 1993. What’s to blame? The report cites an increase in eight of the 10 leading causes of death, including heart disease and strokes.”

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From: Silverberg, Daniel <Daniel.Silverberg@mail.house.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, January 10, 2017 6:54 PM
To: Winer, Jonathan <WinerJ@state.gov>
Subject: CNN story

RELEASE IN
FULL

Reporting on the briefing, not the underlying allegations.

Intel chiefs presented Trump with claims of Russian efforts to compromise him
By Evan Perez, Jim Sciutto, Jake Tapper and Carl Bernstein, CNN
Updated 6:17 PM ET, Tue January 10, 2017
Intel chiefs inform Trump of Russian claims
Now Playing Intel chiefs inform Trump of Russian claims
Source: CNN

Intel chiefs inform Trump of Russian claims 11:30
(CNN) Classified documents presented last week to President Obama and President-elect Trump included allegations that Russian operatives claim to have compromising personal and financial information about Mr. Trump, multiple US officials with direct knowledge of the briefings tell CNN.

The allegations were presented in a two-page synopsis that was appended to a report on Russian interference in the 2016 election. The allegations came, in part, from memos compiled by a former British intelligence operative, whose past work US intelligence officials consider credible. The FBI is investigating the credibility and accuracy of these allegations, which are based primarily on information from Russian sources, but has not confirmed many essential details in the memos about Mr. Trump. The classified briefings last week were presented by four of the senior-most US intelligence chiefs -- Director of National Intelligence James Clapper, FBI Director James Comey, CIA Director John Brennan, and NSA Director Admiral Mike Rogers.

One reason the nation's intelligence chiefs took the extraordinary step of including the synopsis in the briefing documents was to make the President-elect aware that such allegations involving him are circulating among intelligence agencies, senior members of Congress and other government officials in Washington, multiple sources tell CNN.

These senior intelligence officials also included the synopsis to demonstrate that Russia had compiled information potentially harmful to both political parties, but only released information damaging to Hillary Clinton and Democrats. This synopsis was not an official part of the report from the intelligence community case about Russian hacks, but some officials said it augmented the evidence that Moscow intended to harm Clinton's candidacy and help Trump's, several officials with knowledge of the briefings tell CNN.

The two-page synopsis also included allegations that there was a continuing exchange of information during the campaign between Trump surrogates and intermediaries for the Russian government, according to two national security officials.

Sources tell CNN that these same allegations about communications between the Trump campaign and the Russians, mentioned in classified briefings for congressional leaders last year, prompted then-Senate Democratic Leader Harry Reid to send a letter to FBI Director Comey in October, in which he wrote, "It has become clear that you possess explosive information about close ties and coordination between Donald Trump, his top advisors, and the Russian government -- a foreign interest openly hostile to the United States."

CNN has confirmed that the synopsis was included in the documents that were presented to Mr. Trump but cannot confirm if it was discussed in his meeting with the intelligence chiefs.

The Trump transition team declined repeated requests for comment.

CNN has reviewed a 35-page compilation of the memos, from which the two-page synopsis was drawn. The memos originated as opposition research, first commissioned by anti-Trump Republicans, and later by Democrats. At this point, CNN is not reporting on details of the memos, as it has not independently corroborated the specific allegations. But, in preparing this story, CNN has spoken to multiple high ranking intelligence, administration, congressional and law enforcement officials, as well as foreign officials and others in the private sector with direct knowledge of the memos.

Some of the memos were circulating as far back as last summer. What has changed since then is that US intelligence agencies have now checked out the former British intelligence operative and his vast network throughout Europe and find him and his sources to be credible enough to include some of the information in the presentations to the President and President-elect a few days ago.

On the same day that the President-elect was briefed by the intelligence community, the top four Congressional leaders, and chairmen and ranking members of the House and Senate intelligence committees -- the so-called "Gang of Eight" -- were also provided a summary of the memos regarding Mr. Trump, according to law enforcement, intelligence and administration sources.

The two-page summary was written without the detailed specifics and information about sources and methods included in the memos by the former British intelligence official. That said, the synopsis was considered so sensitive it was not included in the classified report about Russian hacking that was more widely distributed, but rather in an annex only shared at the most senior levels of the government: President Obama, the President-elect, and the eight Congressional leaders.

CNN has also learned that on December 9, Senator John McCain gave a full copy of the memos -- dated from June through December, 2016 -- to FBI Director James Comey. McCain became aware of the memos from a former British diplomat who had been posted in Moscow. But the FBI had already been given a set of the memos compiled up to August 2016, when the former MI6 agent presented them to an FBI official in Rome, according to national security officials.

The raw memos on which the synopsis is based were prepared by the former MI6 agent, who was posted in Russia in the 1990s and now runs a private intelligence gathering firm. His investigations related to Mr. Trump were initially funded by groups and donors supporting Republican opponents of Mr. Trump during the GOP primaries, multiple sources confirmed to CNN. Those sources also said that once Mr. Trump became the nominee, further investigation was funded by groups and donors supporting Hillary Clinton.

Spokespeople for the FBI and the Director of National Intelligence declined to comment. Officials who spoke to CNN declined to do so on the record given the classified nature of the material.

Some of the allegations were first reported publicly in Mother Jones one week before the election.

One high level administration official told CNN, "I have a sense the outgoing administration and intelligence community is setting down the pieces so this must be investigated seriously and run down. I think [the] concern was to be sure that whatever information was out there is put into the system so it is evaluated as it should be and acted upon as necessary."

From: Kavalec, Kathleen A <KavalecKA@state.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, January 10, 2017 6:26 PM
To: Winer, Jonathan <WinerJ@state.gov>
Subject: FW: CNN BREAKING: Intel chiefs presented Trump with claims of Russian efforts to compromise him

RELEASE IN FULL

Official
UNCLASSIFIED

From: News Team Washington [<mailto:newsteam.washington@gmail.com>]
Sent: 10 January 2017 17:24
Subject: CNN BREAKING: Intel chiefs presented Trump with claims of Russian efforts to compromise him

Intel chiefs presented Trump with claims of Russian efforts to compromise him
By Evan Perez, Jim Sciutto, Jake Tapper and Carl Bernstein, CNN

Classified documents presented last week to President Obama and President-elect Trump included allegations that Russian operatives claim to have compromising personal and financial information about Mr. Trump, multiple US officials with direct knowledge of the briefings tell CNN.

The allegations were presented in a two-page synopsis that was appended to a report on Russian interference in the 2016 election. The allegations came, in part, from memos compiled by a former British intelligence operative, whose past work US intelligence officials consider credible. The FBI is investigating the credibility and accuracy of these allegations, which are based primarily on information from Russian sources, but has not confirmed many essential details in the memos about Mr. Trump.

The classified briefings last week were presented by four of the senior-most US intelligence chiefs -- Director of National Intelligence James Clapper, FBI Director James Comey, CIA Director John Brennan, and NSA Director Admiral Mike Rogers.

One reason the nation's intelligence chiefs took the extraordinary step of including the synopsis in the briefing documents was to make the President-elect aware that such allegations involving him are circulating among intelligence agencies, senior members of Congress and other government officials in Washington, multiple sources tell CNN.

These senior intelligence officials also included the synopsis to demonstrate that Russia had compiled information potentially harmful to both political parties, but only released information damaging to Hillary Clinton and Democrats. This synopsis was not an official part of the report from the intelligence community case about Russian hacks, but some officials said it augmented the evidence that Moscow intended to harm Clinton's candidacy and help Trump's, several officials with knowledge of the briefings tell CNN.

The two-page synopsis also included allegations that there was a continuing exchange of information during the campaign between Trump surrogates and intermediaries for the Russian government, according to two national security officials.

Sources tell CNN that these same allegations about communications between the Trump campaign and the Russians, mentioned in classified briefings for congressional leaders last year, prompted then-Senate Democratic Leader Harry Reid to send a letter to FBI Director Comey in October, in which he wrote, "It

has become clear that you possess explosive information about close ties and coordination between Donald Trump, his top advisors, and the Russian government -- a foreign interest openly hostile to the United States."

CNN has confirmed that the synopsis was included in the documents that were presented to Mr. Trump but cannot confirm if it was discussed in his meeting with the intelligence chiefs.

The Trump transition team declined repeated requests for comment.

CNN has reviewed a 35-page compilation of the memos, from which the two-page synopsis was drawn. The memos originated as opposition research, first commissioned by anti-Trump Republicans, and later by Democrats. At this point, CNN is not reporting on details of the memos, as it has not independently corroborated the specific allegations. But, in preparing this story, CNN has spoken to multiple high ranking intelligence, administration, congressional and law enforcement officials, as well as foreign officials and others in the private sector with direct knowledge of the memos.

Some of the memos were circulating as far back as last summer. What has changed since then is that US intelligence agencies have now checked out the former British intelligence operative and his vast network throughout Europe and find him and his sources to be credible enough to include some of the information in the presentations to the President and President-elect a few days ago.

On the same day that the President-elect was briefed by the intelligence community, the top four Congressional leaders, and chairmen and ranking members of the House and Senate intelligence committees -- the so-called "Gang of Eight" -- were also provided a summary of the memos regarding Mr. Trump, according to law enforcement, intelligence and administration sources.

The two-page summary was written without the detailed specifics and information about sources and methods included in the memos by the former British intelligence official. That said, the synopsis was considered so sensitive it was not included in the classified report about Russian hacking that was more widely distributed, but rather in an annex only shared at the most senior levels of the government: President Obama, the President-elect, and the eight Congressional leaders.

CNN has also learned that on December 9, Senator John McCain gave a full copy of the memos -- dated from June through December, 2016 -- to FBI Director James Comey. McCain became aware of the memos from a former British diplomat who had been posted in Moscow. But the FBI had already been given a set of the memos compiled up to August 2016, when the former MI6 agent presented them to an FBI official in Rome, according to national security officials.

The raw memos on which the synopsis is based were prepared by the former MI6 agent, who was posted in Russia in the 1990s and now runs a private intelligence gathering firm. His investigations related to Mr. Trump were initially funded by groups and donors supporting Republican opponents of Mr. Trump during the GOP primaries, multiple sources confirmed to CNN. Those sources also said that once Mr. Trump became the nominee, further investigation was funded by groups and donors supporting Hillary Clinton.

Spokespeople for the FBI and the Director of National Intelligence declined to comment. Officials who spoke to CNN declined to do so on the record given the classified nature of the material.

Some of the allegations were first reported publicly in Mother Jones one week before the election.

One high level administration official told CNN, "I have a sense the outgoing administration and intelligence community is setting down the pieces so this must be investigated seriously and run down. I

think [the] concern was to be sure that whatever information was out there is put into the system so it is evaluated as it should be and acted upon as necessary."

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From: Nuland, Victoria J <nulandvj@state.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, November 29, 2016 10:08 AM
To: Winer, Jonathan <WinerJ@state.gov>
Subject: FW: Thank you

RELEASE IN FULL

They want to pursue some of the things we discussed yesterday, albeit on the system integrity side.

Official
UNCLASSIFIED

From: Silverberg, Daniel [mailto:Daniel.Silverberg@mail.house.gov]
Sent: Monday, November 28, 2016 10:57 PM
To: Nuland, Victoria J
Subject: Thank you

Toria,
It was a delight to speak today, notwithstanding the context. You've been a warrior on these issues, and I look forward to speaking further to preserve and wherever possible strengthen the important work you have done. I'll follow up regarding a possible working group meeting.

All the best,
Daniel

Daniel Silverberg
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From: Winer, Jonathan </O=SBUSTATE/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=JONATHAN WINER49E>

RELEASE IN PART B6

Sent: Tuesday, January 17, 2017 12:26 PM

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B6

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Subject: Jonathan Winer Departure from State Department and Contact Information

Colleagues and friends,

My tenure as Special Envoy for Libya and Senior Advisor for MEK Resettlement formally ends at noon on January 20, 2017, but in practice, I will only be receiving emails at my State address until about noon on January 18, 2017. My post-government contact information is:

Jonathan M Winer

[Redacted]
 [Redacted] (home)
 [Redacted] (cell)
 [Redacted]

Personal
UNCLASSIFIED



STATE DEPARTMENT

NEWS CLIPS

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WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 18, 2017 5:30 AM EST

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SECRETARY OF STATE

The Latest: Kerry Says US Diplomatic Deals Hard To Reverse (AP)

Tuesday, January 17, 2017

Associated Press

DAVOS, Switzerland (AP) – The Latest on the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland (all times local):

4:45 p.m.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry says “I just don’t believe” Donald Trump’s administration will quickly reverse some of the Obama administration’s diplomatic achievements.

Interviewed at his last World Economic Forum as America’s top diplomat, Kerry told New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman that he plans to stay “extremely active and involved” after he leaves office with President Barack Obama this week.

If the Trump administration tries to dismantle the Iran nuclear deal, for example, Kerry said, he would bet that other countries who helped strike the deal would keep it, leaving the United States “the odd-person out. We’ll have injured our own credibility.”

Offering a “message to my friends in Europe,” Kerry said: “Europe’s got to believe in itself.”

Asked what he was most proud of during his tenure, Kerry joked: “Getting here alive.”

12:55 p.m.

The dollar’s strength could lead to financial bailouts in emerging market economies and even an intervention to limit the currency’s rise.

That’s the view of David Rubenstein, co-CEO of The Carlyle Group, a leading private equity firm.

Addressing delegates at the World Economic Forum, Rubenstein said there’s a risk of “potentially another Mexican-style crisis” in emerging markets because many firms that borrowed in dollars won’t be able repay the loans if their earnings are in local currency while the dollar appreciates.

He says there’s around \$4.5 trillion in emerging market corporate debt that is dollar-denominated.

He said there may well have “to be some intervention” to rein in the dollar or “you’re going to have to bail some of these countries out.”

It would be “ironic,” he added to guffaws in the audience, if Mexico had to be bailed out by the incoming Trump administration. The Mexican peso has been one of the biggest fallers against the dollar since Donald Trump’s election.

12:15 p.m.

Anthony Scaramucci, who is part of President-elect Donald Trump’s transition team, says global elites have to get out of their comfort zones and listen to the people if they don’t understand how Trump was elected or why Britain voted to leave the European Union.

At a panel at the World Economic Forum, financier Scaramucci said the richest top 3 percent of the world benefited from the massive stimulus measures enacted by global central banks since the financial crisis and are basically back to where they were in 2007. The remaining people, he said, are “struggling.”

To those among the global elites who don’t understand that post-crisis phenomenon, Scaramucci had a message: “Go to the prairie lands of the United States, or perhaps places in Great Britain or places in Europe. You know the places. Listen to the people. We have to as a collective group of people come up with the right policies.”

12:00 p.m.

Chinese President Xi Jinping is pressing his case for free trade, urging the world to “say no to protectionism” and warning that “no one will emerge as a winner in a trade war.

Xi made the comments Tuesday in an opening address to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, in the first such visit ever by a Chinese head of state to the well-heeled gathering of business and political leaders.

Xi didn’t directly mention U.S. president-elect Donald Trump but cast China as a standard-bearer of free trade amid concerns in some corners that the new U.S. administration may enact more protectionist measures in trade.

The leader of the globe’s second-largest economy said the world must “remain committed to promoting free trade and investment through opening up” and said “pursuing protectionism is like locking oneself in a dark room.”

11:25 a.m.

The chairman and CEO of Bank of America says major companies like his need clear rules before deciding how

much business to maintain in Britain after it quits the European Union.

Brian Moynihan and other top bankers and executives gathered at the World Economic Forum in Davos are eagerly awaiting details about the U.K. exit plans from British Prime Minister Theresa May in a speech Tuesday.

Moynihan, speaking to The Associated Press, said Bank of America is working on “all kinds of scenarios” to possibly shift activities out of London after the so-called Brexit, but insisted “it’s still not clear what that would do, or wouldn’t do.”

He said: “It’s still premature to say what anybody’s going to do until you have one set of rules. London will be an important part of our company no matter what happens with the British economy.”

Noting a mass sense of “dislocation” in the British and U.S. electorate because of fast technological change, he said, “The No. 1 job for the leader of any enterprise, whether civil political or business, is to be responsive to the people they serve.”

11:00 a.m.

An adviser to U.S. President-elect Donald Trump says he received no prior “talking points” to bring up at the World Economic Forum, rebutting concerns in some areas about possible U.S. isolationism ahead.

Anthony Scaramucci, a financier and veteran of the well-heeled annual gathering in Davos, said Trump had told him: “Go and do a good job.’ That’s what he always says, actually, ‘go do a good job.’”

Speaking Tuesday to The Associated Press on a golf-cart shuttle ride through snowy Alpine town, Scaramucci insisted that Trump will be engaged in foreign trade, but “free, fair trade ... he’s not talking about isolationism.”

Chinese President Xi Jinping is due to later deliver the opening speech at Davos.

Asked whether he planned any meeting with the Chinese delegation, Scaramucci said: “We’ll see.”

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As He Heads Back To Boston, John Kerry Sees North Korea And Terrorism As The New Administration’s Main Challenges (Morello, WP)

Tuesday, January 17, 2017

Washington Post

By Carol Morello

John F. Kerry has already started referring to himself as Citizen Kerry.

After 29 years in the Senate, and four years as secretary of state, Kerry is about to return to private life in Boston. When he returns from a four-country trip late Wednesday, he will have traveled a record 1.4 million miles and spent cumulatively a year and half overseas on various diplomatic forays.

But after leaving office, some of the signature policies and accomplishments he is most proud of may be abandoned or subject to significant change. President-elect Donald Trump has suggested he will get tougher on Iran, work with Russia, treat climate change with some skepticism and change the approach to Syria and Israel.

Or maybe he won’t, Kerry suggests, brushing off suggestions the Obama’s administration’s legacy is about to be upended.

“I’ve been around long enough to see the difference between campaigning and governing, and I just don’t know yet what they will do,” he said in an interview in Paris on Sunday after joining diplomats from 70 countries to discuss resuscitating Israeli and Palestinian negotiations.

While declining to talk directly about Trump’s positions, Kerry urged the incoming administration not to take steps that would doom the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, which lifted sanctions against Iran in return for restrictions on its nuclear program. Trump has panned it, and Republicans in Congress have threatened to impose new sanctions.

“I would caution people very strongly against looking for excuses to stir it up or to not comply on our part. I think that would be very damaging to the credibility of the United States,” he said.

He was cautiously optimistic about prospects for peace talks over Syria. Russia has invited the Trump administration to join the talks it is sponsoring with Turkey and Iran later this month, after freezing out the Obama administration.

“I’ve always believed that there was a moment where this would move into a slightly different phase,” he said. “And I think it could well be that that moment could be at hand – not necessarily, not definitively, but I do believe it could be.”

Kerry leaves office at a time when the U.S.-Israeli relationship has been strained by the U.S. decision not to veto a U.N. Security Council resolution condemning Israeli settlements, as well as Palestinian incitement to violence. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the leader Kerry has spent the most

time on the phone with, has openly welcomed Trump getting sworn in.

Kerry said the U.N. resolution, and a speech he made defending it, was prompted by his conviction that the time for a two-state solution to the decades-old conflict is running out, and Israel has ignored U.S. entreaties to rein in settlement growth.

“But if our good friends are just not ready to listen to us when we say we’re having a harder and harder time defending you, it’s getting harder and harder in the international community to defend it, I think that it was really important for us to support our own policy,” he said.

“But I will stand up forever for the truth of the words I spoke about what is happening to Israel and about the choice Israel has.”

Among his main concerns for the future, he said, are the persistence of violent extremism, and North Korea’s nuclear weapons program under its mercurial leader Kim Jong-un.

The way to combat terrorism, he said, is by trying to prevent radicalization by providing more opportunities to young people lacking job prospects and education.

North Korea poses a threat “on a par” with radical extremism, Kerry said. Last year, the United Nations placed the country under the most severe set of sanctions ever. Kerry called for more pressure to be exerted on Pyongyang.

“I think that we’ve done well to get China to agree to several more stringent sanctions measures and to enforce them at the U.N.,” he said. “But we still also believe more has to be done, and we would support rational, thoughtful approaches by the new administration to try to continue what we’ve been doing, which is raising the level of pressure — and it needs to be raised more.”

Kerry showed no concern about filling a void when he wakes up Saturday morning with no urgent crises to address, no phone calls to world leaders to make, no stable of diplomats to direct.

He said he will remain involved with peace and conflict resolution, combatting climate change and the state of the oceans.

“I will miss trying to solve some of these problems very directly as someone who has these incredible resources and talented people to be able to try to do that with,” he said. “And so one of my challenges will be trying to land somewhere in some way that I still have talented people working with me and I’m able to work on some of those kinds of issues that I find rewarding and challenging at the same time.

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EDITORIALS & OP-EDS

Russia Gains When Donald Trump Trashes NATO (NYT)

Tuesday, January 17, 2017

New York Times

Many people in the United States and abroad have consoled themselves by assuming that Donald Trump’s outrageous statements were just politically driven, and he’d temper them once he became president. That thinking seems more wishful than ever when the man chosen to lead the world’s most powerful country keeps saying that two pillars of postwar security and prosperity — the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union — are obsolete.

Mr. Trump’s latest salvo against stalwart American allies came in a joint interview over the weekend with The Times of London and Bild, a German newspaper. His published remarks have angered and shaken America’s closest allies in Europe.

Mr. Trump said NATO was obsolete because it had failed to resist terrorism, and he repeated earlier charges that some of its members were not paying their fair share. He described the European Union as “basically a vehicle for Germany” and predicted that other European nations would probably follow Britain’s lead by leaving it.

Then came potshots at Germany’s chancellor, Angela Merkel, a strong leader who is facing a tough re-election. He called her brave decision to open Germany’s borders to migrants and refugees a “very catastrophic mistake.” He also suggested that he saw no difference between Ms. Merkel and Vladimir Putin, saying he would, at least initially, trust them equally, even though it was the Russian president who meddled with the American election, bombed civilians in Syria, crushed dissent in his own country and invaded Ukraine.

It is puzzling indeed for a president-elect to publicly denigrate leaders of his country’s closest allies as well as an alliance that for 70 years has stood firm against Russian expansion. And Mr. Trump’s criticism of NATO’s response to terrorism showed no awareness of the alliance’s contributions to the fight against the Taliban and Al Qaeda in Afghanistan and the Middle East.

Mr. Trump did say during the interview that “NATO is very important to me,” but in the context of his other remarks, this was hardly enough to blunt the impression that he placed little value on NATO’s historic role as a defender of democracy and its continued usefulness today. Nor did Mr. Trump’s remarks ease concerns that his choices for cabinet members, some of whom seem to have a much firmer grasp of foreign

policy than he does, will have little if any influence on administration policy. During their recent confirmation hearings, Rex Tillerson, the nominee for secretary of state, said he saw value in durable alliances; retired Gen. James Mattis, the defense secretary designate, went even further, asserting that “if we did not have NATO today, we would need to create it.”

Mr. Trump’s comments on the European Union almost took the breath away: “I don’t think it matters much for the United States.” The union has its problems, as Britain’s vote to leave it has shown, but to cavalierly dismiss as unimportant the idea of European integration and the second-largest market in the world is to ignore history and reject the future. Mr. Trump seems eager to help unravel the rules-based international order.

The big winner in all this is Mr. Putin, who has been working assiduously not just to delegitimize American democracy by interfering with the election but to destabilize Europe and weaken if not destroy NATO, which he blames for the Soviet Union’s collapse. Mr. Putin will almost certainly try to persuade Mr. Trump to withdraw American support for NATO’s plans to reinforce its defenses against a newly assertive Russia. As part of that effort, an American convoy crossed into Poland last week; on Monday, the deployment of 330 American Marines to Norway began. Reversing course any time soon would be a huge mistake.

European leaders put on a brave face after the Trump interview. “The best response is European unity,” Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault of France said. A worthy response, but incomplete. The Europeans also need America as a partner. America needs Europe as well.

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Trump’s Cabinet Knows NATO Is Important. It’s Not Clear He Agrees. (WP)

Tuesday, January 17, 2017

[Washington Post](#)

CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY by Donald Trump’s national security nominees last week suggested that the incoming administration would not seek to dismantle the alliances that have undergirded the West — and U.S. global leadership — since 1945. “If we did not have NATO today, we would need to create it,” said defense secretary nominee James N. Mattis. The U.S. treaty commitment to defend its European allies, said secretary of state nominee Rex Tillerson, is “inviolable.”

It is still not clear, however, that Mr. Trump agrees. In an interview published by the Times of London on Monday, he recalled his claim last year that NATO was “obsolete” because it did not fight terrorism (though it does) and

because many of its members did not meet its defense spending guidelines. He then went on to say that “it doesn’t matter” to him whether the European Union exists, predicted more countries will leave it and placed German Chancellor Angela Merkel on par with Russian President Vladimir Putin in meriting his trust. Unsurprisingly, Moscow hailed Mr. Trump’s words, while senior European leaders reacted with alarm.

Ms. Merkel played down the statements, and maybe she’s right: Perhaps Mr. Trump’s words — he also said “NATO is very important to me” — were haphazard and should not be taken seriously. Yet if the president-elect’s intention was to undermine the transatlantic alliance, encourage the disintegration of the European Union and tear down Ms. Merkel as she begins a reelection campaign — an agenda identical to Mr. Putin’s — he could hardly have been more effective.

Russia has already launched a disinformation campaign to discredit Ms. Merkel, using fake-news websites and Internet bots in the same way it targeted Hillary Clinton. Germans might be forgiven for thinking that Mr. Trump’s intervention was designed to enhance that assault. He accused Ms. Merkel of making “a catastrophic mistake” by accepting desperate refugees from the Middle East and said Germany was using European integration as a vehicle for its own interests.

Mr. Trump’s critiques of the European Union are shared by many Europeans. But he is wrong to suggest that the United States has no interest in the community’s survival. In addition to making war between its great powers unthinkable, European integration has helped consolidate democracy and the protection of human rights in countries across the continent, from Portugal to Romania. If it broke up, more nations would drift into the corrupt, autocratic orbit of Russia.

As for NATO, Mr. Mattis was right to tell the Senate Armed Services Committee that it “is the most successful military alliance in modern world history.” It has greatly magnified U.S. power and global influence, even when its members were underspending on their military forces. Without it, the West would have no effective way to contain Russian neo-imperialism.

Ms. Merkel said she will wait to see what Mr. Trump does when he is in office. It’s probably naive to hope that he will modulate his rhetoric. But Americans who value their country’s place in the world, including Mr. Trump’s Cabinet members, should do their best to ensure that he does not act on it. Once destroyed, the West’s alliances will not be easily rebuilt.

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Trump Should Listen To Mattis On NATO (Galston, WSJ)

Weakening ties with America's allies in Europe would be both ignorant and myopic.

Tuesday, January 17, 2017

Wall Street Journal

By William A. Galston

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

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China's Industrial Leap: Ballpoint Pens (Feith, WSJ)

The country's leaders still fetishize a kind of autarky that prevents economic reform.

Tuesday, January 17, 2017

Wall Street Journal

By David Feith

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

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New U.S.-China Rivalry Risks Lethal Confrontation (Browne, WSJ)

Provocations by President-elect Trump over trade and territory could escalate into armed conflict

Tuesday, January 17, 2017

Wall Street Journal

By Andrew Browne

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

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Israel As The Lights Go Out (Cohen, NYT)

Tuesday, January 17, 2017

New York Times

By Roger Cohen

WASHINGTON — The bizarre burst of diplomatic activity on Israel-Palestine in the waning days of the Obama administration has been tantamount to an admission that, on this subject, things only get said too late and when they no longer mean anything. The rest of the time political cowardice in the form of silence prevails.

In a matter of weeks we have had a United Nations Security Council resolution calling on Israel to "immediately cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory," a long speech by Secretary of State John Kerry setting out the Obama administration's parameters for a two-state peace

agreement and defending the American abstention that allowed the U.N. resolution to pass; and a Paris peace conference that urged Israelis and Palestinians, neither of them present, to take concrete steps to get the two-state idea off life support.

None of this piety will change anything on the ground, where settlements continue to grow, the daily humiliations that constitute Palestinian life continue to accumulate, and the occupation that will mark its 50th anniversary this year continues to entrench itself. The only possible change will come with President-elect Donald Trump, whose dalliance with moving the United States embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem amounts to pyromania, and whose choice of ambassador, his sometime lawyer David Friedman, suggests hard-line American support for Israeli settlements.

Trump's thirst for the "ultimate deal" in the Holy Land could not be more far-fetched, however much his son-in-law, Jared Kushner, hones his skills with Henry Kissinger. There's nobody and nothing to work with after a half-century of moral corrosion and progressive estrangement.

Speaking of Kushner, I was told he refused to meet with a senior French diplomat after a demand from Trump Tower that the Paris conference be canceled was ignored. Get used to my-way-or-the-highway diplomacy with team Trump.

U.N. resolution 2334 infuriated Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel, who called it "shameful." He seemed surprised that ignoring Obama's veto of an earlier settlements resolution in 2011 would have consequences. Obama ran out of patience because, despite his forbearance, Israel went right on planning housing for tens of thousands more settlers while absorbing "more than one half of our entire global foreign military financing," in Kerry's words. Gratitude is not Netanyahu's forte.

There was little new in the resolution, given America's consistent opposition to settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, over several decades. In fact, the twinning of criticism of Israel with condemnation under international law of "incitement" — a reference to persistent Palestinian practice — was among the fresher elements. Still, the language was sharp. The resolution called on states to distinguish "in their relevant dealings" between Israel and "the territories occupied since 1967"; and it declared that "The cessation of all Israeli settlement activities is essential for salvaging the two-state solution."

I doubt that solution remains viable. But let's be clear on the settlements. They may or may not constitute a primary cause of the conflict, but they do demonstrate Israel's decades-long commitment to building in a way that makes a viable Palestinian state impossible. You cannot be a Palestinian in

the West Bank watching the steady growth of Israeli settlements, outposts and barriers without concluding that Israel's occasional murmurings about a two-state peace are mere camouflage for a project whose objective is to control all the land in perpetuity without annexing it. Annexation would be awkward; some 2.75 million Palestinians would demand the vote. Better to play games and let millions of strangers squirm.

Kerry's speech was almost three years in the making. He should have made it in April 2014, when his diplomacy collapsed. Obama said no. There were the midterms, then there was the Iran deal to negotiate, so better not to anger Israel further, and finally there was the U.S. election in November. In America there is always a domestic political reason for not doing the right thing on Israel-Palestine.

It's ugly, but then ugliness is having its day.

Kerry finally set out the terms of a two-state peace: secure borders based on the 1967 lines with agreed land swaps; a state for the Jewish people and a state for the Palestinian people where the rights of all citizens (Arabs in Israel, Jews in an eventual Palestine) are upheld; a just solution for Palestinian refugees including compensation and acknowledgment of suffering but without changing "the fundamental character of Israel" — so only very limited return to Israel proper; Jerusalem as "the capital of the two states;" a demilitarized Palestinian state, a full end to the occupation after an agreed transition, and elaborate Israeli security guarantees; an end to the conflict and all outstanding claims along with broader peace for Israel with all its Arab neighbors and a regional security partnership.

Why was this unremarkable formula unsayable for so long? Because cowardice inhabits Washington, Jerusalem and Ramallah: This little diplomatic flurry has been obscene. Kerry was honorable; Obama lacked courage. Netanyahu dismissed the "last twitches of yesterday's world." It is a measure of where we are that tomorrow's may well be worse.

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Theresa May Puts The Exit In Brexit (NYT)

Tuesday, January 17, 2017

[New York Times](#)

In the six months since she came to office charged with carrying out the mandate of the British referendum to quit the European Union, Prime Minister Theresa May has seemed indecisive and ambiguous about how this might be achieved. That ended Tuesday, when she made clear that Britain intends to leave the single market, the central feature of the historic effort to eliminate all barriers to trade across the union and to uphold the free movement of goods, services, capital and — the one Britain could not swallow — people.

Whatever one makes of Brexit, it is critical to ensure that this extraordinarily complex divorce does as little damage as possible to long-term economic and political relations between Britain and the Continent. So Mrs. May's speech is to be welcomed for spelling out her government's intentions on the core issue before it formally triggers the two-year exit process, which the prime minister has said she will do by the end of March.

In effect, Mrs. May confirmed what had become increasingly clear: that the core demands of the Brexiteers — an end to the free movement of the bloc's citizens and to the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice over British law — are incompatible with core tenets of the European Union.

Ending uncertainty at least on that score sent the pound surging. Mrs. May also sought to diffuse a smoldering constitutional clash by pledging to give both houses of Parliament a vote on the final deal. She made no reference, however, to a pending ruling by the supreme court on whether Parliament must vote on the formal notification to the union, and there is no certainty that legislators would support her on either vote.

On the E.U. side, Donald Tusk, the president of the European Council, seemed to sum up the predominant reaction in this tweet:

That may indeed be a measure of our times, that a dollop of realism becomes welcome news. But while Mrs. May took the single market off the table and insisted that Britain would cut its own deals outside the bloc, she said she would still seek to maintain some tariff-free access to European markets. She also said she would seek transitional arrangements for financial services and businesses past the two-year deadline for completing exit talks.

All that may be hard for the union to accept. Its leaders said little, following a practice of avoiding negotiations before Britain starts the exit process. But a Czech official seemed to speak for many in suggesting that Mrs. May was still trying to ask for too much:

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Trump Says Europe Is In Trouble. He Has A Point. (Mallaby, WP)

Tuesday, January 17, 2017

[Washington Post](#)

By Sebastian Mallaby

Sebastian Mallaby is a Post contributor and Paul A. Volcker senior fellow for international economics at the Council on Foreign Relations. He is author of "The Man Who Knew: The Life and Times of Alan Greenspan."

Germany's foreign minister reports "astonishment and agitation." The French president protests indignantly about unsolicited "outside advice." Even Secretary of State John F. Kerry sees behavior that is "inappropriate." President-elect Donald Trump's weekend interview, in which he casually predicted the breakup of the European Union, has certainly attracted attention. But despite the consternation, there is some truth in Trump's message. The E.U., he observed, is dominated by Germany. "People, countries want their own identity," he said.

The most obvious vindication of Trump's warning comes from Britain, whose prime minister, Theresa May, has just laid out her plans for a hard break with the European Union. May could have interpreted June's Brexit referendum differently, seeking the "Norway model" of continued membership in the E.U.'s Single Market even while withdrawing from the E.U.'s political structures. But, to paraphrase Trump, the prime minister evidently believes that Britain must have its own identity. She is determined to curb E.U. migration, even though migrants contribute positively to the economy; she wants out of the European Court of Justice, even though that court has upheld British commercial interests in the past. Combined, these two positions rule out continued Single Market membership. The E.U. is losing its second-biggest economic power.

Britain has always been a semi-attached member of the European Union, so the malaise at the heart of continental Europe is even stronger evidence that Trump is on to something. Ironically, all the pressures that are commonly wheeled out to explain Trump's election are far more evident on the other side of the Atlantic: sluggish growth, poor prospects for workers, a backlash against migrants, disaffection with elite governance.

Americans may feel that their recovery since the financial crisis has been anemic. But, adjusted for inflation, the U.S. economy has actually grown by a cumulative 12 percent since 2008. In contrast, the 28 countries in the European Union managed combined growth of just 4 percent. And in the subset consisting of the eurozone minus Germany, output actually fell. Even though the strong dollar may help Europe this year, most of the Mediterranean periphery has suffered a lost decade.

Naturally, this horrible performance has taken an enormous human toll. The unemployment rate in the euro area stands at 9.8 percent, more than double the U.S. rate. Unemployment among Europe's youth is even more appalling: In Greece, Spain, France, Croatia, Italy, Cyprus and Portugal, more than 1 in 4 workers under 25 are jobless. America's ability to put its economic house in order after 2008 shows that there was nothing foreordained about this. Europe has suffered an

optional catastrophe. It has a lost generation to match its lost decade.

The decisions that delivered this destruction were made overwhelmingly in Germany, just as Trump seems to suspect. Angela Merkel, the country's sober, deliberate and altogether un-Trumpian chancellor, systematically slow-walked measures that could have accelerated Europe's recovery. Budget stimulus, bank recapitalizations and, at least early on, monetary policy were sluggish because of German resistance. At some points in this process, Merkel was protecting German taxpayers, which is both reasonable and yet at the same time supportive of Trump's view that national interests beat euro cohesion. At other points Merkel has been protecting nothing more vital than Germans' phobia of even modest public borrowing and inflation — and never mind the plight of Mediterranean youth.

Merkel's cautious leadership of Europe has sown the seeds of a populist backlash. This has been a surprisingly long time coming: For several years after the onset in 2010 of the euro crisis, austerity and mass unemployment did remarkably little to turn voters against establishment leaders. But a recent Italian poll suggests that, if an election were held today, the anti-globalization and anti-euro Five Star Movement would take as many votes as the leading establishment party. In France, polls have the anti-E.U. Marine Le Pen as the joint front-runner in this spring's presidential election. In Merkel's Germany, support for the anti-migrant AfD party has jumped from about 5 percent in 2013 to 16 percent now.

If you take Trump literally, his recent comments on Europe were exaggerated and confused. Populists may be on the rise, but we are a long way from a crackup of the European Union; and to denigrate Merkel for opening her country to "illegals," when what she did was welcome refugees, many of whom were fleeing a war fueled by U.S. vacillation, is infuriating and obtuse. But if you take Trump seriously rather than literally — to borrow the wonderful distinction made by Salena Zito in the Atlantic — then it has to be admitted that the president-elect has a point here. Europe is in deep trouble. It is time for its leaders to recognize that incremental policies are failing the continent's people.

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TRADE

U.S. Ambassadors In Asia Make Final Plea For Dead Trans-Pacific Trade Pact (Wong, NYT)

Tuesday, January 17, 2017

[New York Times](#)

By Edward Wong

When hope of enacting the ambitious Trans-Pacific Partnership trade pact ended in November, Max Baucus, the United States ambassador to China, was among the officials who had to grapple with disappointment.

The partnership, called the TPP, was a hallmark of the Obama administration. It would have been one of the largest trade agreements in history, covering about 40 percent of the world's economy and setting new terms and standards for trade for the United States and 11 other Pacific Rim nations. China was not included but would have been able to join.

When President Obama plucked Mr. Baucus in 2013 from the United States Senate to be the ambassador to China, he chose a politician with a record of promoting free trade. As ambassador, Mr. Baucus supported the Trans-Pacific Partnership and tried to dampen alarm in China over the American-led effort.

Last week Mr. Baucus took the unusual step, with five other American ambassadors in the Asia-Pacific region, of sending an open letter to Congress asking its members to support the pact in an effort to cement a leadership position for the United States in regional trade and not yield that role to China, which has the second-biggest economy in the world.

In their letter, the ambassadors warn that "walking away from TPP may be seen by future generations as the moment America chose to cede leadership to others in this part of the world and accept a diminished role."

"Such an outcome would be cause for celebration among those who favor 'Asia for the Asians' and state capitalism," it added.

This passage critiques President Xi Jinping of China, who has said that Asia should be run by Asians and is a champion of a Chinese economic system that relies on industrial policy. (Mr. Xi was scheduled to appear on Tuesday at the pro-free-trade World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, the first Chinese leader to do so.)

The 2016 presidential race was shaped by anti-globalization trends. Donald J. Trump promised to destroy the pact if he became president. Hillary Clinton also denounced it, even though she supported a form of it as secretary of state.

Senator Mitch McConnell, Republican of Kentucky and the majority leader, said after the election in November that Congress would not take it up. That meant it was dead.

The letter by the six ambassadors, all of whom are political appointees who leave their jobs on Friday, was symbolic. It put them on record supporting Mr. Obama's plan more than a year after the trade chiefs of the nations involved endorsed the pact. Following is the text of the letter:

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Businesses Push Donald Trump To Salvage Pacific Trade Pact (Davis, Mauldin, WSJ)

Groups say new administration should rework and rename TPP, but keep its main provisions to boost U.S. exports

Tuesday, January 17, 2017

[Wall Street Journal](#)

By Bob Davis And William Mauldin

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

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GLOBAL ISSUES

Obama Gives \$500 Million To Climate Fund Over GOP Objections (Lee, AP)

Tuesday, January 17, 2017

[Associated Press](#)

By Matthew Lee, AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) – With just three days left in office, the Obama administration has doubled an initial \$500 million commitment to a fund that helps developing nations fight climate change and adapt to its consequences.

The incoming Trump administration and some Republicans oppose the program.

The State Department's announcement Tuesday brings U.S. contributions to the Green Climate Fund to \$1 billion since 2016. The fund helps poor countries reduce carbon emissions by promoting clean energy and spurring private investment in the field.

"This administration has committed to this fund, in fact helped stand it up, establish it," State Department spokesman John Kirby said. "And it is entirely in keeping with the work that we've been doing across the interagency to try to look for ways to stem the effects of climate change, and this fund helps other economies, other countries develop their own initiatives and help them deal with this."

Obama promised a total of \$3 billion to the fund in 2014 as part of the Paris climate change accord, but it is far from certain that full amount will be pledged.

President-elect Donald Trump and a number of GOP lawmakers have complained that support for the fund wasn't specifically approved by Congress. The administration argues the current fiscal year's budget allows it to take the money from an unobligated portion of a total of \$4.3 billion in economic support fund assistance. The previous \$500 million installment was made in the same way.

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Days Before Trump's Inauguration, State Dept. Sends \$500 Million To United Nations Climate Fund (Mooney, WP)

Tuesday, January 17, 2017

[Washington Post](#)

By Chris Mooney

With just three days until President-elect Donald Trump's inauguration, the State Department on Tuesday announced a half-billion-dollar contribution to the United Nations' Green Climate Fund, part of \$3 billion the United States has promised to the fund under President Obama. That's on top of another \$500 million transferred last year, meaning the United States has now sent \$1 billion to the fund, or a third of the president's pledge.

"The Green Climate Fund is a critical tool that helps catalyze billions of dollars in public and private investment in countries dealing not only with the challenges of climate change, but the immense economic opportunities that are embedded in the transition to a lower carbon economy," said Department spokesman John Kirby at a press briefing Tuesday.

Republicans have been heavily critical of this spending, and Trump pledged, while campaigning, that "we're going to cancel the Paris Climate Agreement and stop all payments of U.S. tax dollars to U.N. global warming programs." Coming so close to the inauguration, the new expenditure is likely to spark controversy for this reason.

Kirby said in a statement that the funds came from a 2016 appropriation for the agency's Economic Support Fund. This \$4.3 billion fund contains some dollars earmarked for specific programs and other dollars that are not officially allocated — the current monies came from the latter.

By the year 2020, under the 2009 Copenhagen accord, developed nations are supposed to be allocating \$100 billion annually on climate-change aid to poorer, developing nations, money to be used for clean energy projects and climate change adaptation measures, among other expenditures. Much, but not all of this money is intended to be distributed through the Green Climate Fund, which has already raised \$10 billion so far.

The broader idea of wealthier nations helping poorer ones adapt to a changing planet, and to transition their energy systems, was a fundamental component of bringing all nations on board to the agreement, and environmental groups hailed the move Tuesday.

"The amount paid-in today, \$500 million, constitutes only 0.012% of the federal budget each year, or \$1.53 per American," said Heather Coleman, climate change manager at Oxfam America, in a statement heralding the payment.

"This contribution shows that even as we face an incoming Administration that engages in dangerous climate denial, those of us in the United States who believe in taking action to save our planet, our economy, and our future will continue doing everything in our power to move forward," added Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.) in a statement. "I am glad that other countries are continuing to take this challenge seriously and that we can continue to work together to fight climate change."

At the State Department press briefing, when asked about the timing of the release of the funds, Kirby said that "this is an investment that had been long-planned. I don't — I don't believe there was any nefarious desire or intent to do it just two days before [the inauguration]." He said that the monies had already been transferred to the Green Climate Fund.

But of course, the Trump administration and a sympathetic Congress could block further payments. However, that would create awkwardness with other countries that are deeply committed to climate change, said John Coeuyt, director of international climate policy at the Sierra Club. Coeuyt pointed out that Trump's nominee to head the State Department, Rex Tillerson, has signaled that he wants to keep a "seat at the table" when it comes to the Paris climate agreement.

"It's a head of state issue, and you know, president-elect Trump is going to hear it when he goes to talk to other heads of state," said Coeuyt. "They can decide that they don't want to move another penny, that is their decision to make, but it's pretty clear that it is not in our national interest."

Carol Morello contributed to this report.

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White House Concedes It Won't Close Guantanamo After All (Lederman, Fox, AP)

Tuesday, January 17, 2017

[Associated Press](#)

By Josh Lederman And Ben Fox

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House said Tuesday that the Guantanamo Bay detention center in Cuba will still be open when President Barack Obama leaves office, conceding that a core campaign promise will go unfulfilled.

Administration officials had long insisted that the president was continuing to work toward closing the facility even when it became obvious that it would no longer be possible for

practical reasons before President-elect Donald Trump takes office Friday.

White House spokesman Josh Earnest told reporters that the administration determined it wouldn't happen when they realized they did not have enough time left to comply with the 30-day deadline for notifying Congress in advance of a detainee transfer.

"At this time, I don't anticipate that we will succeed in that goal of closing the prison," Earnest said. "But it's not for a lack of trying, I assure you."

Over the weekend, the U.S. transferred 10 low-level detainees from Guantanamo to Oman. That lowered the number of detainees to 45, with a few more releases expected in the administration's final days.

Trump said during the campaign that he not only wants to keep Guantanamo open but "load it up with some bad dudes." Earlier this month, he said there should be no further releases of men he called "extremely dangerous people."

The U.S. began using its military base on southeast Cuba's isolated, rocky coast to hold prisoners captured after the Sept. 11, 2001, attack and at the start of the war in Afghanistan. At its peak, the facility held nearly 680 detainees. It was down to 242 when Obama took office in 2009, pledging to close what had become a source of international criticism over the treatment of detainees and the notion of holding people indefinitely, most without charge.

Congress thwarted Obama's effort to close the detention center with restrictions on transfers, including the requirement of a 30-day notice, and a ban on moving detainees to the U.S. for any reason, including trial. The administration launched a case-by-case review process to winnow down the population, moving 193 prisoners to 42 countries for repatriation, resettlement or prosecution.

Earnest blamed politics for failing to close the detention center, which he called a waste of money and "recruiting tool" for terrorists. "Members of Congress in both parties, frankly, played with this issue," he said.

Human rights groups and others who have called for the closure of the detention center have criticized Obama for not acting forcefully enough to shutter it at the start of his administration.

Tom Wilner, a Washington lawyer who helped secure the right of detainees to challenge their detention, hopes Trump will take a fresh look at the situation.

"I think if he looks at the facts objectively he will really see that Guantanamo really is a bad deal for America," Wilner said. "There's no benefit to it, it's grossly expensive and it hurts our reputation."

Associated Press writer Josh Lederman reported this story in Washington and AP writer Ben Fox reported from Miami.

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Obama Releases 10 More Gitmo Prisoners, This Time To Oman (Jackson, USAT)

Tuesday, January 17, 2017

[USA Today](#)

By David Jackson

While falling short of President Obama's pledge to close the prison camp at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, the administration said Tuesday it has sent 10 more detainees to the nation of Oman.

The Defense Department said that agencies within the Guantanamo Review Task Force signed off on the releases, determining that the prisoners no longer represent a threat.

Continued detention "does not remain necessary to protect against a continuing significant threat to the security of the United States," the announcement said.

The releases pare down the Gitmo prison population to 45 as Obama prepares to leave office on Friday ahead of President-elect Donald Trump, who has said he plans to keep the facility open and even add to it.

Obama spokesman Josh Earnest said that when Obama took office, there 242 prisoners at Gitmo, but most have been moved out for repatriation, resettlement or prosecution.

"At this time, I don't anticipate that we will succeed in that goal of closing the prison," Earnest said. "but it's not for a lack of trying, I assure you."

The releases appear to be somewhat defiant of Trump's wishes.

Trump, who during the 2016 campaign pledged to put some "bad dudes" at Guantanamo Bay, tweeted this month: "There should be no further releases from Gitmo. These are extremely dangerous people and should not be allowed back onto the battlefield."

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Victims Of Mistaken Identity Among The 10 Sent From Guantánamo To Oman (Rosenberg, MH)

Tuesday, January 17, 2017

[Miami Herald](#)

By Carol Rosenberg

The Arabian Sea nation of Oman has taken in eight Yemenis and two Afghans from Guantánamo, the Pentagon said Tuesday, including several men cleared for release for years who were mistakenly profiled as captives of consequence.

U.S. officials anticipated that there would be more releases in coming days — over the objection of President-elect Donald Trump — that could reduce the detention center population to 41 captives. That would leave a prison population of 10 men charged with war crimes, 26 indefinite detainees known as “forever prisoners” and five men who were cleared for release but had no countries that could provide security guarantees that satisfied Secretary of Defense Ash Carter.

A Pentagon statement did not explain why the Department of Defense chose to wait to identify the 10 men for more than a day after the Sultanate of Oman announced it had taken them in as “temporary” residents “in consideration to their humanitarian situation.”

EARLIER COVERAGE: U.S. sends 10 Guantánamo captives to Oman

But those named included two men who had been cleared for release as far back as 2009, plus eight men approved for release by an inter-agency parole-style Periodic Review Board between May 2014 and late last year.

All had been held in U.S. military custody for at least 14 years.

Just one of the men was charged with a crime at Guantánamo — Afghan Abdul Zahir, 44 — who was ultimately ordered released after U.S. intelligence agencies concluded that he had been confused with another Afghan who shared the same nickname.

In what his military defense attorney Air Force Col. Sterling Thomas called an exceptional outrage, suspicious chemicals seized at the time of Zahir’s capture as a suspected bomb maker turned out to be salt, sugar and petroleum jelly. The Afghan’s photo on his 2008 prison profile — provided to the anti-secrecy group WikiLeaks by former soldier Chelsea Manning — shows him sticking out his tongue at his captors.

Another, Yemeni Mustafa al Shamiri, 38, was likewise mistaken for another man with a similar name for most of his years at Guantánamo — a suspected al-Qaida courier or trainer — until U.S. intelligence concluded he was a run-of-the-mill jihadist.

READ MORE: New Guantánamo intelligence upends old ‘worst of the worst’ assumptions

A third, Ghaleb al Bihani, 37, gained some prominence as a sickly Yemeni who learned to practice yoga in his cell as an

escape from the daily grind of prison life. “We are relieved that his ordeal is finally over,” said his attorney, Pardiss Kebriaei. “After having lost a third of his life in Guantánamo, what he needs now is support for a real chance to rebuild. We are hopeful that he will have that opportunity in Oman.”

His also cleared older brother, Tawfiq, who was captured in Iran and turned over to Afghan, then U.S. troops, remained behind.

There was no immediate explanation of Oman’s reference to their stay being temporary. But U.S. diplomats have in the past negotiated transfers to security arrangements that withhold travel documents from freed captives for a specific time period, in some instances two years.

The Afghans — Zahir and Bostan Karim, 46 —are the only non-Yemenis taken in by Oman, which shares a border with Yemen and is said to have a special rehabilitation and reintegration program. Oman previously took in 20 captives from Guantánamo in three transfers in 2015 and 2016.

The other cleared Yemenis sent to Oman were Muhammed al Ansi, 41, Muhammed Ahmad Said Haydar, 38, Salman Yahya Hassan Mohammed Rabei’, 37, Musab Omar Ali al Madhwani, 37, Walid Said Bin Said Zaid, 38, and Hayl al Mithali, 40.

Trump tweeted two weeks ago asking for a cessation in transfers, a request the Obama White House has rejected.

A Pentagon statement declared the United States’ gratitude to “Oman for its humanitarian gesture and willingness to support ongoing U.S. efforts to close the Guantánamo Bay detention facility. The United States coordinated with the government of Oman to ensure these transfers took place consistent with appropriate security and humane treatment measures.”

It added: “Today, 45 detainees remain at Guantánamo Bay.”

Zahir’s lawyers said in a statement soon after the Pentagon disclosed the Afghan’s release that the husband and father of three sons “hopes to reunite with family and recover from the mental and physical trauma suffered during his 14 years of unlawful imprisonment by the United States government.”

The lawyers said that Zahir impressed his legal team — the Air Force lieutenant colonel and civilians Bob Gensburg and David Sleigh of Vermont — “with his prolific poetry, kind nature and resilient spirit.”

- Statement here from Abdul Zahir’s attorneys.
- Statement here from Ghaleb Bihani’s attorney.
- The Pentagon announcement here.

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Executives In Davos Optimistic Despite Surge In Antiglobal Sentiment (Cimilluca, Schechner, Strasburg, WSJ)

Annual gathering comes amid surging equity prices

Tuesday, January 17, 2017

Wall Street Journal

By Dana Cimilluca, Sam Schechner And Jenny Strasburg

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

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In Davos, Anthony Scaramucci Translates Trump Message To Global Elite (Forelle, Berman, WSJ)

Financier-turned-Trump adviser seeks to soothe nerves about the president-elect at the World Economic Forum; 'one of the last great hopes for globalism'

Tuesday, January 17, 2017

Wall Street Journal

By Charles Forelle And Dennis K. Berman

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

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In Davos, Anthony Scaramucci Volunteers For 'Trump Translation' Duty (Hjelmgaard, USAT)

Tuesday, January 17, 2017

USA Today

By Kim Hjelmgaard

DAVOS, Switzerland — Anthony Scaramucci, the smooth-talking entrepreneur, financier and now senior aide to President-elect Donald Trump took on the Herculean task of "Trump translator" at the World Economic Forum that kicked off here Tuesday.

"You probably like it the way I'm explaining it because it sounds more sensible," the 53-year-old Goldman Sachs alumnus and founder of hedge-fund firm SkyBridge Capital, said in comments to delegates and media at the annual meeting.

Scaramucci was speaking about Trump's allure for voters, his well-known use of Twitter at 3 a.m., NATO, Brexit, the European Union, Russia, the pitfalls of globalization and other hot-button topics being discussed by several thousand people in this cozy Alpine ski town.

Many of the delegates appearing here have expressed concerns over Trump's electoral victory and the theme of the meeting — "Responsive and Responsible Leadership" — is a

veiled reference to a number of anti-establishment shake-ups taking place across the world from the U.S. to the Philippines.

"If you guys get a little upset about the tweeting or some of the things that he's saying I want to put your mind at ease that this is a super-compassionate man, he's a generous man, he has wonderful children, he loves people. He's not necessarily communicating in a way that the people in (Davos) love, but he is communicating very effectively," Scaramucci said.

For example, on NATO, which the president-elect has criticized, Trump was "simply trying to find common cause, let try's to find a way to get along better," Scaramucci said. "He's saying that if you look at NATO in 2017 the way it is currently architected, maybe we need to focus less on combating Communism and more on rejecting Islamic terrorism."

"So when he uses the word 'obsolete' and everyone runs around and says he is going to bust up NATO, that's not what he's saying. When he says 'hey, wait a minute there's a two or three percent, per GDP, per country, for defense expenditure, and a lot of those guys are not paying those bills,' well, he's a real-estate developer, what do you think he's going to do? He's going to go to those guys and say 'you signed this thing, you owe the money, start paying up.' I don't understand why people would be upset by that."

Scaramucci is the sole representative of Trump's transition team appearing at the forum, a gathering of business and political leaders that runs through Friday, when the president-elect officially takes office.

Along with defending his new boss — Scaramucci has been given a business outreach role in the office of public liaison (previously the office of public engagement) — he announced that he sold SkyBridge Capital to RON Transatlantic EG and HNA Capital Holding, a move that clears the way for his transition from Wall Street to public life in the White House. Terms of Tuesday's transaction were not disclosed. SkyBridge Capital's price tag could be as high as \$225 million.

In a separate development, Russian news agency Tass reported Scaramucci and Kirill Dmitriev, the CEO of the Russian Direct Investment Fund, a \$10 billion state-run wealth fund, met in Davos to discuss possible business cooperation. No details about the meeting were disclosed and Scaramucci did not discuss it beyond confirming the meeting took place. The investment vehicle is on the list of entities Russia has been sanctioned for over its illegal annexation of the Black Sea peninsula, Crimea.

Even though Scaramucci has been a regular attendee at this event for the last decade, his participation this year has drawn considerably more interest than usual because of his

close ties to the incoming U.S. administration. Yet despite expectations — including, apparently, Scaramucci's own — that his role as a Davos envoy for anti-establishment, populist Trump would rankle many of the conference's global elite, little immediate evidence of that emerged on the first day.

Scaramucci was the most popular guy in the room on a walk through the event's crowded, power-filled corridors Tuesday filled with royalty, CEOs, actors and big league movers and shakers. Heads turned and he was frequently stopped by people who wanted to speak with him or shake his hand.

"I brought a food taster with me," the Long Island, N.Y., native joked in an interview with USA TODAY, a reference to the possibility that someone might try to poison him.

"A lot of people (in Davos) don't understand the Donald J. Trump movement or Brexit in the United Kingdom and that's primarily because they isolated themselves. I would tell people here to take a pause in their lives, gain some intellectual curiosity and go meet with people that are not similarly situated to the way they are," Scaramucci said.

"At the end of the day, I am here to give a message to people: Let's not be out of touch with the common struggle that's going on. There are some very wealthy, very successful people here. But we are all just human beings. We're drinking the same water, breathing the same air."

Asked how he was feeling about his upcoming move from Wall Street to Washington, Scaramucci said that in the financial world "they only stab you in the front."

Scaramucci said his job is to get people to see Trump in the way that his family, staff and the entire administration see him.

"Not just in terms of his political and strategic instincts, but in terms of how smart he is in building his relationships with people."

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ISIL

Turkey: Istanbul Nightclub Attacker Confessed After Capture (Guzel, Elden, AP)

Tuesday, January 17, 2017

Associated Press

By Mehmet Guzel And Neyran Elden

ISTANBUL (AP) — The accused perpetrator of a New Year's nightclub attack in Istanbul has confessed and his fingerprints are a match, Turkish authorities said Tuesday. They identified him as an Uzbek national who trained in Afghanistan and staged the attack for the Islamic State group.

The gunman shot a policeman and a civilian outside the Reina night club before entering the swanky building on the banks of the Bosphorus and unleashing a hail of bullets on hundreds of people gathered to celebrate the end of 2016.

A total of 39 people lost their lives and dozens others were wounded. Most of the victims came from the Middle East.

The suspect, who switched clothes during the attack, fled the scene by blending into the crowd of survivors. He succeeded in evading police for more than two weeks, reportedly collecting his son in a working class neighborhood of Istanbul before hiding out in a luxury apartment at another low-income district.

Photographs widely published in the Turkish media showed a bruised, black-haired man in a gray, bloodied shirt being held by his neck. NTV television said the gunman had resisted arrest.

Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim announced on Tuesday that "the vile terrorist" who attacked the nightclub had been captured. Speaking to reporters in Ankara, he said the "forces behind (the attack) would be revealed in time."

Moments later, in separate remarks, Istanbul governor Vasip Sahin, gave a full portrait of the suspected killer and the efforts that went into securing his capture.

Sahin named the alleged killer as Abdulkadir Masharipov, an Uzbek national who was born in 1983 and also operated under the alias Ebu Muhammed Horasani. Turkish media have reported the suspect's first name as Abdulgadir.

Turkey's state-run Anadolu Agency said Masharipov traveled to Afghanistan from his home country six years ago and claimed he was on a wanted list in Uzbekistan for membership in a terror group.

The suspect, according to the governor of Istanbul, had trained in Afghanistan and was believed to have entered Turkey in January 2016. He described him as a highly educated terrorist who speaks four languages and had clearly carried out the attack in the name of IS.

Masharipov, who was taken into custody late Monday, confessed to carrying out the massacre and his fingerprints matched those of the attacker, Gov. Sahin said.

He can be held for up to 30 days under Turkey's state of emergency, which was introduced after a failed coup attempt in July, before he is charged and formally arrested. It could take prosecutors several months to prepare for a trial.

The police operation to apprehend Masharipov drew on a review of 7,200 hours of security camera footage and about 2,200 tipoffs from the public. Police searched 152 addresses and 50 people were taken into custody.

Authorities seized nearly \$200,000, two guns and two drones during the suspect's arrest.

"Together with the terrorist, an Iraqi man was detained as well as three women from various countries – from Egypt and from Africa," Sahin said. "There is a high chance that they may be connected (to IS) because they were staying in the same house."

The governor said it was believed that they arrived three days earlier at Esenyurt, a low-income neighborhood of Istanbul that has witnessed a construction boom.

AP reporters visited the suspect's apartment on Tuesday, finding doors with broken locks, food and garbage on the floor and clothes outside of the closets. They also saw a woman's purse and money of various currencies including Egyptian and Sudanese pounds.

Neighbors of the alleged attacker were in shock to learn of his identity and find their building at the heart of a large-scale police operation. Ali Haydar Demir said he came out of his apartment when he heard the commotion only to be turned back by police officers who told him to close his door.

Demir, who lived on the same floor of the Istanbul complex as Masharipov, said he felt "very bad living in the same building with a person like that."

Another resident, Sezer Aras, described the situation as a nightmare. He told the AP "he was very close to us, but we had no idea."

The state-run Anadolu Agency said that the gunman's 4-year-old son was taken into protective custody.

Hurriyet newspaper earlier reported that the suspect's wife and 1-year-old daughter were caught in a police operation in the neighborhood of Zeytinburnu on Jan. 12.

In another report citing police officials, the newspaper said the gunman had picked up his son from Zeytinburnu after attacking the nightclub.

Sahin said the boy wasn't with Masharipov on the night of the police operation, although he had taken the child with him and left his daughter with his wife.

IS has claimed responsibility for the nightclub massacre, saying the attack in the first hours of Jan. 1 was in reprisal for Turkish military operations in northern Syria.

Days after the attack, Deputy Prime Minister Numan Kurtulmus said an intelligence agency may have been involved, an assertion he reiterated Monday. But Sahin, when asked about it, declined to comment, saying: "It is too soon to say anything about such connections."

Anadolu said police also carried out raids on members of a suspected Uzbek IS cell in five Istanbul neighborhoods, and detained several people.

Turkish media also circulated a photograph of the Iraqi suspect lying on the floor face down, hands bound behind his back, with the boot of an unidentified man pressed to the back of his head.

Speaking in Ankara, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan thanked his country's security and intelligence agencies for their efforts.

"In this country, no one will slip through the net, everyone will be held to account within the limits of the rule of law," he said.

Turkey, a member of NATO and a partner in the U.S.-led coalition against IS, has endured multiple attacks attributed to the extremist group. IS said the assault on the nightclub was retaliation for Turkey's military operations in northern Syria.

The country has also witnessed an uptick in violence linked to the resumption of conflict between the Turkish state and Kurdish militants.

Suzan Fraser and Burhan Ozbilic in Ankara, Lefferis Pitarakis and Ayse Wieting in Istanbul and Dominique Soguel in Basel, Switzerland, contributed to this report.

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Suspect In Istanbul Nightclub Attack Confesses, Officials Say (Times, NYT)

Tuesday, January 17, 2017

[New York Times](#)

By The New York Times

The Uzbek man who was taken into custody on Monday and is believed to be the gunman who carried out an attack at an upscale Istanbul nightclub, killing 39 people early on New Year's Day, has confessed, the Turkish authorities said on Tuesday.

The suspect, identified as Abdulgadir Masharipov, an Uzbek citizen born in 1983, received help in the attack, done "in the name of ISIS," Vasip Sahin, the governor of Istanbul, said at a news conference, referring to the Islamic State militant group, which claimed responsibility for the rampage.

"No one will get away with what they have done," President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said from his office in Ankara, the capital.

Mr. Masharipov, whose arrest was confirmed by Prime Minister Binali Yildirim, was detained Monday night after the police raided a residence in the Esenyurt district of Istanbul, which is home to a large number of migrants from former Soviet states in Central Asia.

He was arrested with four others, an Iraqi man and three women from countries including Egypt and another country on the African continent, the governor said.

Turkish officials said that the investigation into the New Year's attack had uncovered a network of extremists from former Soviet states. And after the attack at Istanbul's main international airport in June, which left scores dead, the three suicide bombers were identified by the Turkish authorities as citizens of Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Uzbekistan.

Turkish news organizations released photographs of the nightclub attack suspect, taken while he was in custody and showing bruises and blood on his face. But Mr. Sahin said that Mr. Masharipov had not opened fire when confronted by the police, and that officers had not used weapons while arresting him.

"He admitted his crime," Mr. Sahin said, adding that the suspect had been trained in Afghanistan and speaks four languages. "His fingerprints matched," the governor said, although he did not elaborate.

Mr. Sahin said the interrogation, which he described as "very new," was continuing but that more would be learned about who had helped Mr. Masharipov and how.

Mr. Masharipov, who used the alias Abu Mohammed Khorasani Abdulqavi, entered Turkey illegally in January 2016 "from the eastern border," the governor said.

Mr. Sahin, who was standing next to the Istanbul police chief, Mustafa Caliskan, in front of Police Headquarters, said a team of about 2,000 officers and special forces had been called in to capture the assailant.

The police investigation had focused on five addresses, and Mr. Masharipov was caught at one of them, Mr. Sahin said.

The police examined 7,200 hours of video in their search for the attacker, and they raided 152 addresses, detaining 50 people in the process.

A pistol, an air gun, ammunition, two drones and \$197,000 were seized during the raid on the residence where Mr. Masharipov was found.

TV footage showed a cluttered apartment with white walls and white furniture. Fingerprint powder was visible on kitchen closets and on tables.

The governor said that Mr. Masharipov's 4-year-old son, who had been reported to be with his father during the operation in Esenyurt, had not been present.

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Suspect In Istanbul Nightclub Attack Trained In Afghanistan (Coker, Peker, WSJ)

Turkish security services touted the arrest following a two-week nationwide manhunt

Tuesday, January 17, 2017

[Wall Street Journal](#)

By Margaret Coker And Emre Peker

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Captured Suspect In Nightclub Attack Is Uzbek With Islamic State Ties, Turkey Says (Cunningham, Fahim, WP)

Tuesday, January 17, 2017

[Washington Post](#)

By Erin Cunningham And Kareem Fahim

ISTANBUL — Turkish officials on Tuesday confirmed the arrest of a suspect accused of fatally shooting 39 people at a New Year's Eve party in an Istanbul nightclub, saying he is an Uzbek national who is linked to the Islamic State militant group and who had received training in Afghanistan.

Officials said the suspect, Abdulkadir Masharipov, was arrested late Monday in Istanbul's high-rise Esenyurt district and detained along with four other people. He was the focus of a nationwide manhunt in several cities and had eluded police for weeks. He was shown bruised and bloody in pictures that were apparently taken after he was in custody and that local news outlets distributed.

"The perpetrator of this vile attack has been captured," Prime Minister Binali Yildirim told reporters in Ankara, the Turkish capital. "The powers behind this will be revealed," he added, without elaborating.

Vasip Sahin, Istanbul's governor, said that fingerprint evidence linked Masharipov to the killings and that the suspect had "accepted his crime."

The attack on the waterfront Reina nightclub was among the worst mass killings in recent memory in Turkey, which has been shaken by an onslaught of attacks from militants as well as Kurdish separatists.

The details and surveillance footage from the brazen assault shocked the country, with the gunman blasting his way

through the front entrance of the club, one of Turkey's most famous venues, as people fell around him.

The victims included more than two dozen foreigners, mostly from countries across the Middle East, as well as a Turkish security guard who, just weeks before, survived another terrorist attack in the city.

The Islamic State quickly claimed responsibility, framing the carnage as retaliation for Turkey's military involvement in Syria's civil war. There, Turkish forces have battled Islamic State fighters in strongholds along the border. Turkey has also carried out air and artillery strikes on the Islamist militants.

Hundreds of Uzbek militants have flocked to join the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, according to researchers tracking the group's foreign fighters. Uzbek Islamic militants have been featured in the group's propaganda videos and have carried out suicide attacks on Iraqi troops.

Turkish authorities did not say Tuesday whether Masharipov had spent significant time in Iraq or Syria. But his alleged training in Afghanistan raises questions about the potential role of the Islamic State affiliate there.

The affiliate, known as Khorasan Province, has struggled to establish a foothold and is not known to have ordered or participated in an attack outside Afghanistan.

But Uzbek militants have long fought in Afghanistan, where they were allied with the Taliban, and they have launched attacks on U.S. and NATO troops. In 2015, a faction of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, which has a strong presence in Afghanistan, pledged allegiance to the Islamic State.

Sahin, the Istanbul governor, said Tuesday that Masharipov speaks four languages and was "well trained." He was born in 1983, Sahin said.

Authorities think he arrived in Turkey last year. Turkey is home to a number of residents from Central Asian countries, with which it shares linguistic and historical ties.

After the attack, the hunt for Masharipov involved about 2,000 officers searching dozens of locations, Sahin said.

The authorities found nearly \$200,000 in cash at the apartment where Masharipov was captured.

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Iran Opposes U.S. Participation In Russian-backed Syria Talks (Sly, WP)

Tuesday, January 17, 2017

[Washington Post](#)

By Liz Sly

BEIRUT — Iran opposes the participation of the United States in Syrian peace talks backed by Russia that are due to be launched in Kazakhstan next week, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said Tuesday.

His comments contradicted promises from Russia and Turkey and indications from U.S. officials that the newly installed Trump administration would be invited to the talks, scheduled for Jan. 23 in the Kazakhstan capital, Astana.

They also pointed to the potential for conflict over at least one of the Middle East's flashpoints between Tehran and the incoming Trump administration, which has consistently indicated that it plans to adopt a more hawkish posture toward Iran than the Obama administration.

"We have not invited the U.S. and oppose their presence" at the talks, Zarif said, according to Iran's Press TV.

Whether Iran would refuse to attend if the United States were invited was not immediately clear. The talks are part of a three-way process led by Russia and including Turkey and Iran — now the three most powerful international players on the ground in Syria. The process is aimed at forging a settlement in Syria after the failure of the Obama administration's diplomacy.

The opening round is expected to be a modest affair, with representatives of Syrian rebels meeting with members of the Syrian government to discuss the modalities of a shaky cease-fire that went into effect on Dec. 29, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told reporters in Moscow. Representatives of the invited countries will attend in the role of observers, rather than participants.

Assuming the meeting takes place, it would represent a profound moment for the Syrian conflict, bringing the military protagonists together for the first time since the uprising against President Bashar al-Assad in 2011.

It would also be a significant moment for the wider Middle East, signaling the first major initiative to resolve a big regional conflict in which the United States is not playing a leading role. Though Turkey and Iran are partnering with Russia in the effort, this is a Russian-led process, diplomats said.

No invitations have yet been formally issued, partly because Turkish efforts to persuade Syrian rebels to attend have dragged on longer than expected. On Tuesday, rebel commanders confirmed that half a dozen mostly Turkish-backed groups, most of them based in the north of the country, would send representatives.

Although Iran is one of the three sponsors of the peace talks, it has not signed the agreement reached between Russia and Turkey that launched the cease-fire, suggesting that Tehran

has reservations about an effort that could potentially erode its extensive influence in Syria.

Both President-elect Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin have said they regard Syria as one of the areas in which the United States and Russia could cooperate more closely. Trump has said on a number of occasions that he hopes better relations with Moscow will help counterbalance Iran's expanding regional role.

Iran has been instrumental in providing the manpower and resources that have helped Assad's government hold the rebellion at bay. Thousands of Iranian-trained Shiite militia fighters from Iraq and Afghanistan are on the front lines, the Iranian-backed Lebanese Shiite militia Hezbollah is at the forefront of most of the major battles, and Iranian military advisers and commanders are embedded with them in many locations around the country.

The military conquests have cemented Iran's role as a dominant player in Syria, making Iranian cooperation essential if any peace deal is to stick.

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Russia's Lavrov Wants Trump Administration At Syria Peace Talks (Mills, Hodge, WSJ)

Foreign minister says he hopes discussions in Kazakhstan on Jan. 23 would be more productive than they were with Obama

Monday, January 16, 2017

[Wall Street Journal](#)

By Laura Mills And Nathan Hodge

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

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Iran's President Welcomes Syria Talks Planned For Next Week (Karimi, AP)

Tuesday, January 17, 2017

[Associated Press](#)

By Nasser Karimi

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) – Iran's President Hassan Rouhani said Tuesday that he hopes talks planned for next week can mark the beginning of the end of the civil war in Syria, where Tehran has provided crucial military and financial support to the government.

Russia's foreign minister meanwhile said Moscow would invite representatives of the incoming Trump administration to the talks in Kazakhstan, which could provide the first indication of how U.S. policy will change with regard to the six-year conflict.

The talks have been brokered by Russia, a key ally of President Bashar Assad, and Turkey, which backs the armed opposition. Turkey and Iran have traded blame for repeated violations of a Dec. 30 cease-fire that was intended to pave the way for the talks.

"We are happy that the cease-fire has been agreed to. This is a positive step on its own," Rouhani told reporters. "We have to apply efforts to keep the cease-fire."

He said it was important that the government reach an agreement with the opposition, but that only the Syrian people can choose their president. Assad's resignation, a key demand of the rebels, will not be on the agenda of the upcoming talks.

Representatives of nearly a dozen Syrian armed opposition groups have nevertheless said they will attend the talks, expected on Jan. 23, in order to reinforce the cease-fire and set up monitoring mechanisms for violators.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said the attendance of the leaders of armed groups could make the latest talks more successful than previous rounds of negotiations with civilian opposition representatives held in Geneva, which led nowhere.

Russia has blamed the failure of previous talks in part on President Barack Obama's administration, which was excluded from the negotiations that led to the cease-fire.

President-elect Donald Trump has indicated he would like to pursue a closer partnership with Russia in order to battle the Islamic State group and other extremists, but he has also adopted a tough stance against Iran.

Lavrov said he hoped Russian and U.S. representatives could discuss efforts to combat terrorism during the meeting in Astana.

Rouhani did not mention the attendance of U.S. representatives, but Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif was quoted by the semi-official Tasnim news agency as saying Tehran did not think they should be invited.

An emerging U.S.-Russian alliance against IS could face an early test in the eastern Syrian city of Deir el-Zour, where the extremists are waging a major offensive against the last remaining pockets of government control.

IS fighters launched a multi-pronged offensive over the weekend, and on Monday cut the government-held area in half. The extremist group, which controls most of Deir el-Zour province, has besieged the provincial capital since 2014.

Russia has been carrying out airstrikes in support of Assad's forces since September 2015, but has mainly attacked Syrian rebels rather than IS. A U.S.-led coalition has been attacking

IS in Syria since 2014, but is not coordinating its efforts with Damascus.

Associated Press writers Sarah El Deeb in Beirut and Vladimir Isachenkov in Moscow contributed to this report.

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Syria Rebels, Regime Split On Aim Of Astana Talks (Rahal, AFP)

Tuesday, January 17, 2017

[AFP](#)

By Layal Abou Rahal

Beirut (AFP) – Regime and rebel figures will head to Kazakhstan on Monday for negotiations on ending Syria's brutal war, but will arrive with diametrically opposed approaches to the aims of the talks.

Damascus has insisted it will seek a "comprehensive" political solution to the nearly six-year conflict at the meeting, while rebels say they will focus solely on reinforcing a frail nationwide truce.

The Astana talks, organised by rebel backer Turkey and regime allies Russia and Iran, are expected to last less than a week.

Several rounds of negotiations hosted by the United Nations, most recently in April 2016, have failed to bring an end to the war that has killed more than 310,000 people.

During those talks, government negotiator Bashar al-Jaafari and leading rebel figure Mohammad Alloush often clashed, with Jaafari calling his rival a "terrorist".

The pair will return as the respective heads of the government and rebel delegations in Astana.

Alloush is a prominent figure of the Jaish al-Islam (Army of Islam) faction and studied Islamic jurisprudence in Saudi Arabia.

He will head a "military delegation" of around eight people, backed by nine legal and political advisors from the High Negotiations Committee umbrella group.

Jaafari, meanwhile, is a silver-haired diplomat who speaks multiple languages and belongs to the same Alawite religious minority as President Bashar al-Assad.

His team will include "figures representing the military and the Syrian judiciary", according to the Al-Watan daily, which is close to the regime.

It said the delegation "will be similar to the delegation that previously went to Geneva".

– 'Political solution'? –

But the personal rivalries pale in comparison to widespread differences on the ultimate aim of the talks.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Tuesday said "one of the goals of the Astana meeting is, first, reinforcing the ceasefire".

The truce, brokered by rivals Turkey and Russia, came into force on December 30 and excludes jihadists like the Islamic State group.

In announcing their participation in the Astana negotiations, rebels said that the talks would focus on strengthening the truce, while a political deal would be negotiated in Switzerland in February.

"The main agenda, for us, includes reinforcing the ceasefire, halting forced displacement, and delivering aid to besieged areas without limitations," leading opposition figure Ahmad Ramadan said.

He earlier told AFP that "the details of the political process will be left to Geneva", referring to talks hosted by the United Nations.

Damascus, however, insists it will be pursuing a "comprehensive political solution" to the war, according to an editorial Tuesday in the Al-Watan daily.

"No one thinks Damascus is going to Astana to discuss a halt to military operations, as some want to suggest, or to reinforce the so-called ceasefire," editor Waddah Abd Rabbo wrote.

"Damascus is attending in the framework of its vision for a comprehensive political solution to the war on Syria... and to re-impose the hegemony and sovereignty of the state on all Syrian territory," he wrote.

Abd Rabbo said the Astana talks were effectively "between Damascus and Ankara, sponsored by Russia and Iran, in a land free of Western pressure".

But they could succeed, he wrote, as the attending rebel factions "are on the ground and control thousands of Syrian fighters".

– 'Freeze', not end conflict –

Years of efforts by the international community have failed to put a stop to the war raging in Syria since the spring of 2011.

Last year, the United States and Russia worked hand-in-hand to put a temporary truce in place and sponsored several

rounds of talks in Geneva, but they did not secure a political solution.

In late 2016, a new partnership between Moscow and Ankara emerged to take the lead, and the talks in Astana will be the first test of the nascent alliance.

Donald Trump's transition team said Saturday it had been invited to take part in the talks, but indicated that it had yet to respond.

"I think the United States is invited to go there and I would urge the new administration to do that," outgoing US Secretary of State John Kerry said Tuesday.

"We are supportive of the efforts of the Russians and the Turks and Iranians to go to Astana," he told Sky News Arabia.

Ramadan said the opposition had yet to receive an agenda on the talks and did not know whether they would be face-to-face.

He said it was also unclear whether previous international agreements, like the Geneva Communiqué which calls for a transitional governing body, would apply for the Astana talks.

The opposition and the regime remains bitterly divided on Assad's future role, with anti-government factions insisting he should leave at the start of any transition.

Kerry predicted "a change in the course of the next months, that you will see countries begin to be more practical, to begin to engage, and it may be possible" to "get to Geneva, to the full negotiation."

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IS Assault Halts Food Aid Drops In Syria's Deir Ezzor (AFP)

Tuesday, January 17, 2017

AFP

Beirut (AFP) – The World Food Programme said Tuesday it has suspended aid drops to the Syrian city of Deir Ezzor because of heavy fighting after a fierce assault by the Islamic State group.

IS has besieged Deir Ezzor's 100,000 residents since 2015 and already controls large parts of the city, but on Saturday advanced further inside remaining government-held territory.

The clashes, which continued for a fourth day on Tuesday, have killed more than 100 people, according to a monitor.

"We have put on hold the air drop operation in Deir Ezzor for security operational reasons," said WFP spokeswoman Bettina Luescher.

"There is heavy fighting ongoing in and around the landing zone... It is simply too dangerous to do this now," she told reports in Geneva.

The WFP has been dropping humanitarian aid into Deir Ezzor since April 2016, and the government-held area is the only place in Syria where the agency has permission for the drops.

Luescher said the WFP's last aid drop was on Sunday, adding that 3,300 tonnes of food and other aid have been dispatched to the city since the operation began.

The IS assault has managed to divide the east of the remaining government-held parts of the city from the west.

It has also cut the route running from the city's key military airport, limiting the government's ability to bring in supplies and military reinforcements.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitor said Tuesday that Syria's military and allied Russian forces were carrying out air strikes against IS, as government troops battled the jihadists on the ground.

Ten civilians were killed Tuesday in air strikes on the Deir Ezzor district of Al-Ummal, which is held by IS, the monitor said, bringing to 37 the total number of civilians killed in the four-day IS offensive.

The latest assault, which included waves of suicide bombers, was the "most violent" attack on the city in more than a year, said the Observatory.

It said the government was flying reinforcements into the military base and had called up residents to fight on the front lines against IS, including some without military training.

Since the siege began, the government has been able to fly limited supplies into the airport, and WFP and Russia have also delivered aid.

But residents have nonetheless faced shortages and rising prices, as well as being unable to leave the city.

Deir Ezzor sits in the oil-rich eastern province of the same name, most of which is controlled by IS.

The extremist group has lost swathes of territory in northern Syria to Kurdish fighters as well as a Turkish-backed rebel alliance, but it remains on the offensive in other parts of the country.

More than 310,000 people have been killed in Syria since the conflict began in March 2011 with anti-government protests that were met with a regime crackdown.

The violence has drawn in international players, as well as attracting jihadist groups like IS.

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Syrians Elect First Civilian Council To Run Idlib City (AFP)

Tuesday, January 17, 2017

AFP

Idlib (Syria) (AFP) – Syrians in northwestern Idlib cast their ballots on Tuesday for members of the first civilian council to run their city, two years after it was overrun by rebels and jihadists.

Regime forces were expelled from Idlib city in March 2015 by the Army of Conquest, led by the Fateh al-Sham Front, which changed its name from Al-Nusra Front when it broke ties with Al-Qaeda.

Since then, a committee appointed by the Army of Conquest had run the city's affairs, electoral commission head Mohammad Salim Khodr told AFP.

But "after efforts from the city's residents, the Army of Conquest was persuaded to hand over the city's affairs to its residents, who would vote for a local council to manage it", Khodr said.

An AFP correspondent saw hundreds of people crowd around voting stations across the city on Tuesday to check they were registered before casting their ballots.

Voters, who had to be at least 25 years old and originally from Idlib, could choose from among 85 candidates who were running for the 25-member council.

Polling stations opened at 8:00am local time (0600 GMT) for 12 hours.

"I came here to vote in these free elections, which make us hold our heads up high," voter Mustafa al-Mohammad told AFP.

According to Khodr, the council's 25 members will later elect a 10-member executive committee led by the equivalent of a mayor.

They will be responsible for "overseeing services and development projects... as well as aid and support to refugees and displaced people from other cities," Khodr said.

"We wanted to take part in this huge joy, in the unbridled desire by Idlib's residents to create a local council that represents them as civilians and manages the institutions," said candidate Hussam al-Din Dbis, who works as a surgeon.

Since Syria's conflict broke out, the population of Idlib city has swelled to an estimated 200,000 people.

Tens of thousands of people, including rebels, have been displaced to the city and broader province – including as part of local reconciliation deals that opposition fighters strike with the government.

Under such deals, rebels agree to leave an opposition-held area in exchange for an end to regime siege or bombardment.

There are around 160 civilian-run councils across Idlib province, according to Mohammad al-Aref, a member of Idlib province's executive office.

These bodies manage "health and educational affairs, as well as public services" of towns and villages.

More than 310,000 people have been killed since Syria's conflict broke out in March 2011 with protests against President Bashar al-Assad.

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Islamic State Gains In Syria Province (Raydan, Alakraa, WSJ)

Terror group cuts government enclave in Deir Ezzour in half during a fierce offensive

Tuesday, January 17, 2017

Wall Street Journal

By Noam Raydan And Nour Alakraa

Full-text stories from the Wall Street Journal are available to Journal subscribers by clicking the link.

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'We Have To End It': Trump Takes Over Islamic State Fight, Vowing To Finish It (Ryan, WP)

Tuesday, January 17, 2017

Washington Post

By Missy Ryan

As President-elect Donald Trump prepares to take office, the Islamic State is on the defensive in three countries and has been all but wiped out in another. Two and a half years after the extremists rolled across northern Iraq, Pentagon and diplomatic officials say a military victory, at least in their major strongholds, is within sight.

But tens of thousands of fighters remain, and the militants are showing signs of reinventing themselves as a dispersed terrorist movement — a threat that the incoming commander in chief says has been given too much time to grow.

"This should have been over with quickly," Trump told CNN last year. "We're not fighting strongly enough. We have to end it."

While Trump has promised a more effective military campaign than that of his predecessor, many of the actions he might take to accelerate progress in Iraq and Syria come with toxic side effects. Those include the potential worsening of already frayed ties with NATO ally Turkey, an increase in U.S. or civilian casualties or reinvigorated militant recruitment.

"I think they'll find there's not a lot of low-hanging fruit, by which I mean obvious and low-cost things to do that will noticeably advance progress without negative or unintended consequences," said Philip H. Gordon, who served as President Obama's coordinator for Middle East issues when the Islamic State captured the Iraqi city of Mosul in June 2014, an event that stunned U.S. officials and upended the president's national security plans.

Obama administration officials credit their slow-and-steady strategy, which has centered on local combat power backed by U.S. air support, for the gradual recapture of much of the territory held by militants across Iraq and Syria over the past two years.

U.S. air power has also dealt a blow to a potent Islamic State branch in Afghanistan and, last month, finished off the militants' sole stronghold in Libya.

While Trump has spoken only in general terms about his plans, Pentagon officials are already preparing recommendations in anticipation of the changes that Trump and his designated Pentagon chief, retired Marine Gen. James Mattis, may want to make.

Speaking in his confirmation hearing, Mattis told lawmakers that the current plan for recapturing Raqqa, the Syrian city where the Islamic State, also known as ISIS, has plotted external attacks, "needs to be reviewed and perhaps energized on a more aggressive timeline." But he, like Trump, provided few details on what steps he might take.

U.S.-backed Syrian fighters are seeking to encircle Raqqa, supported by members of an American Special Operations force of about 500 troops. But U.S. reliance on the Syrian Democratic Force, a Kurdish-dominated group, in the lead-up to the Raqqa battle has already created deep strains with Turkey, which views the Kurdish fighters as a threat to its own security.

Robert Ford, a former U.S. ambassador to Syria, said the United States had already laid the ground for lasting conflict in Syria by empowering the YPG, the Kurdish group that is at odds not only with Turkey, but also with much of the country's Arab majority.

The U.S. military has struggled since 2014 to build up a reliable, sufficiently large Arab force that can battle the Islamic State without exacerbating ethnic friction or fueling jihadist sympathies among Arabs opposed to Kurdish encroachment.

But increasing support to the Kurdish forces may be one of the only options Trump can exercise to accelerate the Raqqa offensive, short of sending in U.S. troops to liberate the city. Obama administration officials have long mulled providing

weapons directly to the YPG, and are continuing to consider that step, but have held off for fear of triggering a crisis with Turkey.

Ford warned against such a move, saying that only by limiting support to Arab groups could the United States head off a more lasting, problematic conflict.

"In return for delaying six months, you'd have the chance of defusing the ethnic tensions that the Islamic State is sure to exploit in its soon-to-come insurgency," said Ford, who is a senior fellow at the Middle East Institute.

The president-elect, who said that "Russia can help us fight" the Islamic State, has also suggested he might broaden military cooperation with Moscow in Syria. Over the past year, Russia's support for President Bashar al-Assad has altered the trajectory of the war while, Western nations allege, indiscriminate Russian airstrikes have killed thousands of Syrian civilians.

But moving to establish a robust partnership with Russia in Syria will probably face significant resistance at the Pentagon. Last year, defense officials sought to block a proposal to expand cooperation with Moscow over Syria air operations, a move that Pentagon officials argued would give the Kremlin access to sensitive U.S. intelligence and operational information.

One area where Trump's national security team may decide to dial things up is with the size of the U.S. force deployed in support of local troops in Syria and Iraq.

In Iraq, additional troops would mean more hands-on advisory capability for Iraqi troops who have taken heavy losses as they push their way deeper into Mosul. Obama has gradually increased the number of U.S. military personnel in Iraq to more than 6,000 U.S. troops today, most of whom serve in an advisory role away from the front lines.

In Syria, additional troops there could mean more hands to recruit, train and advise Arab forces ahead of the Raqqa offensive.

While military leaders will probably support modest increases to those advisory forces, proposals for any larger increase, many thousands or tens of thousands as Trump has suggested he might order, could lack military support.

Shaped by their repeated deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan, many of the senior officers leading the Pentagon have questioned the need to risk American lives in conflicts that may fail to bring about lasting change in the countries where they occur. They also worry about the antibodies that large U.S. deployments will produce, among Sunni extremists or Shiite militias.

The president-elect, promising during the campaign to “bomb the s---” out of the Islamic State,” will probably intensify the American air effort. Although the United States has conducted more than 13,000 strikes in Iraq and Syria since 2014, critics have assailed the offensive for proceeding more slowly than previous air campaigns.

Gen. Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told reporters recently that air operations were limited only by the pace of ground operations, as American and allied officials seek to help local forces advance into militant territory.

But military officials have said they have been already hitting all the available militant sites, not just in areas where allied ground forces are active and are constrained primarily by strict rules about avoiding civilian casualties.

“There’s not much left to strike in many cases,” a defense official, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss current operations, said. “The bottleneck in the chain is having targets to hit.”

Despite the restrictions, U.S. Central Command has acknowledged the death of at least 188 people in U.S. strikes over Iraq and Syria, a figure that watchdog groups say is too low.

As a candidate, Trump espoused a cavalier attitude toward civilian deaths, saying he would “go after” family members of terrorists.

“I suspect . . . they will err on the side of possibly doing more, hitting more, and killing more, in order to go after ISIS,” Gordon said. “But there will be a cost.”

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Obama’s Stark Options On ISIS: Arm Syrian Kurds Or Let Trump Decide (Gordon, Schmitt, NYT)

Tuesday, January 17, 2017

[New York Times](#)

By Michael R. Gordon And Eric Schmitt

WASHINGTON — With just days left as commander in chief, President Obama is confronting a wrenching decision on whether to move ahead with plans to arm Syrian Kurdish fighters battling the Islamic State in order to launch the long-awaited assault to retake Raqqa, the terrorist group’s de facto capital.

The choice before Mr. Obama has been a stark one.

One option would be forging a closer military alliance with the Syrian Kurds to maintain the momentum in the fight against the Islamic State, even though Turkey has denounced the Kurdish fighters as terrorists.

The other would be for Mr. Obama to leave the decision to the incoming Trump administration. Such a move could delay the Raqqa operation for many months and would mean that Mr. Obama would leave office without a clear path forward for seizing the most important Islamic State stronghold and its base for plotting terrorist operations against the West.

Mr. Obama convened a meeting on Tuesday of the National Security Council, which discussed the question, one of the most momentous of the United States’ campaign against the Islamic State, also known as ISIS or ISIL.

The White House declined to disclose what decision Mr. Obama had reached, but some administration officials believe it is unlikely that he will resolve the contentious issue in the waning moments of his presidency.

That such a pivotal decision has been left to Mr. Obama’s final weeks in office reflects the complexity of the debate about working with the Y.P.G., as the Syrian Kurdish militia is known, as well as the caution the president has displayed about sending American forces to fight in the region.

Mr. Obama has vowed to deal the Islamic State crippling blows in Mosul, Iraq, and Raqqa before he steps down on Friday. Allied airstrikes have increased in and around Raqqa in recent weeks as thousands of Syrian Kurdish and Syrian Arab fighters encircle the city, isolating it from the resupply of arms, fighters and fuel. Last month, Mr. Obama ordered 200 more American Special Operations forces to Syria to help these local fighters advancing on Raqqa, nearly doubling the number of American troops on the ground there.

But the American military believes that Raqqa cannot be seized unless the Y.P.G. is equipped for urban warfare. It is unclear what level of support President-elect Donald J. Trump will maintain for opposition groups in Syria combating the Islamic State, especially those groups that are bitterly opposed by the Turks.

Defense Secretary Ashton B. Carter stressed Raqqa’s importance during a visit to Fort Campbell, Ky., in January 2016. “The ISIL parent tumor has two centers: Raqqa in Syria and Mosul in Iraq,” Mr. Carter said. “That’s why our campaign plan’s got big arrows pointing at both Mosul and Raqqa.”

American officials requested anonymity in order to describe the administration’s internal deliberations.

About 250,000 civilians are in Raqqa, and the Islamic State has fortified the city with trenches and mines and would defend it with suicide bombers. Because the Obama administration has ruled out the use of American combat troops, the United States has to rely on mobilizing local Arab forces to join battle-hardened Syrian Kurdish fighters.

“Raqqa is very difficult because unlike Iraq, we’re not working with a government,” Brett McGurk, the American envoy to the coalition that is fighting the Islamic State, said at a seminar last week. “We’re not working with an army. We have to work with local actors and organize them into a military force.”

American military officials say it is urgent to retake Raqqa because it is the capital of the Islamic State’s caliphate, a sanctuary for many of its top leaders and the hub for the extremist group’s plots against the West.

The Pentagon has been urging Mr. Obama to equip the Syrian Kurds, whom American commanders view as their most effective ground partner, with armored vehicles, rocket-propelled-grenade launchers, machine guns and other heavy equipment so that the American-supported Raqqa attack can begin in February.

The weaponry is needed, American military officials say, because the Iraqi push to capture Mosul has demonstrated that retaking a city occupied by Islamic State fighters, armed with suicide car bombs, is a difficult and bloody operation.

To buttress the Raqqa mission, the Pentagon is also urging that the White House authorize the use of United States Army Apache attack helicopters, which are equipped with Hellfire missiles. Apaches are supporting Iraqi troops in the fight for Mosul.

But arming the Kurds would also aggravate Mr. Obama’s tense relations with Turkey’s president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who has contended that the Y.P.G. is linked to the Kurdistan Workers’ Party, which Turkey regards as a terrorist group.

The administration has been considering ways to ease Turkey’s anxiety, such as making arrangements to monitor the weapons given to the Syrian Kurds for the Raqqa offensive and thus prevent the weapons from being used elsewhere by the Kurds. In addition, Arab forces would occupy Raqqa after the city is taken, and Kurdish fighters would be withdrawn.

The United States also recently began carrying out airstrikes near Al Bab, a town in northern Syria that Turkey has been struggling to take from the Islamic State.

But American diplomats in Ankara, the Turkish capital, have warned that providing weapons to the Y.P.G. could provoke a Turkish backlash, officials say. Not only might it cause a deep breach in the United States’ relations with Mr. Erodogan, but the Turks might take actions against the Y.P.G. in northern Syria that could ultimately undermine the offensive to retake Raqqa.

Anticipating Mr. Obama’s decision, the Turks have been quietly increasing the pressure by delaying approval for

American air missions that are flown from the Turkish air base at Incirlik and supplies going in and out of the base. Incirlik has been a major hub for carrying out airstrikes against the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq.

Turkey’s sensitivity on the issue was clear last week when the United States Central Command, which oversees military operations in the Middle East, posted a statement on Twitter by the Syrian Democratic Forces, the umbrella group that includes Syrian Kurds as well as Syrian Arab fighters, affirming that it is not part of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party as “some regional governments” have claimed.

“Is this a joke or @CENTCOM has lost its senses,” Ibrahim Kalin, President Erodogan’s spokesman, responded on Twitter.

Faced with the dilemma, some administration officials have suggested that American officials go back to the drawing board and try to cobble together a more diverse force to take Raqqa that would include Turkish Special Forces as well as Turkish-supported Syrian opposition groups. American commanders say about 20,000 troops will be needed to seize the city. By contrast, Turkey has been able to muster only about 2,000 Arab fighters in its battle to reclaim Al Bab, and that campaign has been bogged down by fierce resistance.

During a visit to Washington last month, Masrour Barzani, a top security official in the Kurdish autonomous region in Iraq, pressed American officials to work with Syrian Kurds who have split with the Y.P.G. and are operating in Iraq, a group known as Pesh Merga of Rojava, or Roj Pesh. Aides to Mr. Barzani assert that the Roj Pesh are trained by the pesh merga, would be politically acceptable to the Turks and number about 3,300.

“Roj Pesh are the most efficient and politically diverse force,” Mr. Barzani said. “They can be the bridge to lessen regional tensions and a force multiplier in the campaign.”

But Pentagon officials say that the Y.P.G. has the best and most battle-tested fighters and that trying to assemble, train and equip an alternative force could be difficult and at best would take many months.

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NEAR EAST & NORTH AFRICA

Iran Says Trump’s Talk On Nuclear Deal Is ‘Mainly Slogans’ (AP)

Tuesday, January 17, 2017

[Associated Press](#)

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) – Iran’s president on Tuesday compared talk of renegotiating its nuclear accord to “converting a shirt

back to cotton,” and said U.S. President-elect Donald Trump’s talk of doing so is “mainly slogans.”

Trump has strongly criticized the deal struck with world powers, in which Iran agreed to curb its uranium enrichment in exchange for sanctions relief, but has not said what he plans to do about the agreement.

Iran’s President Hassan Rouhani told reporters that “renegotiation has no meaning at all.”

“Mr. Trump has so far made many remarks on the deal,” he added. “These are mainly slogans. I do not see it as likely that something happens in practice.” He said the deal is beneficial to the United States, but that Trump “doesn’t understand this.”

The agreement also included Russia, China, Britain, France and Germany. None have expressed interest in scrapping the deal or restoring sanctions.

“There will be no negotiations on the nuclear deal,” Rouhani said. “The deal has been finalized and it was approved in the U.N. Security Council.”

Rouhani, a moderate who has advocated greater openness toward the West, is up for re-election in May, in what will likely be seen as a referendum on the nuclear deal. He said the new administration in Washington would have no impact on the vote.

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EU Contacts Trump Camp Over Iran Deal ‘Misunderstanding’: Source (AFP)

Tuesday, January 17, 2017

AFP

Brussels (AFP) – The European Union has informally contacted the incoming Trump administration to clarify “misunderstanding” about the Iran nuclear deal which he has threatened to scrap, an EU diplomatic source said Tuesday.

EU foreign affairs head Federica Mogherini on Monday insisted the bloc would stand by the accord – which she helped negotiate – because it showed that diplomacy worked and served Europe’s security needs.

US President-elect Donald Trump has blasted the agreement as “one of the dumbest deals I have ever seen” and warned it will not stop Tehran getting atomic weapons.

The EU diplomatic source, who asked not to be named, said the contacts were made to explain the value of the accord.

“Some informal outreach was done to the new US administration to explain the added value of the deal,” the source said.

“There has been a lot of misunderstanding out there ... It is a multilateral agreement; if one side steps away from it, the others can do the same.”

The source said the EU was determined to stick with the accord and was “working very much hand in hand with China and Russia on this.”

“We see this deal as very important, as having averted a potential major crisis in a region running high with tensions,” the source added.

Under the hard-won accord, Tehran agreed to rein in its nuclear programme in return for an easing of punishing Western economic sanctions.

US President Barack Obama hailed the accord as one of his major achievements, preventing Iran getting nuclear weapons without having to go to war.

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Trump Can’t Renegotiate Iran Nuclear Deal, Rouhani Says (Erdbrink, NYT)

Tuesday, January 17, 2017

New York Times

By Thomas Erdbrink

TEHRAN — Even if President-elect Donald J. Trump would want to, there is no chance of renegotiating the 2015 nuclear agreement with Iran, the country’s president, Hassan Rouhani, said on Tuesday.

“Mr. Trump says things like that he is not happy with the nuclear deal, or he calls it the worst agreement,” Mr. Rouhani said. “These are more like slogans. I consider it unlikely that anything will happen in practice.”

On numerous occasions Mr. Trump has called the nuclear agreement a “really, really bad deal,” and has said that he may want to renegotiate its terms after he is sworn in as the 45th president of the United States on Friday.

His pick for defense secretary, James N. Mattis, a retired Marine Corps general, has been critical of Iran and the deal, but he contradicted Mr. Trump during his confirmation hearing last Thursday in Washington. He said the incoming administration should respect the nuclear agreement.

“I think this is an imperfect arms control agreement — it’s not a friendship treaty,” General Mattis said. “But when America gives her word, we have to live up to it and work with our allies.”

Iran's president said going back on the deal was impossible as it was not a bilateral agreement between Iran and the United States, but a multilateral one, also signed by Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia.

Renegotiating "is like saying that we should turn a shirt back to cotton," Mr. Rouhani said during a news conference commemorating the anniversary of the deal's implementation.

Under the agreement, Iran suspended and dismantled a large part of its nuclear program in exchange for the lifting of many — but not all — sanctions against the country. Hard-liners and a growing group of ordinary Iranian citizens, however, say they are not seeing any benefits from the agreement.

Mr. Rouhani, fending off domestic critics, pointed out to his audience that Iran was now able to sell \$70 billion worth of oil until the end of the Iranian calendar year, on March 20. "Without the deal, that would have been \$32 or \$33 billion," he said. "If not for the deal, where would we have deducted this money from? From nurses', from teachers' salary? Put health and treatment projects on hold?" "What were we to do?" he added.

Asked on Sunday by George Stephanopoulos on the ABC News program "This Week" if the Iran agreement would continue under the Trump administration, Reince Priebus, the incoming White House chief of staff, said that the deal was "on life-support."

"We all know that President-elect Trump doesn't like the Iran deal, thinks it's a terrible document, thinks it will create a nuclear arms race in the Middle East, which it already is beginning to do," Mr. Priebus said.

The head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, Ali Akbar Salehi, said that Iran would restart its nuclear program if the agreement were annulled.

"Tearing up the deal would mean that our program would resume in a new manner that would shock Washington," Al Jazeera television quoted Mr. Salehi as saying.

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Egypt Keen To Save Saudi Ties After Islands Ruling (El-Tabei, AFP)

Tuesday, January 17, 2017

AFP

By Haitham El-Tabei

Cairo (AFP) – Cairo will do all it can to preserve crucial ties with Saudi Arabia, experts say, after an Egyptian court ruled against government plans to transfer control of two islands to Riyadh.

Strains between the two Sunni Arab allies have grown in recent months, in particular over Cairo's less-than-enthusiastic support for Saudi efforts in Syria and Yemen.

Monday's ruling – which saw Egypt's top administrative court block the transfer of the Red Sea islands to Saudi Arabia – is likely to fuel concerns in Riyadh.

Still, analysts say Egypt's government, which relies on Riyadh for vital financial backing, will take steps to ensure the dispute does not escalate further.

"The government will not spare any effort to implement the (islands) agreement," says Mostafa Kamel el-Sayed, a political science professor at Cairo University.

The Egyptian government "will use all legal means available for achieving that, whether at the constitutional court or the parliament," Sayed says.

Neither government has so far commented on the ruling, which upheld a previous court decision that the two islands – Tiran and Sanafir – are sovereign Egyptian territories.

The deal to hand over the islands, signed during a visit last April by Saudi King Salman in which Riyadh showered Egypt with aid, provoked accusations that Cairo had "sold" the strategic islands.

President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's government had appealed the earlier court ruling blocking the sale and is likely to appeal the latest decision on constitutional grounds.

"The Egyptian authorities will try to calm the situation and prevent an escalation," parliamentarian Samir Ghattas says.

In an interview carried out on Sunday with state-run newspapers and published on Tuesday Sisi called for "unity" and "understanding" between Egypt and its Saudi "brothers".

Riyadh has provided billions of dollars in aid and credit to Egypt since then-army chief Sisi overthrew Islamist president Mohamed Morsi in 2013.

– Alternative backers –

Saudi Arabia is also one of Egypt's main trading partners and any cooling in relations could become "a difficult economic challenge" for Cairo, says a government official speaking on condition of anonymity.

Riyadh has already backtracked on one of the deals it signed in April without offering an explanation, with the oil giant Saudi Aramco suspending monthly deliveries of 700,000 tonnes of petroleum products to Egypt since October.

The suspension came a few days after Egypt voted in favour of a Russian-drafted UN Security Council resolution on Syria that Riyadh strongly opposed.

Economist Ibrahim al-Ghitani says Egyptian authorities are aware of their vulnerability, and have begun to seek alternative backers.

“The Egyptian government has already begun to seek an alternative in this area: an agreement has been reached with Kuwait, and negotiations with Iraq have reached a very advanced stage,” Ghitani says.

In another possible sign of tensions, a Saudi delegation in December visited a massive hydroelectric dam being built on the Nile in Ethiopia – a project which seriously worries Egypt as the river provides more than 90 percent of its water.

“The idea that we can count on Saudi Arabia as an economic partner for Egypt has started to fade,” Ghitani says.

It is unclear how concerned officials are in Riyadh following the latest ruling.

Anwar Eshki, a retired Saudi general and founder of the independent Middle East Centre for Strategic and Legal Studies in Jeddah, says there is “no problem between Saudi Arabia and Egypt” about the decision.

“This is an internal affair,” he says, describing the court battles as a reflection of domestic Egyptian struggles.

In Tuesday’s edition of Saudi Arabia’s Arab News, editor-in-chief Faisal Abbas also played down the dispute, saying that contrary “to some local media”, Saudi Arabia “remains one of Egypt’s biggest allies”.

“The issue of Tiran and Sanafir will pass sooner or later,” he wrote.

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Palestinian Parties Agree To Form Unity Government (AFP)

Tuesday, January 17, 2017

AFP

Moscow (AFP) – The main Palestinian parties on Tuesday announced a deal to form a national unity government prior to the holding of elections, after three days of reconciliation talks in Moscow.

“We have reached agreement under which, within 48 hours, we will call on (Palestinian leader) Mahmud Abbas to launch consultations on the creation of a government” of national unity, senior Fatah official Azzam al-Ahmad told a press conference, speaking in Arabic.

After the government is formed, the Palestinians would set up a national council, which would include Palestinians in exile, and hold elections.

“Today the conditions for (such an initiative) are better than ever,” said Ahmad.

The non-official talks in Moscow began on Sunday under Russian auspices with the goal of restoring “the unity of the Palestinian people.” Representatives came from Fatah, Hamas, Islamic Jihad and other factions.

Abbas’s secular party Fatah and the Islamist Hamas have been at loggerheads since the latter seized Gaza in a near civil war in 2007.

Last year the Palestinian government postponed the first municipal polls in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip in 10 years after the high court ruled they should be held only in the Fatah-run West Bank.

The last time the Palestinians staged elections in which both Hamas and Fatah took part was in 2006.

The Palestinian representatives also met on Monday with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, and asked him to dissuade incoming US president Donald Trump from carrying out a campaign pledge to move the US embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

Israel captured east Jerusalem during the 1967 war and later annexed it – in a move not recognised by the international community – declaring all of the city its unified capital.

“We sensed understanding on the part of Mr. Lavrov,” said Ahmad.

Ahmad and Moussa Abu Marzouk of Hamas spoke derisively of the Quartet – the United States, Russia, the EU and UN – in its years-long effort to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

“The Quartet’s work completely failed. It was unable to advance the decisions taken by the international community, including (UN) resolutions,” said Ahmad.

“It is imperative to find a new working mechanism for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict,” he said.

Abu Marzouk, a senior Hamas official, said he no longer wanted to work with the Quartet but instead with countries and organisations on an individual basis.

“Russia can play a substantial role” in the region, he said.

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Palestinian Shot Trying To Stab Soldier (AP)

Tuesday, January 17, 2017

Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israeli forces shot and killed a Palestinian who tried to stab a soldier in the West Bank, the military said Tuesday, as it investigates soldiers’ conduct during a violent Palestinian demonstration the day before.



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

November 14, 2018

Case No.: F-2018-00529, F-2018-00827,
F-2018-01063, & F-2018-01467

Michael Bekesha, Esq.
Judicial Watch, Inc.
425 Third Street, S.W., Suite 800
Washington, D.C. 20024

Dear Mr. Bekesha:

I refer you to our letter dated October 10, 2018, regarding the review of certain Department of State material under the Freedom of Information Act (the "FOIA"), 5 U.S.C. § 552.

The review of potentially responsive records is ongoing and has resulted in the retrieval of seven documents responsive to your request. After reviewing these documents, we have determined that five may be released in full and two may be released in part. All released material is enclosed.

Where a document has been released to you in part, all non-exempt material that is reasonably segregable from the exempt material has been released. Where we have made excisions, the applicable exemptions are marked on the document. An enclosure provides information on FOIA exemptions and other grounds for withholding material.

We will keep you advised as your case progresses. If you have any questions, you may contact Trial Attorney Damon William Taaffe at (202) 252-2544 or damon.taaffe@usdoj.gov. Please refer to the case numbers cited above and the civil action number, 18-cv-968, in all correspondence regarding this case.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan C. Weetman".

Susan C. Weetman
Chief, Programs and Policies Division
Office of Information Programs and Services

Enclosures: As stated

The Freedom of Information Act (5 USC 552)

FOIA Exemptions

- (b)(1) Information specifically authorized by an executive order to be kept secret in the interest of national defense or foreign policy. Executive Order 13526 includes the following classification categories:
- 1.4(a) Military plans, systems, or operations
 - 1.4(b) Foreign government information
 - 1.4(c) Intelligence activities, sources or methods, or cryptology
 - 1.4(d) Foreign relations or foreign activities of the US, including confidential sources
 - 1.4(e) Scientific, technological, or economic matters relating to national security, including defense against transnational terrorism
 - 1.4(f) U.S. Government programs for safeguarding nuclear materials or facilities
 - 1.4(g) Vulnerabilities or capabilities of systems, installations, infrastructures, projects, plans, or protection services relating to US national security, including defense against transnational terrorism
 - 1.4(h) Weapons of mass destruction
- (b)(2) Related solely to the internal personnel rules and practices of an agency
- (b)(3) Specifically exempted from disclosure by statute (other than 5 USC 552), for example:
- | | |
|----------------|---|
| ARMSEXP | Arms Export Control Act, 50a USC 2411(c) |
| CIA PERS/ORG | Central Intelligence Agency Act of 1949, 50 USC 403(g) |
| EXPORT CONTROL | Export Administration Act of 1979, 50 USC App. Sec. 2411(c) |
| FS ACT | Foreign Service Act of 1980, 22 USC 4004 |
| INA | Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 USC 1202(f), Sec. 222(f) |
| IRAN | Iran Claims Settlement Act, Public Law 99-99, Sec. 505 |
- (b)(4) Trade secrets and confidential commercial or financial information
- (b)(5) Interagency or intra-agency communications forming part of the deliberative process, attorney-client privilege, or attorney work product
- (b)(6) Personal privacy information
- (b)(7) Law enforcement information whose disclosure would:
- (A) interfere with enforcement proceedings
 - (B) deprive a person of a fair trial
 - (C) constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy
 - (D) disclose confidential sources
 - (E) disclose investigation techniques
 - (F) endanger life or physical safety of an individual
- (b)(8) Prepared by or for a government agency regulating or supervising financial institutions
- (b)(9) Geological and geophysical information and data, including maps, concerning wells

Other Grounds for Withholding

- NR Material not responsive to a FOIA request excised with the agreement of the requester

From: Glenn Simpson <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Monday, September 19, 2016 9:51 AM
To: Winer, Jonathan <WinerJ@state.gov>
Subject: in town?

B6

RELEASE IN PART B6

From: Winer, Jonathan </O=SBUSTATE/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=JONATHAN WINER49E>
Sent: Monday, September 26, 2016 1:55 PM
To: Dlugos, Barbara <DlugosB@state.gov>
Subject: RE: FYI, A/S Nuland meeting moved to 3:30 PM today!

RELEASE IN FULL

Ok, thanks.

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

From: Dlugos, Barbara
Sent: Monday, September 26, 2016 1:54 PM
To: Winer, Jonathan
Subject: FYI, A/S Nuland meeting moved to 3:30 PM today!
Importance: High

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

From: Winer, Jonathan </O=SBUSTATE/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=JONATHAN WINER49E>
Sent: Tuesday, November 8, 2016 9:28 AM
To: Nuland, Victoria J <nulandvj@state.gov>; Kavalec, Kathleen A <KavalecKA@state.gov>
Subject: Libya Russia

RELEASE IN FULL

- LNA's Spokesperson, Colonel Ahmed Al-Masmari said during an interview with the Egyptian newspaper Youm 7, that Egypt is supporting the Libyan army in its fight against the terrorists. He pointed out that the Egyptian government is conscious about the movements of the terrorist groups in Libya, and that if it doesn't combat them they will reach their country. He denied the reports about the presence of an Emirati military base in Libya and revealed that Libya has signed agreements with Russia for the maintenance of the arms, including naval and air defense's weapons. He added that the LNA "renewed the glory of the old Russian arms" during the fights against the terrorists. He commented on the last visit made by Khalifa Haftar to Russia by saying that they had been promised to reactivate the previous armament contracts, including the agreement signed before 2011, which is estimated to be worth four billion and 400 million. He stressed that the import will be upon certain conditions and that Moscow had slowed the supply process for the moment.

Libya Channel

Youm 7

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

From: Schwartz, Larry <SchwartzL@state.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, November 8, 2016 2:41 PM
To: Patterson, Anne W <pattersonaw@state.gov>; Jones, Stuart E <JonesS2@state.gov>; Albright, Richard A <AlbrightRA@state.gov>; Alford, Edward M <AlfordEM@state.gov>; Backemeyer, Christopher R <BackemeyerCR@state.gov>; Desrocher, John P <desrocherjp@state.gov>; Holmstrom, Todd C <HolmstromTC@state.gov>; Jones, Stuart E <JonesS2@state.gov>; Lenderking, Timothy A <lenderkingta@state.gov>; NEA-Staff-Assistants-DL <NEA-Staff-Assistants-DL@state.gov>; Pennington, Joseph S <PenningtonJS@state.gov>; Pounds, Timothy J <PoundsTJ@state.gov>; Ratney, Michael A <RatneyMA@state.gov>; Winer, Jonathan <WinerJ@state.gov>
Subject: Daesh endorses HRC, sorta

From a UK researcher – both bad, Trump worse.

RELEASE IN FULL

2016 Elections: ISIS Weighs In

Despite the seeming propaganda value of the campaign, the group has been strangely silent about it. Until recently.

- CHARLIE WINTER

Throughout the last year, the U.S. presidential race had been the elephant in the ISIS media room; for one reason or another, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's propaganda moguls neglected to address it. Montages of "Crusader leaders" staking bombastic rhetorical claims are a favorite trope for the ISIS media operative, so it seemed that talk by the U.S. presidential candidates of things like "carpet-bombing" ISIS or "[taking] out their families" might provide valuable programming for their propaganda. Yet, besides one fleeting reference to the catalyzing role the "presidential electoral campaign in America" played in the run-up to the operation to retake the group's Iraqi stronghold of Mosul, not once did the group deign to tackle the issue directly.

That is, until Saturday, when one of the Islamic State's official propaganda arms, the Al Hayat Media Center, released a seven-page essay on "The Murtadd Vote" ("murtadd" meaning "apostate"). Even this, the group's first election-focused media product, opted to sidestep the considerable propaganda value presented by the current campaign, instead offering up an ISIS twist on electoral advice. Written in dense but fluent English, it marked a departure from the group's normal media operations, in that it ostensibly targeted a group to whom it rarely pays any attention—American Muslims. The aim was to try to convince them not to vote. There is, perhaps, some irony to the group's intervention in an electoral process it considers illegitimate, even to urge abstention. The image of theocratic fundamentalists making a pitch to voters on the eve of a democratic election is an incongruous spectacle.

Early on, the essay featured a couple of cheap soundbites on each candidate—Clinton, it claimed, is a "female feminist" adept in "the sorcery of hypocrisy," while Trump is "impulsive and unpredictable." In any case, according to ISIS they are equally reprehensible, just modestly different manifestations of the "Crusader enemy."

Besides this, as well as a few customary threats to those who disagree with the ISIS project and a reiteration of

the alleged Western “War on Islam” conspiracy that rests at the center of the Islamic State’s recruitment pitch, the essay simply explained—in tedious detail—the theological basis for abstaining from voting. The author attempted to argue that, even when one candidate is “the lesser of two evils” in terms of his or her policy towards Islam—which, he implies without actually saying, would be Hillary Clinton—and even if “the victory of one candidate or nominee will lead to the deportation and abuse of Muslims,” no votes may be cast, because participation in the democratic system inevitably leads to a state of disbelief. In the curious world of ISIS, anyone that votes willingly makes themselves “a rival to Allah in rule and legislation” and thereby falls into apostasy.

Underscoring this, the author goes on to argue that the “abuse of Muslims” that a Trump win would herald does not present the mitigating circumstances within which Muslims would be “allowed” to vote—the only situation in which ISIS would deem that permissible is one wherein Muslims are subjected to “unbearable torture, lethal execution,” or the “immediate” threat thereof. The key question, though, as is often the case with ISIS propaganda, is whether ISIS actually believes this religious position, or if the group is (once again) adapting religion to facilitate its political project. The argument for Muslim abstention is one seemingly designed to indirectly aid Trump in the race, given levels of Muslim support for Clinton.

To finish, two caveats: First of all, no one actually takes election advice off ISIS. The Al Hayat Media Center released the essay not in order to actually impact the electoral decisions of Muslim Americans, but so it could claim to have warned them, prior to the election, about the consequences of voting. Essentially, and perhaps worryingly, it is intended to give ISIS a terrorist *carte blanche* for future operations in which Muslim Americans may be targeted.

Second of all, and more importantly, this is only ISIS’s stated “position.” In reality, ISIS has no ambivalence about who it wants in the Oval Office. The more anti-Muslim, bigoted, and polarizing the president, the better from the group’s perspective. It is not for nothing that ISIS kills civilians and boasts of brutality—polarization has always been one of its key strategic objectives, a way to rupture societies into binary shadows of their former selves. A Trump presidency would be a big step in that direction.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

CHARLIE WINTER is a senior research fellow at the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation.

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

From: Kavalec, Kathleen A <KavalecKA@state.gov>
Sent: Thursday, November 10, 2016 10:28 AM
To: Winer, Jonathan <WinerJ@state.gov>
Subject: Fw: : Russia had contacts with Trump team, this work is continuing - Ryabkov

RELEASE IN FULL

Sent from my BlackBerry 10 smartphone.

From: Tefft, John F <TefftJF@state.gov>
Sent: Thursday, November 10, 2016 8:20 AM
To: Nuland, Victoria J; Wallander, Celeste (NSS-Russia, EOP); Kavalec, Kathleen A; Green, Eric F; Kenney, Kristie A; Toner, Mark C
Cc: Tracy, Lynne M; Wentworth, Mark A (Moscow); Kalan, Andrea R; Godfrey, Anthony F; EUR-Press; EUR-RUS-DL; Enstrom, Karen L; Manero, David G
Subject: : Russia had contacts with Trump team, this work is continuing - Ryabkov

Fyi

Russia had contacts with Trump team, this work is continuing - Ryabkov (Part 2)

MOSCOW. Nov 10 (Interfax) - Russia contacted members of U.S. President Elect Donald Trump team during the election campaign, and this work will continue after the ballot, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said on Thursday.

"There were contacts," Ryabkov told Interfax in an interview, answering a related question.

As to whether the contacts would be intensified, he said, "these are working matters, and the sequence of actions will depend on the issues we are facing. Naturally, we are continuing this work even after the elections."

Speaking of the interaction with the Trump team, Ryabkov said, "we are doing this and we have been doing so during the election campaign."

"Obviously, we know most of the people from his entourage. Those people have always been in the limelight in the United States and have occupied high-ranking positions. I cannot say that all of them but quite a few have been staying in touch with Russian representatives," he said.

"We have just begun to consider ways of building dialogue with the future Donald Trump administration and channels we will be using for those purposes," Ryabkov said.

He said "it would be premature to speak about that, because today is actually the day after the U.S. elections, which, as you can see, have caused a massive, extremely wide reaction worldwide."

"There is a global process of perception of the consequences and an analysis of what this decision of voters actually means and how this outcome will influence U.S. global positions. Naturally, these issues matter to us. Russia is integrated in the international system in every aspect, so this is important to us, mostly from the angle of international security and the settlement of conflicts where Washington and Moscow have been playing key roles for a long period of time, which reminds us of the need to start discussing all those subjects with the next administration without delay," the deputy minister said.

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

From: Kavalec, Kathleen A <KavalecKA@state.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, December 7, 2016 9:15 PM
To: Winer, Jonathan <WinerJ@state.gov>
Subject: Fw: Trolling for Trump: How Russia Is Trying to Destroy Our Democracy

RELEASE IN FULL

Sent from my BlackBerry 10 smartphone.

From: Kavalec, Kathleen A <KavalecKA@state.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, December 7, 2016 9:05 PM
To: Nuland, Victoria J; Heffern, John A; Katsoulos, Athena; Durakoglu, Naz; Cohen, Jonathan R; Brink, Bridget A; Green, Eric F; Robinson, Christopher T; Tribble, Conrad R; Ziff, Benjamin G; Burton, Gregory S; Quinville, Robin S; Yee, Hoyt B
Subject: Trolling for Trump: How Russia Is Trying to Destroy Our Democracy

As I mentioned tonight in Vespers, I met today with one of the authors of this report. He and two colleagues have been doing analytics on Russian trolls and their use of fake news in the U.S. for the last two years. This is definitely worth reading. He noted that before DT won the nomination they were amplifying the American far right and far left. They have now moved on after Trump won and are pushing recount and calls for the Electoral college not to elect Trump. Goal is to disrupt system. His recommendations: major awareness campaign in USG; need immediate USG refutation of fake news; industry needs to fund independent organizations to monitor and rate news sources in terms of reliability and credibility.

Trolling for Trump: How Russia Is Trying to Destroy Our Democracy

Andrew Weisburd, Clint Watts and JM Berger
 November 6, 2016

Trump isn't the end of Russia's information war against America. They are just getting started.

In spring 2014, a funny story crossed our social media feeds. A petition on whitehouse.gov called for "resending Alaska back to Russia," and it quickly amassed tens of thousands of signatures. The media ran a number of amused stories on the event, and it was quickly forgotten.

The petition seemed odd to us, and so we looked at which accounts were promoting it on social media. We discovered that thousands of Russian-language bots had been repetitively tweeting links to the petition for weeks before it caught journalists' attention.

Those were the days. Now, instead of pranking petitions, Russian influence networks online are interfering with the 2016 U.S. election. Many people, especially Hillary Clinton supporters, believe that Russia is actively trying to put Donald Trump in the White House.

And the evidence is compelling. A range of activities speaks to a Russian connection: the theft of emails from the Democratic National Committee and Clinton campaign officials, hacks surrounding voter rolls and possibly election machines, Putin's overt praise for Trump, and the curious Kremlin connections of Trump campaign operatives Paul Manafort and Carter Page.

But most observers are missing the point. Russia is helping Trump's campaign, yes, but it is not doing so solely or even necessarily with the goal of placing him in the Oval Office. Rather, these efforts seek to produce a divided electorate and a president with no clear mandate to govern. The ultimate objective is to diminish and tarnish American democracy. Unfortunately, that effort is going very well indeed.

Russia's desire to sow distrust in the American system of government is not new. It's a goal Moscow has pursued since the beginning of the Cold War. Its strategy is not new, either. Soviet-era "active measures" called for using the "force of politics" rather than the "politics of force" to erode American democracy from within. What *is* new is the methods Russia uses to achieve these objectives.

We have been tracking Russian online information operations since 2014, when our interest was piqued by strange activity we observed studying online dimensions of jihadism and the Syrian civil war. When experts published content criticizing the Russian-supported Bashar al Assad regime, organized hordes of trolls would appear to attack the authors on Twitter and Facebook. Examining the troll social networks revealed dozens of accounts presenting themselves as attractive young women eager to talk politics with Americans, including some working in the national security sector. These "Egyptian" social media accounts were linked to other accounts used by the Syrian Electronic Army hacker operation. All three elements were working together: the trolls to sow doubt, the honeypots to win trust, and the hackers (we believe) to exploit clicks on dubious links sent out by the first two.

The Syrian network did not stand alone. Beyond it lurked closely interconnected networks tied to Syria's allies, Iran and Russia. Many of these networks were aimed at U.S. political dissenters and domestic extremist movements, including militia groups, white nationalists, and anarchists.

Today, that network is still hard at work, running at peak capacity to destroy Americans' confidence in their system of government. We've monitored more than 7,000 social media accounts over the last 30 months and at times engaged directly with them. Trump isn't the end of Russia's social media and hacking campaign against America, but merely the beginning. Here is what we've learned.

The Russian Social Media Approach: Soviet Union's "Active Measures" On Steroids

The United States and its European allies have always placed state-to-state relations at the forefront of their international strategies. The Soviet system's effort to undermine those relations during the Cold War, updated now by modern Russia, were known as "active measures."

A [June 1992 U.S. Information Agency report](#) on the strategy explained:

It was often very difficult for Westerners to comprehend this fundamentally different Soviet approach to international relations and, as a result, the centrality to the Soviets (now Russians) of active measures operations was gravely underappreciated.

Active measures employ a three-pronged approach that attempts to shape foreign policy by directing influence in the following ways: state-to-people, people-to-people, and state-to-state. More often than not, active measures sidestep traditional diplomacy and normal state-to-state relationships. The Russian government today employs the state-to-people and people-to-people approaches on social media and the internet, directly engaging U.S. and European audiences ripe for an anti-American message, including the alt-right and more traditional right-wing and fascist parties. It also targets left-wing audiences, but currently at a lower tempo.

Until recently, Western governments focused on state-to-state negotiations with Putin's regime largely missed Russian state-to-people social media approaches. Russia's social media campaigns seek five complementary objectives to strengthen Russia's position over Western democracies:

- Undermine citizen confidence in democratic governance;
- Foment and exacerbate divisive political fractures;

- Erode trust between citizens and elected officials and democratic institutions;
- Popularize Russian policy agendas within foreign populations;
- Create general distrust or confusion over information sources by blurring the lines between fact and fiction

In sum, these influence efforts weaken Russia's enemies without the use of force. Russian social media propaganda pushes four general themes to advance Moscow's influence objectives and connect with foreign populations they target.

Political messages are designed to tarnish democratic leaders or undermine institutions. Examples include allegations of voter fraud, election rigging, and political corruption. Leaders can be specifically targeted, for instance by promoting unsubstantiated claims about Hillary Clinton's health, or more obviously by leaking hacked emails.

Financial propaganda weakens citizen and investor confidence in foreign markets and posits the failure of capitalist economies. Stoking fears over the national debt, attacking institutions such as the Federal Reserve, and attempts to discredit Western financial experts and business leaders are all part of this arsenal.

In one example from August, Disneyland Paris was the site of a reported bomb scare. Social media accounts on Twitter reported that the park had been evacuated, and several news outlets including Russian propaganda stations *RT* and *Sputnik* published alarming stories based on the tweets, which escalated in hysteria as the afternoon stretched on. In fact, the park had not been evacuated. But that didn't stop Disney's stock from taking a temporary hit. This fluctuation could be exploited by someone who knew the fake scare was coming, but we do not have access to the data that would allow us to know whether this happened.

 disney

Social issues currently provide a useful window for Russian messaging. Police brutality, racial tensions, protests, anti-government standoffs, online privacy concerns, and alleged government misconduct are all emphasized to magnify their scale and leveraged to undermine the fabric of society.

Finally, wide-ranging conspiracy theories promote **fear of global calamity** while questioning the expertise of anyone who might calm those fears. Russian propaganda operations since 2014 have stoked fears of martial law in the United States, for instance, by promoting **chemtrails** and **Jade Helm** conspiracy theories. More recently, Moscow turned to stoking fears of nuclear war between the United States and Russia.

For the Kremlin, this is not just focused on the outside world. Russian news organizations bombard Russian citizens with the same combination of content. Steve Rosenberg, a *BBC News* correspondent in Moscow, filmed the Russian domestic equivalent of this approach on November 1, showing Russian language news headlines inciting fears such as impending nuclear war, a U.S.-Russia confrontation in Syria, and the potential for an assassination of Donald Trump.

 russia_active_measures

The Confluence of Information and Cyberspace

Russian active measures use a blend of overt and covert channels to distribute political, financial, social, and calamitous messages (see above). During the Soviet era, “white” active measures were overt information outlets directly attributable to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Today, *RT* and *Sputnik* push Kremlin-approved English-language news on television and the Internet. These outlets broadcast a mix of true information (the vast majority of content), manipulated or skewed stories, and strategically chosen falsehoods. *RT*’s slogan, “Question More,” aptly fits their reporting style “seeding ideas of conspiracy or wrongdoing without actually proving anything.”

This “white” content provides ammunition for “gray” measures, which employ less overt outlets controlled by Russia, as well as so-called useful idiots that regurgitate Russian themes and “facts” without necessarily taking direction from Russia or collaborating in a fully informed manner.

During the Cold War, gray measures used semi-covert Communist parties, friendship societies, and non-governmental organizations to engage in party-to-party and people-to-people campaigns. Today, gray measures on social media include conspiracy websites, data dump websites, and seemingly credible news aggregators that amplify disinformation and misinformation.

Conspiracy sites include outlets such as InfoWars and Zero Hedge, along with a host of lesser-known sites that repeat and repackaging the same basic content for both right- and left-wing consumers. Sometimes, these intermediaries will post the same stories on sites with opposite political orientations.

Data dump websites, such as Wikileaks and DC Leaks, overtly claim to be exposing corruption and promoting transparency by uploading private information stolen during hacks. But the timing and targets of their efforts help guide pro-Russian themes and shape messages by publishing compromising information on selected adversaries.

The people who run these sites do not necessarily know they are participants in Russian agitprop, or at least it is very difficult to prove conclusively that they do. Some sites likely receive direct financial or operational backing, while others may be paid only with juicy information.

Sincere conspiracy theorists can get vacuumed up into the social networks that promote this material. In at least one case, a site described by its creator as parody was thoroughly adopted by Russian influence operators online and turned into an unironic component of their promoted content stream, at least as far as the network’s targeted “news” consumers are concerned.

A small army of social media operatives “a mix of Russian-controlled accounts, useful idiots, and innocent bystanders” are deployed to promote all of this material to unknowing audiences. Some of these are real people, others are bots, and some present themselves as innocent news aggregators, providing “breaking news alerts” to happenings worldwide or in specific cities. The latter group is a key tool for moving misinformation and disinformation from primarily Russian-influenced circles into the general social media population. We saw this phenomenon at play in recent reports of a second military coup in Turkey and unsubstantiated reports of an active shooter that led to the shutdown of JFK Airport. Some news aggregators may be directly controlled by Russia, while other aggregators that use algorithmic collection may be the victims of manipulation.

“Black” active measures are now easier to execute than they were for the Soviets. During the Cold War, according to the 1992 USIA report, these included:

“the use of agents of influence, forgeries, covert media placements and controlled media to covertly introduce carefully crafted arguments, information, disinformation, and slogans into the discourse in government, media, religious, business, economic, and public arenas in targeted countries.”

Black active measures create both risks and costs. Agents deployed into the West must avoid detection or risk state-to-state consequences. The KGB’s Cold War efforts to keep these operations secret bore significant financial costs while producing little quantifiable benefit. Stories were difficult to place in mainstream media outlets, and the slow process made it challenging to create momentum behind any one theme.

On social media, this process is far easier, more effective, and relatively difficult to attribute. Without stepping foot in America, Russia's coordinated hackers, honeypots, and hecklers influence Americans through people-to-people engagement.

Hackers provide the fuel for themes and narratives. Initially, hackers concentrated on defacements, denial of service, and misinformation posted on compromised social media accounts. By 2015, the Kremlin's hacking efforts were much more sophisticated, coalescing into two distinct, competing hacking collectives: Fancy Bear (APT 28), possibly operated by Russian military intelligence (GRU), and Cozy Bear (APT 29), possibly operated by Russia's foreign intelligence service (FSB).

The most notorious Russian-linked hacker, using the handle Guccifer2.0, targets current and former U.S. government officials, American security experts, and media personalities by seeking access to their private communications and records. Former Secretary of State Colin Powell and Clinton campaign chairman John Podesta provide two current examples, but there will be many more to come. Today, Guccifer2.0 posts threats of election meddling this coming Tuesday.

 guccif

Guccifer 2.0 Warning on Election Posted to Social Media

In addition to phishing and cracking attacks, these hackers are aided by honeypots, a Cold War term of art referring to an espionage operative who sexually seduced or compromised targets. Today's honeypots may include a component of sexual appeal or attraction, but they just as often appear to be people who share a target's political views, obscure personal hobbies, or issues related to family history. Through direct messaging or email conversations, honeypots seek to engage the target in conversations seemingly unrelated to national security or political influence.

These honeypots often appear as friends on social media sites, sending direct messages to their targets to lower their defenses through social engineering. After winning trust, honeypots have been observed taking part in a range of behaviors, including sharing content from white and gray active measures websites, attempting to compromise the target with sexual exchanges, and most perilously, inducing targets to click on malicious links or download attachments infected with malware.

One of us directly experienced how social media direct messages from hackers or influencers seek to compromise or sway a target by using social engineering to build a rapport. Operators may engage the target's friends or acquaintances, drawing them into conversations to encourage trust. Once conversations are started, an agent of influence will be introduced into the group and will subsequently post on Russian themes from grey outlets or introduce malicious links.

When targets click on malicious links, Fancy Bear and Cozy Bear extract personal information from public officials, media personalities, and American experts and selectively dump the content obtained at opportune times. The goal is to increase popular mistrust of political leaders and people with expertise or influence in specific circles of interest to Russia, such as national security. In some cases, experts criticizing Russia have had their computers mysteriously compromised by destructive malware and their research destroyed.

Online hecklers, commonly referred to as trolls, energize Russia's active measures. Ringleader accounts designed to look like real people push organized harassment including threats of violence designed to discredit or silence people who wield influence in targeted realms, such as foreign policy or the Syrian civil war. Once the organized hecklers select a target, a variety of volunteers will join in, often out of simple antisocial tendencies. Sometimes, they join in as a result of the target's gender, religion, or ethnic background, with anti-Semitic and misogynistic trolling particularly prevalent at the moment. Our family members and colleagues have been targeted and trolled in this manner via Facebook and other social media.

Hecklers and honeypots can also overlap. For instance, we identified hundreds of accounts of ostensibly American anti-government extremists that are actually linked to Russian influence operations. These accounts create noise and fear, but may also draw actual anti-government extremists into compromising situations. Based on our observations, the latter effort has not been widely successful so far among anti-government extremists, who tend to stay in their own social networks and are less likely to interact with Russian influence accounts, but our analysis points to greater overlap with networks involving American white nationalists.

Russia's honeypots, hecklers, and hackers have run amok for at least two years, achieving unprecedented success in poisoning America's body politic and creating deep dissent, including a rise in violent extremist activity and visibility. Posting hundreds of times a day on social media, thousands of Russian bots and human influence operators pump massive amounts of disinformation and harassment into public discourse.

This "computational propaganda," a term coined by Philip Howard, has the cumulative effect of creating Clayton A. Davis at Indiana University calls a "majority illusion, where many people appear to believe something, which makes that thing more credible." The net result is an American information environment where citizens and even subject-matter experts are hard-pressed to distinguish fact from fiction. They are unsure who to trust and thus more willing to believe anything that supports their personal biases and preferences.

The United States disbanded the U.S. Information Agency after the Cold War and currently fields no apparatus to detect and mitigate Russia's social media influence campaign. As seen in America's disjointed counter narratives against the Islamic State, efforts to create any kind of U.S. information strategy are plagued by disparate and uncoordinated efforts strewn among many military, diplomatic, and intelligence commands. American cyber operations and hacking reside separately with the National Security Agency. Russia, on the other hand, seamlessly integrates the two efforts to devastating effect.

After Election Day: What to do about Russia's Active Measures?

The most overwhelming element of Russia's online active measures over the last year relate to the presidential campaign of Donald Trump. Russian promotion of Trump not only plagues Clinton, but likely helped sideline other GOP candidates in early 2016 with a more traditional anti-Russia view of foreign policy. It is impossible to assess whether Donald Trump is even fully aware of these efforts, let alone complicit. Setting aside that question for a moment, some readers will immediately ask how we are so sure all this activity goes back to Russia?

There are a number of technical indicators, most tellingly the synchronization of messaging and disinformation with "white" outlets such as *RT* and *Sputnik*, as well as the shocking consistency of messaging through specific social networks we have identified.

Dmitri Alperovich of the cyber-security firm CrowdStrike first attributed the DNC hacks to Russia. He explained in a recent *War on the Rocks* podcast:

The important thing about attribution is that it's not that much different from the physical world. Just like someone can plan a perfect bank heist and get away with it, you can do that in the cyber-domain, but you can almost never actually execute a series of bank heists over the course of many years and get away with it. In fact, the probability of you not getting caught is miniscule. And the same thing is true in cyber-space because eventually you make mistakes. Eventually you repeat trades. It's hard to sort of hide the targets you're going after.

There are other, less subtle indications as well, for instance, a notification from Google: "We believe we detected government backed attackers trying to steal your password. This happens to less than 0.1% of all Gmail users." When one of us receives these messages, we feel confident we're on the right trail.



For his part, Trump rejects the idea that Russia is involved and claims it is impossible to know either way. [Shane Harris commented](#):

It is startling how he is the only one, it seems, who does not want to acknowledge what 17 intelligence agencies and a lot of technical experts all agree on and his insistence that it could be anyone just flies in the face of the available evidence.

[Trump's business ties](#) to Russia and those of his key advisers have been [documented by several journalists](#), including Harris, who reported that Republican officials were [blocking efforts to investigate ties](#) between Trump and Russia.

Regardless of the extent of Trump's direct knowledge about Russia's intelligence activities, active measures have achieved enormous success on the back of his presidential campaign. Russia sees Trump as a tool to undermine its American adversaries. In that regard, they've already achieved their goal and possess the potential to exceed their expectations. As noted previously, the goal of these efforts may not be to elect Trump as president, but rather to ensure the election result is as divided and negative as possible, as reflected in historically low approval ratings for both candidates.

A Trump victory could pave the way for Russian ascendance and American acquiescence, but the candidate's unpredictability may carry more risk than Vladimir Putin would prefer. It is one thing to stoke fears of nuclear war; it is entirely another to risk the actuality. A Trump loss may be adequately beneficial to Russia in the short-term and of even greater benefit over the long term, particularly if the candidate indulges his not-so-veiled hints that he could engage in an ongoing battle to tarnish the legitimacy of the electoral system. A Trump loss may lead to a [Trump television and social media venture](#), a vehicle to sustain his supporters' angst and perhaps ultimately becoming a high-profile gray active measures outlet.

There are many possible scenarios for the future direction of Russian active measures. Additional damaging information may have been withheld from documented hacks of U.S. political actors, and as-yet undisclosed information – perhaps from a hack of Republican Party emails already suggested by some media reports – may emerge after the election regardless of who wins. Should Russia conduct such data dumps through Wikileaks, for instance, it would create an appearance of balance while also damaging the Republican Party, which almost certainly has at least as much embarrassing material as the DNC. Regardless of who wins, Russian operators might save particularly damaging information for release after the inauguration, when talk of impeachment could further diminish his or her influence in Washington and abroad.

Globally, the implications of Russia's social media active measures are dire. Social media has played a key role in controversial decisions such as [Brexit](#), and in politics and elections around the world, including those of [France](#), [Estonia](#) and [Ukraine](#). In heated political contests such as [Brexit](#) and the U.S. presidential election, Russian social media active measures could tip the balance of an electoral outcome by influencing a small fraction of a voting public.

Russian [employment of bots](#) and covert personas spells trouble for social media companies, too. Their aggressive behavior erodes trust between consumers and the platforms they enjoy. Social media users will not be sure what to believe or who to trust, and they will either limit their sharing or leave social media life altogether after harassment and misinformation. Mainstream media should also reflect on having fallen victim to Russian propaganda time and again in such a way that has made them accomplices to the Kremlin's efforts to damage the American body politic. They can claim to be unwitting accomplices, but given all of the public information on the nature of this Russian information warfare campaign, such claims lack credibility.

The Obama administration has been slow to assess and respond to Russia's social media manipulation, so Russia continues to push the envelope. The U.S. government will need to rapidly develop a strategy to mitigate Russian active measures starting in January 2017. How and when will they counter Russian aggression online? How will they protect citizens from influence operations and hacks? How should we respond to and ultimately deter interference with U.S. elections and the hacking of officials, companies, or citizens?

Meanwhile, the story continues. In late October 2016, Kremlin-linked accounts and bots once again began pushing a [White House petition](#), this time to remove George Soros-owned voting machines from 16 states. Of course, no such machines exist, but that didn't prevent the petition from racking up nearly 129,000 signatures.

But don't forget about Alaska.

In November 2015, Russian television aired a program arguing that the transfer of Alaska to the United States was invalid. In October 2016, [The New York Observer](#) – a newspaper owned by Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner – published a story about [Putin's desire to reclaim Alaska for Russia](#). Well, at least they can point to that totally legitimate petition.

Andrew A. Weisburd is a Fellow at the Center for Cyber & Homeland Security, a provider of instruction and expert services to the intelligence community, and a non-sworn law enforcement professional.

Clint Watts is a Fox Fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute in Philadelphia and a Senior Fellow at the Center for Cyber and Homeland Security at The George Washington University. Prior to his current work as a security consultant, Clint served as a U.S. Army infantry officer, a FBI Special Agent on a Joint Terrorism Task Force, and as the Executive Officer of the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point.

J.M. Berger is an author and analyst studying extremism and the use of propaganda on social media.

<http://warontherocks.com/2016/11/trolling-for-trump-how-russia-is-trying-to-destroy-our-democracy/>

From: Eric Hamburg [redacted]
Sent: Thursday, January 12, 2017 7:55 PM **RELEASE IN PART B6**
To: Winer, Jonathan <WinerJ@state.gov>
Subject: Fwd: Christopher Steele: super-spy or dodgy dossier writer? The secret world of the man behind the leaked Trump document

B6

Dear Jonathan,

I have been meaning to write to you, and just came across this article which mentions your name... Let's do a movie about this!

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/donald-trump-who-is-christopher-steele-man-behind-the-trump-dossier-perverted-sexual-acts-mi6-agent-a7524191.html>

I was wondering if you have decided what your next position will be after leaving government. I'd like to keep in touch and get together the next time I'm in Washington. I'm currently working on a mini-series about Watergate for ABC with John Dean. [redacted]

[redacted]
[redacted] I'm glad you have gotten the recognition you deserve from President Obama.

All the best,

Eric



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

December 12, 2018

Case No.: F-2018-00529, F-2018-00827,
F-2018-01063, & F-2018-01467

Michael Bekesha, Esq.
Judicial Watch, Inc.
425 Third Street, S.W., Suite 800
Washington, D.C. 20024

Dear Mr. Bekesha:

I refer you to our letter dated November 14, 2018, regarding the review of certain Department of State material under the Freedom of Information Act (the "FOIA"), 5 U.S.C. § 552.

The review of potentially responsive records is ongoing and has resulted in the retrieval of 16 documents responsive to your request. After reviewing these documents, we have determined that 2 may be released to you in full, 13 may be released in part, and 1 must be withheld in full. All released material is enclosed.

Of the information withheld in full, all was withheld under FOIA exemptions 1 and 5, 5 U.S.C. §§ 552(b)(1) and (b)(5). Where a document has been released to you in part, all non-exempt material that is reasonably segregable from the exempt material has been released. Where we have made excisions, the applicable exemptions are marked on the document. An enclosure provides information on FOIA exemptions and other grounds for withholding material.

We will keep you advised as your case progresses. If you have any questions, you may contact Trial Attorney Damon William Taaffe at (202) 252-2544 or damon.taaffe@usdoj.gov. Please refer to the case numbers cited above and the civil action number, 18-cv-968, in all correspondence regarding this case.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan C. Weetman".

Susan C. Weetman
Chief, Programs and Policies Division
Office of Information Programs and Services

Enclosures: As stated

The Freedom of Information Act (5 USC 552)

FOIA Exemptions

- (b)(1) Information specifically authorized by an executive order to be kept secret in the interest of national defense or foreign policy. Executive Order 13526 includes the following classification categories:
- 1.4(a) Military plans, systems, or operations
 - 1.4(b) Foreign government information
 - 1.4(c) Intelligence activities, sources or methods, or cryptology
 - 1.4(d) Foreign relations or foreign activities of the US, including confidential sources
 - 1.4(e) Scientific, technological, or economic matters relating to national security, including defense against transnational terrorism
 - 1.4(f) U.S. Government programs for safeguarding nuclear materials or facilities
 - 1.4(g) Vulnerabilities or capabilities of systems, installations, infrastructures, projects, plans, or protection services relating to US national security, including defense against transnational terrorism
 - 1.4(h) Weapons of mass destruction
- (b)(2) Related solely to the internal personnel rules and practices of an agency
- (b)(3) Specifically exempted from disclosure by statute (other than 5 USC 552), for example:
- | | |
|----------------|---|
| ARMSEXP | Arms Export Control Act, 50a USC 2411(c) |
| CIA PERS/ORG | Central Intelligence Agency Act of 1949, 50 USC 403(g) |
| EXPORT CONTROL | Export Administration Act of 1979, 50 USC App. Sec. 2411(c) |
| FS ACT | Foreign Service Act of 1980, 22 USC 4004 |
| INA | Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 USC 1202(f), Sec. 222(f) |
| IRAN | Iran Claims Settlement Act, Public Law 99-99, Sec. 505 |
- (b)(4) Trade secrets and confidential commercial or financial information
- (b)(5) Interagency or intra-agency communications forming part of the deliberative process, attorney-client privilege, or attorney work product
- (b)(6) Personal privacy information
- (b)(7) Law enforcement information whose disclosure would:
- (A) interfere with enforcement proceedings
 - (B) deprive a person of a fair trial
 - (C) constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy
 - (D) disclose confidential sources
 - (E) disclose investigation techniques
 - (F) endanger life or physical safety of an individual
- (b)(8) Prepared by or for a government agency regulating or supervising financial institutions
- (b)(9) Geological and geophysical information and data, including maps, concerning wells

Other Grounds for Withholding

- NR Material not responsive to a FOIA request excised with the agreement of the requester

RELEASE IN PART B5

From: Finer, Jonathan J <FinerJJ@state.gov>
Sent: Saturday, March 12, 2016 1:16 PM
To: Johnson, Glen D (S) <JohnsonGD@state.gov>; Imbrie, W. Andrew <ImbrieWA@state.gov>
Cc: Sullivan, Thomas D <SullivanTD@state.gov>; Stout, Jennifer P <StoutJP@state.gov>; Kirby, John <KirbyJ@state.gov>; Toner, Mark C <tonermc@state.gov>; Kenna, Lisa D <kennald@state.gov>; Nuland, Victoria J <nulandvj@state.gov>; Jeffrey, Jahn F <JeffreyJahnF@state.gov>; Patterson, Anne W <pattersonaw@state.gov>; Feierstein, Gerald M <FeiersteinGM@state.gov>; Silverman, Lawrence R <SilvermanLR@state.gov>; Ratney, Michael A <RatneyMA@state.gov>; Fogarty, Daniel J <FogartyDJ@state.gov>; Winer, Jonathan <WinerJ@state.gov>; NEA-LIBYADESK <NEALIBYADESK@state.gov>; Shannon, Thomas A <ShannonTA@state.gov>; McGurk, Brett H <McGurkBH2@state.gov>; Sharma, Sujata P <SharmaS7@state.gov>; Plane Team <PlaneTeam@state.gov>; Line <line1@mail2ses.com>
Subject: Re: Latest - S press avail Paris

We may need to amp up the Syria language by tomorrow. Violations mounting.

From: Johnson, Glen D (S)
Sent: Saturday, March 12, 2016 1:12 PM
To: Imbrie, W. Andrew
Cc: Finer, Jonathan J; Sullivan, Thomas D; Stout, Jennifer P; Kirby, John; Toner, Mark C; Kenna, Lisa D; Nuland, Victoria J; Jeffrey, Jahn F; Patterson, Anne W; Feierstein, Gerald M; Silverman, Lawrence R; Ratney, Michael A; Fogarty, Daniel J; Winer, Jonathan; NEA-LIBYADESK; Shannon, Thomas A; McGurk, Brett H; Sharma, Sujata P; Plane Team; Line
Subject: Re: Latest - S press avail Paris

Reads well to me but defer to JF and others...

On Mar 12, 2016, at 7:08 PM, Imbrie, W. Andrew <ImbrieWA@state.gov> wrote:

Hi all - attached and below is the latest draft of the S press avail for tomorrow in Paris. Thanks to Sujata for translating two sections into French.

PT- could you please print out four copies and put in folders for U/S Shannon, Tom, Mark, and Glen?

Many thanks,
Andrew

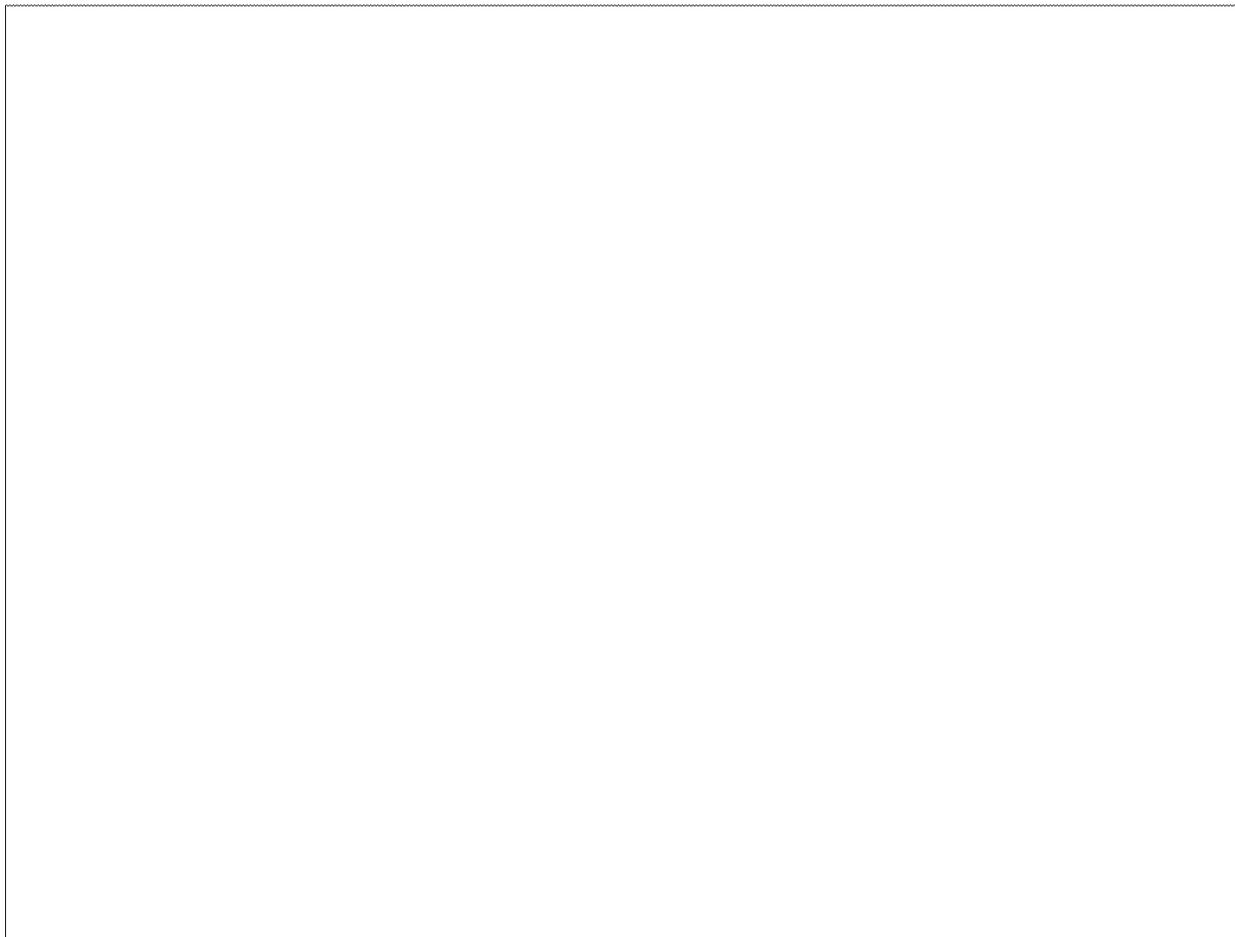
Secretary of State John Kerry
Joint Press Availability, Paris
Sunday, March 13, 2016

Good afternoon. C'est toujours un plaisir d'être à Paris.



B5





###

From: Winer, Jonathan </O=SBUSTATE/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=JONATHAN WINER49E>
Sent: Saturday, February 13, 2016 8:15 AM
To: Epner, Stephanie <EpnerS@state.gov>; Finer, Jonathan J <FinerJJ@state.gov>; Nuland, Victoria J <nulandvj@state.gov>; Sullivan, Thomas D <SullivanTD@state.gov>; Kenna, Lisa D <kennald@state.gov>; Kirby, John <KirbyJ@state.gov>; Johnson, Glen D (S) <JohnsonGD@state.gov>
Cc: S_SpecialAssistants <S_SpecialAssistants@state.gov>; Rubin, Joshua A <RubinJA@state.gov>; Plane Team <PlaneTeam@state.gov>; SP_SpeechWriters <SP_SpeechWriters@state.gov>
Subject: Re: Draft Albania press avail

RELEASE IN PART B5, B6

Great as is

Jonathan Winer +

B6

From: Epner, Stephanie
Sent: Saturday, February 13, 2016 1:22 PM
To: Finer, Jonathan J; Nuland, Victoria J; Sullivan, Thomas D; Kenna, Lisa D; Kirby, John; Johnson, Glen D (S); Winer, Jonathan
Cc: S_SpecialAssistants; Rubin, Joshua A; Plane Team; SP_SpeechWriters
Subject: Draft Albania press avail

All -- Attached/below is a draft of S's statement to press in Albania tomorrow. Let me know if any edits necessary. Thanks,
Stephanie

Secretary of State John Kerry

Brief Opening Remarks – Press Availability Prime Minister Rama

Tirana, Albania

February 14, 2016

B5



From: Finer, Jonathan J <FinerJJ@state.gov>
Sent: Saturday, May 14, 2016 2:11 PM
To: Nuland, Victoria J <nulandvj@state.gov>
Cc: Kenna, Lisa D <kennald@state.gov>; Winer, Jonathan <WinerJ@state.gov>; Sullivan, Thomas D <SullivanTD@state.gov>; Heffern, John A <HeffernJA@state.gov>; Kosnett, Philip S <KosnettPS@state.gov>; Quinville, Robin S <QuinvilleRS@state.gov>; Charles A. Kupchan <Charles_A_Kupchan@nsc.eop.gov>
Subject: Re:

RELEASE IN PART B5

B5

On May 14, 2016, at 2:07 PM, Nuland, Victoria J <nulandvj@state.gov> wrote:

From: Kupchan, Charles A. EOP/NSC <Charles_A_Kupchan@[redacted]>
Sent: Saturday, May 14, 2016 2:29 PM
To: Winer, Jonathan <WinerJ@state.gov>
Cc: Nuland, Victoria J <nulandvj@state.gov>; Kenna, Lisa D <kennald@state.gov>; Finer, Jonathan J <FinerJJ@state.gov>; Sullivan, Thomas D <SullivanTD@state.gov>; Heffern, John A <HeffernJA@state.gov>; Kosnett, Philip S <KosnettPS@state.gov>; Quinville, Robin S <QuinvilleRS@state.gov>
Subject: Re: [redacted]

B6

B5

[redacted]

On May 14, 2016, at 2:11 PM, Winer, Jonathan <WinerJ@state.gov<<http://redirect.state.sbu/?url=mailto:WinerJ@state.gov>>> wrote:

It's likely to last ninety minutes ?before S and Gentiloni leave. [redacted]
[redacted]

Jonathan Winer +12026152819
From: Nuland, Victoria J
Sent: Saturday, May 14, 2016 8:07 PM
To: Kenna, Lisa D; Finer, Jonathan J; Winer, Jonathan; Sullivan, Thomas D; Heffern, John A
Cc: Kosnett, Philip S; Quinville, Robin S; Charles A. Kupchan
Subject: [redacted]

RELEASE IN PART B5, B6

[redacted]

From: Glenn Simpson [redacted]
Sent: Thursday, September 22, 2016 7:48 AM
To: Winer, Jonathan <WinerJ@state.gov>
Subject: Re: Can u ring

B6

RELEASE IN PART B6

Not really but it is quick

Sent from my iPhone

> On Sep 22, 2016, at 7:46 AM, Winer, Jonathan <WinerJ@state.gov> wrote:
>
> Will try. I am on a call currently and then in Libya ministerial. Can this await 11am?
>
>
> Jonathan Winer [redacted]
> Original Message
> From: Glenn Simpson
> Sent: Thursday, September 22, 2016 7:37 AM
> To: Winer, Jonathan
> Subject: Can u ring
>
>
> Asap?
>
> Sent from my iPhone
>

From: Winer, Jonathan <WinerJ@state.gov> **RELEASE IN PART B6**
Sent: Thursday, October 27, 2016 1:10 PM
To: Kenna, Lisa D <kennald@state.gov>; Finer, Jonathan J <FinerJJ@state.gov>; Sullivan, Thomas D <SullivanTD@state.gov>
Cc: Bodde, Peter W (LEO) <BoddePW@state.gov>; Leaf, Barbara A <LeafBA@state.gov>; Beecroft, Robert S (Cairo) <BeecroftRS@state.gov>; Patterson, Anne W <pattersonaw@state.gov>; Nuland, Victoria J <nulandvj@state.gov>; Jones, Stuart E <JonesS2@state.gov>; John, Oliver B <JohnOB@state.gov>; LoGerfo, Gregory D <LoGerfoGD@state.gov>; Desrocher, John P <desrocherjp@state.gov>; Lenderking, Timothy A <lenderkingta@state.gov>
Subject: London Ministerial

My Italian counterpart just confirmed to me Gentiloni attendance. Emiratis have advised Embassy Abu Dhabi (and me) of Sheikh Abdullah bZ attendance.

Jonathan Winer



B6

DONALD TRUMP'S FOREIGN POLICY

Mr. Trump's Website

RELEASE IN FULL

Overall foreign policy

- Peace through strength will be at the center of our foreign policy. We will achieve a stable, peaceful world with less conflict and more common ground.
- Advance America's core national interests, promote regional stability, and produce an easing of tensions in the world. Work with Congress to fully repeal the defense sequester and submit a new budget to rebuild our depleted military.
- Rebuild our military, enhance and improve intelligence and cyber capabilities.
- End the current strategy of nation-building and regime change.
- Ensure our security procedures and refugee policy takes into account the security of the American people.

Middle Eastern Policy

- Work with our Arab allies and friends in the Middle East in the fight against ISIS.
- Pursue aggressive joint and coalition military operations to crush and destroy ISIS, international cooperation to cutoff their funding, expand intelligence sharing, and cyberwarfare to disrupt and disable their propaganda and recruiting.
- Defeat the ideology of radical Islamic terrorism just as we won the Cold War.
- Establish new screening procedures and enforce our immigration laws to keep terrorists out of the United States.
- Suspend, on a temporary basis, immigration from some of the most dangerous and volatile regions of the world that have a history of exporting terrorism.
- Establish a Commission on Radical Islam to identify and explain to the American public the core convictions and beliefs of Radical Islam, to identify the warning signs of radicalization, and to expose the networks in our society that support radicalization.
- Key Issue: Iran, the world's largest state sponsor of terrorism, is now flush with \$150 billion in cash released by the United States – plus another \$400 million in ransom.

Mr. Trump's Speeches and Statements

On Syrian Refugees: Second Debate, 10 October 2016

It's called **extreme vetting**. We are going to areas like Syria where they're coming in by the tens of thousands because of Barack Obama. And Hillary Clinton wants to allow a 550 percent increase over Obama. People are coming into our country like we have no idea who they are, where they are from, what their feelings about our country is, and she wants 550 percent more. **This is going to be the great Trojan horse of all time.**

On Assad: Second Debate, 10 October 2016

He's much tougher and much smarter than her and Obama. And everyone thought he was gone two years ago, three years ago. He aligned with Russia. He now also aligned with Iran, who we made very powerful. We gave them \$150 billion back. We gave them \$1.7 billion in cash. I mean, cash, bundles of cash as big as this stage. We gave them \$1.7 billion. Now they have lined -- he has aligned with Russia and with Iran. They don't want ISIS, but they have other things because we're backing, we're backing rebels. **We don't know who the rebels are.** We're giving them lots of money, lots of everything. We don't know who the rebels are, and when and if -- and it's not going to happen because you have Russia and you have Iran now. But if they ever did overthrow Assad, you might end up with as bad as Assad is. And he's a bad guy. **But you may very well end up with worse than Assad.**

On Safe Zones: Second Debate, 10 October 2016

We have enough problems in this country. I believe in building safe zones. I believe in having **other people pay for them, as an example, the Gulf states**, who are not carrying their weight, but they have nothing but money, and take care of people. But I don't want to have, with all the problems this country has and all of the problems that you see going on, hundreds of thousands of people coming in from Syria when we know nothing about them. We know nothing about their values and we know nothing about their love for our country.

On Counterterrorism: "Making America Safe Again," 15 August 2016

..Let's look back at the Middle East at the very beginning of 2009, before the Obama-Clinton Administration took over... **Syria was under control.** Egypt was ruled by a secular President and an ally of the United States... Iran was being choked off by economic sanctions. If I become President, **the era of nation-building will be ended.** Our new approach, which must be shared by both parties in America, by our allies overseas, and by our friends in the Middle East, must be to **halt the spread of Radical Islam.** All actions should be oriented around this goal, and any country which shares this goal will be our ally. We cannot always choose our friends, but we can never fail to recognize our enemies. As President, I will call for an **international conference focused on this goal.** We will work side-by-side with our friends in the Middle East, including our greatest ally, Israel. We will partner with King Abdullah of Jordan, and President Sisi of Egypt, and all others who recognize this ideology of death that must be extinguished. We will also **work closely with NATO** on this new mission. I had previously said that NATO was obsolete because it failed to deal adequately with terrorism; since my comments they have

changed their policy and now have a new division focused on terror threats. I also believe that we could find **common ground with Russia in the fight against ISIS**. They too have much at stake in the outcome in Syria, and have had their own battles with Islamic terrorism. My Administration will aggressively **pursue joint and coalition military operations to crush and destroy ISIS**, international cooperation to cutoff their funding, **expanded intelligence sharing, and cyberwarfare** to disrupt and disable their propaganda and recruiting. We cannot allow the internet to be used as a recruiting tool, and for other purposes, by our enemy – we must shut down their access to this form of communication, and we must do so immediately. Unlike Hillary Clinton, who has risked so many lives with her careless handling of sensitive information, my Administration **will not telegraph exact military plans to the enemy**. I have often said that General MacArthur and General Patton would be in a state of shock if they were alive today to see the way President Obama and Hillary Clinton try to recklessly announce their every move before it happens – like they did in Iraq – so that the enemy can prepare and adapt... Just as we won the Cold War, in part, by exposing the evils of communism and the virtues of free markets, so too must we **take on the ideology of Radical Islam**.... The common thread linking the major Islamic terrorist attacks that have recently occurred on our soil ...is that they have involved immigrants or the children of immigrants. Clearly, **new screening procedures** are needed... In the Cold War, we had an ideological screening test... we must also screen out any who have hostile attitudes towards our country or its principles – or who believe that Sharia law should supplant American law... To put these new procedures in place, we will have to **temporarily suspend immigration from some of the most dangerous and volatile regions of the world** that have a history of exporting terrorism. As soon as I take office, I will ask the State Department and the Department of Homeland Security to identify a list of regions where adequate screening cannot take place. We will stop processing visas from those areas until such time as it is deemed safe to resume based on new circumstances or new procedures... These warnings signs were ignored because political correctness has replaced common sense in our society. That is why one of my first acts as President will be to **establish a Commission on Radical Islam**... The goal of the commission will be to identify and explain to the American public the core convictions and beliefs of Radical Islam, to identify the warning signs of radicalization, and to expose the networks in our society that support radicalization... We will also **keep open Guantanamo Bay**, and place a renewed emphasis on human intelligence. **Drone strikes will remain** part of our strategy, but we will also seek to capture high-value targets to gain needed information to dismantle their organizations. Foreign combatants will be tried in military commissions. Finally, we will pursue aggressive criminal or immigration charges against anyone who lends material support to terrorism...

On Nuclear Proliferation: CNN Republican Townhall, 29 March 2016

COOPER: So some proliferation is OK?

TRUMP: At some point we have to say, you know what, we're better off if Japan protects itself against this maniac in North Korea, we're better off, frankly, if South Korea is going to start to protect itself, we have...

COOPER: Saudi Arabia, nuclear weapons?

TRUMP: **Saudi Arabia, absolutely.**

On Israel: AIPAC Speech, 21 March 2016

I speak to you today as a lifelong supporter and true friend of Israel. I am a newcomer to politics, but not to backing the Jewish state... **My number-one priority is to dismantle the disastrous deal with Iran.** I have been in business a long time. I know deal-making. And let me tell you, **this deal is catastrophic for America, for Israel and for the whole of the Middle East...** When I'm president, I will adopt a strategy that focuses on three things when it comes to Iran. First, we will stand up to Iran's aggressive push to destabilize and dominate the region... Secondly, we will totally dismantle Iran's global terror network which is big and powerful, but not powerful like us... Third, at the very least, we must enforce the terms of the previous deal to hold Iran totally accountable... Which brings me to my next point, **the utter weakness and incompetence of the United Nations...** The United Nations is not a friend of democracy, it's not a friend to freedom, it's not a friend even to the United States of America where, as you know, it has its home. And it surely is not a friend to Israel... So with the president in his final year, discussions have been swirling about an attempt to bring a Security Council resolution on terms of an eventual agreement between Israel and Palestine... **The United States must oppose this resolution and use the power of our veto,** which I will use as president 100 percent... **We will move the American embassy to the eternal capital of the Jewish people, Jerusalem...** The Palestinians must come to the table knowing that the bond between the United States and Israel is absolutely, totally unbreakable...

On Putin: 17 February 2016

I have no relationship with him other than he called me a genius. He said Donald trump is a genius and he is going to be the leader of the party and he's going to be the leader of the world or something. These characters that I'm running against said, "We want you to disavow that statement." I said what, he called me a genius, I'm going to disavow it? Are you crazy? Can you believe it? How stupid are they. And besides that wouldn't it be good if we actually got along with countries. Wouldn't it actually be a positive thing. I think I'd **have a good relationship with Putin.** I mean who knows.

On ISIL: "Take out their families," 3 December 2015

The other thing with the terrorists is you have to take out their families, when you get these terrorists, you have to take out their families. They care about their lives, don't kid yourself. When they say they don't care about their lives, you have to take out their families

On Safe Zones in Syria: Rally Speech in Knoxville, TN, 16 November 2015

What I like is build a safe zone in Syria. Build a big, beautiful safe zone, and you have whatever it is so people can live, and they'll be happier... **So you keep 'em in Syria.** You build a tremendous safe zone, it'll cost you tremendously much less, much less, and they'll be there and the weather's the same. And the weather is the same and then when this horrible situation that is so horrible run. We don't know what we are doing. When it's all over they move back and they go back into their cities, and they rebuild their cities. And they start out and they start over again.

On ISIL: "I would bomb the sh-- out of 'em." 12 November 2015

"ISIS is making a tremendous amount of money because they have certain oil camps, certain areas of oil that they took away. They have some in Syria, some in Iraq. I would bomb the s--- out of 'em. I would just bomb those suckers. That's right. I'd blow up the pipes. ... I'd blow up every single inch. There would be nothing left. And you know what, you'll get Exxon to come in there and in two months, you ever see these guys, how good they are, the great oil companies? They'll rebuild that sucker, brand new — it'll be beautiful. And I'd rig it, and I'd take the oil."

On the Iran Nuclear Deal: "I will be so tough," August, 2015.

I've heard a lot of people say, "We're going to rip up the deal." It's very tough to do when you say, "Rip up a deal." You know, I've taken over some bad contracts. I buy contracts where people screwed up and they have bad contracts. But I'm really good at looking at a contract and finding things within a contract that, even if they're bad, **I would police that contract so tough that they don't have a chance.** As bad as the contract is, I will be so tough on that contract.

On Trade Wars: "We're already in one."

"Some people have said that my policies on trade will lead to a trade war. Well, I guess, if you think about it, we're already in one. We're losing 500 billion dollars a year to China. We're losing billions and billions to Japan and Vietnam and India, and Mexico's beating us both at the border and they're beating us in trade. **So, when you say war, they're in a war, we're not in a war because they're beating us so badly.** We're gonna have to tax the goods coming in from companies that left, otherwise there's no incentive whatsoever, absolutely none. I'm a businessman, this is what I do.

Mr. Trump's Foreign Policy Advisors

Dr. Walid Phares, Fox News, 27 April 2016

Presidential candidate Donald J. Trump's first foreign policy speech laid out a bold new vision for American leadership in the world. Mr. Trump makes the case that **American taxpayers are spending titanic amounts defending other nations** and regions which could and should be contributing more toward their own self-defense. The principle of defending friends is not in question, but our spending strategies have to be reevaluated, so that long term viability is insured. Within NATO, only four of the 28 member countries are meeting their defense commitments while the US is providing 73 percent of the overall NATO budget. Mr. Trump clearly **desires to reduce tensions with Russia and China** so as to better focus on containing our common enemy, Jihadism. For Mr. Trump, the worst case scenario of nuclear terror is the first priority to be addressed *before* such weapons fall into the hands of jihadi terrorists who are more than willing to use them. President Trump will **never allow Iran to obtain a nuclear weapon**, and he will confront and contain Iranian expansionism. Iran is using the unfrozen billions released by Obama's deal to purchase advanced weaponry and to destabilize the region even further. A new U.S. policy will reverse these processes as of February 2017. Although Mr. Trump would take steps to create **safe zones** in the region to stem the tide of refugees now pouring into Europe, he has declared that America will get out of the nation-building business and that American citizens

will never again feel their interests come second to the interests of the citizens of foreign country. Mr. Trump also understands **the use of economic leverage to pressure China into reining in North Korea's nuclear ambitions**. Stronger counter-terrorism measures and deeper international cooperation on the one hand, and new and **smarter immigration strategies** on the other, must be set up in order to place America on a path to greater security, not just for today, but for generations to come. Under President Donald Trump, **jihadism and Islamism will be called by their names**, inasmuch as they already are in Europe and the Arab world, and with greater precision. Furthermore, the mother organization which has been spreading extremism and stealth indoctrination since the 1920's, i.e. **the Muslim Brotherhood, will be designated as a terrorist group** by President Trump in coordination with the U.S. Congress and in conjunction with a growing number of Arab countries who have already framed it as such. But to achieve this goal, the American public must be informed and educated not dis-informed and dis-educated. A Trump administration will lead the effort to address these terror threats and will reform the engagement and strategic communication agencies of the U.S. government in such a way that this message is clearly understood by friend and foe alike and is reflective of the new national consensus between the White House and the Congress.

Full Article: <http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2016/04/27/walid-phares-trump-lays-out-new-vision-for-american-foreign-policy-leadership.html>

Gens. Flynn, Kellogg: The truth about what's happening in Mosul (hint: Trump's right), Fox News, 26 October 2016

General Kellogg is a Foreign Policy Advisor for Mr. Trump

Donald Trump has voiced concerns regarding the Mosul offensive that was launched last week, in particular the involvement of Iranian backed Shiite militias. **He has rightly stated that the winner in the Mosul offensive will be Iran**. He is absolutely correct that the Mosul offensive was poorly and politically planned instead of being entrusted to military professionals who know how to win. The primary outcome of this operation will ultimately benefit the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Obama administration shows poor judgment in launching the Mosul offensive without planning for the day after military operations are complete, nor who will ultimately control Iraq's second largest city. **The problem in Iraq is political; it always has been and cannot be solved through military means alone**. Mr. Trump was also correct that **the White House should not have announced previously, and in such detail, that the offensive was going to begin**, instead stating that the element of surprise should have been considered. Under the Obama/Clinton administration, Iran has become the dominating and aggressive player in the Middle East. The next administration will be responsible for handling the rapidly unraveling situation in Iraq after Mosul has been liberated. Donald Trump has a plan to defeat ISIS and it comes with sound components that requires a far greater role by our Middle East partners combined with strong U.S. leadership. Donald Trump is committed to bringing back American leadership to the White House and will put our people and our American interests first.

Full Article: <http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2016/10/26/gens-flynn-kellogg-truth-about-whats-happening-in-mosul-hint-trumps-right.html>

Carter Page: A Washington Post Profile

Page is a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy and rose through the ranks at Merrill Lynch before founding his current firm, Global Energy Capital. He previously was a fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, where he focused on the Caspian Sea region and the economic development in former Soviet states. In a September 2014 article, Page appeared to blame NATO in part for provoking Russia. “While interventionist policies of the Soviet Union might have stood as the pivotal threat in Europe when Thatcher was rising to power as she argued at the time, similar aggressive policies of pushing NATO right to Russia’s doorstep have instigated today’s predicament.”

Full Article: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2016/03/21/meet-the-men-shaping-donald-trumps-foreign-policy-views/>

Trump foreign policy advisor reportedly being probed for ties to Russia, CNBC, 23 September 2016

One of Donald Trump's foreign policy advisors is being probed by U.S. intelligence officials to determine whether he has had private discussions with senior Russian officials, Yahoo News reported, citing sources. In particular, members of the intelligence community are concerned that Carter Page has spoken with the Kremlin about the possibility of lifting economic sanctions on Russia, sources told Yahoo. The report comes amid growing concerns that Moscow may be trying to influence the U.S. presidential election.

Full Article: <http://www.cnbc.com/2016/09/23/trump-foreign-policy-advisor-reportedly-being-probed-for-ties-to-russia.html>

Joseph Schmitz: A Washington Post Profile

Schmitz served as inspector general at the Department of Defense during the George W. Bush administration. A Los Angeles Times investigation in 2005 revealed a number of issues with Schmitz’s term there. Schmitz slowed or blocked investigations of senior Bush administration officials, spent taxpayer money on pet projects and accepted gifts that may have violated ethics guidelines, according to interviews with current and former senior officials in the inspector general’s office, congressional investigators and a review of internal email and other documents. He later became a senior official at the Prince Group, the parent company of defense contractor Blackwater.

Full Article: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2016/03/21/meet-the-men-shaping-donald-trumps-foreign-policy-views/>

Trump Foreign Policy Adviser Accused of Holocaust Denial

Allegations of anti-Semitism and Holocaust diminishment have emerged against one of Donald Trump’s foreign-policy advisers. According to complaints leveled by former colleagues, former Department of Defense inspector general Joseph Schlitz bragged about firing Jewish employees and questioned whether the Holocaust could have killed as many Jewish people as widely reported. “His summary of his tenure’s achievement reported as ‘...I fired the Jews,’ ” wrote

Daniel Meyer, a former IG colleague of Schlitz's, in a complaint obtained by McClatchy DC. "In his final days, he allegedly lectured [former top Pentagon official John] Crane on the details of concentration camps and how the ovens were too small to kill 6 million Jews." Schmitz has adamantly denied ever being accused of such anti-Semitism, but three ex-colleagues have cited his controversial remarks, including one person who has testified under oath about them.

Full Article: <http://www.thedailybeast.com/cheats/2016/08/18/trump-adviser-joseph-schmitz-accused-of-anti-semitism.html?via=desktop&source=copyurl>

George Papadopoulos: A Washington Post Profile

Almost all his work appears to have revolved around the role of Greece, Cyprus and an Israeli natural gas discovery in the eastern Mediterranean. Yet Jonathan Stern, director of gas research at the Oxford Institute for Energy Studies, said when asked about Papadopoulos: "He does ring a very faint bell but he's not written anything very significant on East Mediterranean natural gas and pipelines that I can remember." Indeed Papadopoulos has not left much of a paper trail. He has written an oped piece in the Israeli newspaper Haaretz and three articles for Arutz Sheva, an Israeli news site. His points in all of them boil down to this: Israel should use the natural gas it has found in the giant Leviathan field offshore in the eastern Mediterranean to build bridges to Greece and Cyprus – and avoid dealing with Turkey at all costs. Any extra gas could be sent to Egypt, which Papadopoulos said already has liquefied natural gas plants for importing gas. He also urged Israel to settle antitrust issues regarding its oil and gas industry – by "providing the regulatory certainty" — so that relatively large companies can exploit the natural gas soon. Elizabeth Rosenberg, an energy expert at the Center for a New American Security, said judging from the limited writing Papadopoulos has done that "his approach won't square well with an American audience: he lacks a strong contemporary background on domestic energy issues." She added that "he has argued for Israeli gas moving to Europe. If that eventually comes to pass it will compete with U.S. gas to Europe. The United States and Israel are allies, but whose team is he on?"

Full Article: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2016/03/21/meet-the-men-shaping-donald-trumps-foreign-policy-views/>

ANALYSIS

Al Jazeera—What does Trump's victory mean for the Middle East?

Gilbert Achcar, 9 November 2016

Trump has contradicted himself and changed positions and/or tone on several issues time and again during the electoral campaign. Judging, however, by a few key themes that he persistently reiterated over the past year, here is what can be guessed at this point about the way his presidency may affect the Middle East: **The Syrian people will be the first to suffer from his election.** The doors of the United States will be slammed shut in the face of would-be Syrian refugees, with maybe an exception made for Christians as Trump's agitation against Syrian refugees has always centred around Islamophobia. To stop altogether the outflow of refugees from Syria, Trump has advocated the creation of a "safe zone" within the country's borders, where Syrian displaced persons would be concentrated rather than allowed to go

abroad as refugees. He boasted that he would make the Arab Gulf states pay for this as he would make Mexico pay for the wall that he intends to build on the border between the two countries. Secondly, Trump will inaugurate a **new policy of friendship and collaboration with Russian President Vladimir Putin**, based on accommodating Russia's interests. In the Middle East, this includes accepting Russia's role in Syria as positive and **supporting Bashar al-Assad's regime** as the lesser evil. It would logically involve demanding from the United States' traditional allies in the region that they cease supporting the Syrian armed opposition. Washington would then co-sponsor with Moscow a Syrian "coalition government" that would include conciliationist "opposition" members. This could open the way to US collaboration with the Assad regime in the name of the "war on terror". Since Trump is poised to antagonise Iran by revoking the nuclear deal negotiated by the Obama administration, he may even try to entice Saudi Arabia into joining what would emerge as a Sunni triangle of Ankara, Cairo and Riyadh backed by Washington. Herein lies the principal inconsistency in Trump's vision for the Middle East (whereas his hostile stance towards China is the principal inconsistency of his global vision): overcoming it requires luring both Moscow and the Assad regime into breaking with Tehran.

Full article: <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2016/11/trump-victory-middle-east-161107105151822.html>

NY Times—Uncertainty Over Donald Trump's Foreign Policy Risks Global Instability

Max Fisher, 9 November 2016

Whether or not Donald J. Trump follows through on his campaign pledges to diminish or possibly abandon American commitments to security alliances such as NATO, **his election victory forces nations around the world to begin preparing for the day they can no longer count on the American-backed order.** This creates a danger that derives less from Mr. Trump's words, which are often inconsistent or difficult to parse, than from the inability to predict his actions or how other states might respond to them. That uncertainty puts pressure on allies and adversaries alike to position themselves, before Mr. Trump even takes office, for a world that could be on the verge of losing one of its longest-standing pillars of stability. **Mr. Trump's election comes at a moment when rising powers are already pushing against the American-led order:** China in Asia, Iran in the Middle East, and particularly Vladimir V. Putin's Russia in Europe. Those powers will be tempted to test their new limits. Western European states like Germany and France "may decide they can no longer afford to take a tough stand against Putin's Russia," he suggested. "They may decide their best bet is to cut some kind of deal with him," even if it means tolerating Russian influence over Eastern Europe. Or they may not. But that possibility — and the fact that Eastern European states may have to worry, and plan accordingly — shows how uncertainty can build on itself, adding instability to already tumultuous regions. **Over the past year, I have been asking policy experts to evaluate Mr. Trump's likely foreign policy, and they have consistently given me the same answer: They are unable to stitch Mr. Trump's rambling speeches and scant white papers into a coherent worldview.** The difficulty of predicting Mr. Trump's foreign policy could create other forms of destabilizing uncertainty. Asked about the international agreement to restrict Iran's nuclear program, Daryl G. Kimball, director of the Arms Control Association, said it was unclear to him — and most likely to Middle Eastern leaders — whether Mr. Trump "would deliberately or inadvertently take actions that unravel that agreement." Because Middle Eastern countries would so struggle to

predict or plan around Mr. Trump's Iran policies, and because he seems thus far unlikely to win over European leaders whom he has insulted from the campaign trail, Mr. Kimball said, "the future of the Iran deal is now in greater jeopardy." While Mr. Kimball doubted that renewed Iranian nuclear development would inspire other Middle Eastern states to seek their own nuclear programs, the region's turmoil seems likely to worsen if American-brokered restrictions fall away. Smaller states will face even harder choices. "If you're in the Baltics, you now have no idea whether you can count on the U.S. if Putin makes a move," Mr. Goldgeier said, referring to Mr. Trump's suggestions that he might not fulfill American treaty obligations to defend a NATO ally such as Estonia from Russian aggression. Mostly, we know what he opposes: "There's no indication that Donald Trump wants to continue the kind of foreign policy that the U.S. has followed since World War II," he said.

Full Article: <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/10/world/americas/donald-trump-foreign-policy.html>

Carnegie Center—Syria in Crisis

A Secondary Thought: Donald Trump's policies on Syria suggest he may favor Assad and has learned little about the country

Aron Lund, 14 October 2016

Though Donald Trump has broached the issue several times, **he has never laid out a clear policy for Syria.** His statements have often been vague and sometimes contradictory, and it is abundantly clear that he has thought and learned very little about Syria. Rather, his main interest in the Syrian war has been to wield it as a stick with which to beat Clinton, Obama's former secretary of state, and to highlight his opposition to resettling Muslim refugees in the United States. "Taken at his word—a risky proposition—**Trump might well stand back from Syria and simply impede any further entry of Syrian refugees,**" said Robert S. Ford. Judging by Trump's campaign rhetoric, the world outside the United States consists largely of terrorists and refugees, most of whom are also terrorists. "Not isolationist, but I am America First," he said last March. "I like the expression." In keeping with this sentiment, Trump has declared himself an opponent of U.S. involvement in Iraq and Libya (though he appears to have supported both wars when they began). He approaches Syria in the same manner, which has led him to **take a more lenient line on Assad** than either Obama or Clinton. The Trump campaign website describes Syria as having been "under control" before the Obama administration took office, whereas, "under Secretary Clinton, regime change in Syria [...] destabilized the world." Trump has never explicitly voiced support for the Syrian president or argued that he should actively be kept in power, but has made it clear that he thinks U.S. efforts to overthrow Assad are misguided. "I would have stayed out of Syria and I wouldn't have fought so much against Assad," he said last May. At the same time, Trump has sought to court nationalist and military support, **promising to "bomb the hell" out of the Islamic State** and complaining that Kurdish allies of the United States in Syria aren't given enough support. **The idea that Assad or Putin would seek to prevent foreign governments from controlling Syrian territory does not even seem to have occurred to him,** and, in the manner of his proposed border wall with Mexico, he has waved away all practical problems by saying that the Arab Gulf states can pay the bills and provide the troops. On Syria, like on all other issues, Trump seems to make up his mind as he goes along.

Full Article: <http://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/64849>

From: Putnam, EC <PutnamEC@state.gov>
Sent: Thursday, November 10, 2016 8:15 AM
To: Albright, Richard A <AlbrightRA@state.gov>; NEA-DAS-DL <NEA-DAS-DL@state.gov>
Subject: RE: Donald Trump's Foreign Policy

RELEASE IN PART B5

Thanks.



B5

SBU
This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

From: Albright, Richard A
Sent: Thursday, November 10, 2016 2:30 AM
To: NEA-DAS-DL; Putnam, EC
Subject: FW: Donald Trump's Foreign Policy

Might find this useful. Outrage intern assembled these. RA

From: Walters, Danika L <WaltersDL@state.gov>
Date: November 9, 2016 at 11:05:05 PM GMT+1
To: NEA-AC-DL <NEA-AC-DL@state.gov>
Subject: FW: Donald Trump's Foreign Policy

All,

Our superstar intern has compiled an incredibly useful compendium of Trump's public statements on foreign policy issues, which will be instructive as we prepare for the transition team.

Best,

Danika

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

From: Greer, Lucille C
Sent: Wednesday, November 09, 2016 4:13 PM
To: Walters, Danika L
Cc: Thompson, Leslie
Subject: Donald Trump's Foreign Policy

Hello Danika,

Here's what I've pulled together on Trump's foreign policy. Hope it helps.

With kind regards,

Lucy Greer
Intern—NEA/AC Syria Team
GreerLC@state.gov (202) 776-8675

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

From: Winer, Jonathan </O=SBUSTATE/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=JONATHAN WINER49E>
Sent: Monday, September 19, 2016 10:18 AM
To: Glenn Simpson <[REDACTED]>
Subject: Re: in town?

B6

RELEASE IN PART B6

For a couple of hours.

Jonathan Winer + [REDACTED]

From: Glenn Simpson
Sent: Monday, September 19, 2016 9:51 AM
To: Winer, Jonathan
Subject: in town?

RELEASE IN PART
1.4(B),B1,1.4(D)

From: Nuland, Victoria J <NulandVJ@state.sgov.gov>
Sent: Monday, September 26, 2016 12:31 PM
To: Rubin, Joshua A <RubinJA@state.sgov.gov>; Heffern, John A <HeffernJA@state.sgov.gov>; Blinken, Antony J <ABlinken@state.sgov.gov>; Shannon, Thomas A <ShannonTA@state.sgov.gov>; Kenney, Kristie A <KenneyKA2@state.sgov.gov>; Sullivan, Thomas D <SullivanTD@State.sgov.gov>; Kenna, Lisa D <KennaLD@state.sgov.gov>; Mull, Stephen D <MullSD@state.sgov.gov>; Patterson, Anne W <PattersonAW2@state.sgov.gov>; Winer, Jonathan <WinerJ@state.sgov.gov>; Ratney, Michael A <RatneyMA@state.sgov.gov>; Pounds, Tim J <poundstj@state.sgov.gov>; Backemeyer, Christopher R <BackemeyerCR@state.sgov.gov>
Cc: Finer, Jonathan J <FinerJJ@state.sgov.gov>
Subject: RE: Readout of S' Quint FMs + EU HR Meeting in Boston

added

Sensitivity: Sensitive
Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Classified By: Victoria Nuland, Assistant Secretary, EUR/FO, Department of State
Derived From: DSCG 11-01
Declassify On: 2041/09/26

From: Rubin, Joshua A
Sent: Monday, September 26, 2016 10:56 AM
To: Nuland, Victoria J; Heffern, John A; Blinken, Antony J; Shannon, Thomas A; Kenney, Kristie A; Sullivan, Thomas D; Kenna, Lisa D; Mull, Stephen D; Patterson, Anne W; Winer, Jonathan; Ratney, Michael A; Pounds, Tim J; Backemeyer, Christopher R
Cc: Finer, Jonathan J
Subject: Readout of S' Quint FMs + EU HR Meeting in Boston

All – passing along the below on Jon Finer’s behalf. Thanks,
Josh

Below is a quick readout of S's meetings with the Quint foreign ministers and EU High Representative in Boston on Saturday. They held a couple of hours of substantive meetings at the Fletcher School, had a working lunch, took a boat ride and then did a more social dinner. Main topics/highlights below, which Toria can add to:

Syria:

[Redacted content]

1.4(B)
1.4(D)
B1

[Redacted]

1.4(B)
1.4(D)
B1

Ukraine:

[Redacted]

1.4(B)
1.4(D)
B1

Iran:

[Redacted]

1.4(B)
1.4(D)
B1

Russia:

[Redacted]

1.4(B)
1.4(D)
B1

Libya:

[Redacted]

1.4(B)
1.4(D)
B1

1.4(B)
1.4(D)
B1

From: Winer, Jonathan </O=SBUSTATE/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=JONATHAN WINER49E>
Sent: Wednesday, September 28, 2016 10:07 AM
To: Nuland, Victoria J <nulandvj@state.gov>
Cc: Finer, Jonathan J <FinerJJ@state.gov>; Kavalec, Kathleen A <KavalecKA@state.gov>
Subject: RE: Libyan army asks Russia for weapons, hardware - newspaper

Thank you, Toria.

RELEASE IN FULL

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

From: Nuland, Victoria J
Sent: Wednesday, September 28, 2016 10:05 AM
To: Winer, Jonathan
Cc: Finer, Jonathan J; Kavalec, Kathleen A
Subject: RE: Libyan army asks Russia for weapons, hardware - newspaper

Yup. JW, I just asked my team to collaborate w yours today on a one-pager for S on this today, in line w our convo and the dispute among Quint in Boston.

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

From: Winer, Jonathan
Sent: Wednesday, September 28, 2016 9:06 AM
To: Nuland, Victoria J
Cc: Finer, Jonathan J
Subject: OSE: Libyan army asks Russia for weapons, hardware - newspaper

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Libyan army asks Russia for weapons, hardware - newspaper

CER2016092825572763 Moscow *Interfax* in English 0701 GMT 28 Sep 16

[Computer selected and disseminated without OSE editorial intervention] Libyan army asks Russia for weapons, hardware - newspaper

MOSCOW. Sept 28 (Interfax) - Libyan Army Commander Gen. Khalifa Haftar has sent messages to the Russian administration requesting supply of weapons and hardware, the newspaper *Izvestia* said on Wednesday.

According to the newspaper, the messages were delivered to the Russian side in the evening of September 26 by Haftar's special representative, Libyan Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Abdelbaset Al Badri. Special Representative of the Russian President for the Middle East and Africa, Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov received the ambassador in Moscow.

"This meeting has actually happened. Al Badri paid a one-day visit to Moscow. His negotiations with Bogdanov highlighted lifting of the embargo and beginning of arms supplies. The Libyans have asked to supply both small arms and hardware, including aircraft. They have also urged Moscow to launch a military operation against Islamists in Libya, similar with the one underway in Syria," a source close to the Russian diplomatic circles told *Izvestia*.

Russian Ambassador to Libya Ivan Molotkov said in late June that Russia would not supply arms to the Libyan authorities until related international restrictions were lifted.

te ek

[Description of Source: Moscow *Interfax* in English -- Website of nonofficial information agency known for its extensive and detailed reporting on domestic and international issues; URL: <http://www.interfax.com/>]

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UNCLASSIFIED

From: Prieto-Danaher, Ana M <PrietoDanaherA@state.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, November 23, 2016 2:24 PM
To: Dlugos, Barbara <DlugosB@state.gov>
Cc: Winer, Jonathan <WinerJ@state.gov>
Subject: RE: Would like to catch up on something at your convenience

RELEASE IN PART B6

Hi Barb –

Many thanks for confirming this meeting. It would be great if S/W Winer could come to HST-6226.

Kind regards,
Ana Maria

Official
UNCLASSIFIED

From: Dlugos, Barbara
Sent: Wednesday, November 23, 2016 12:20 PM
To: Prieto-Danaher, Ana M
Cc: Winer, Jonathan
Subject: RE: Would like to catch up on something at your convenience

Hi Ana – Yes, 10:00 AM works on S/E Winer’s calendar for a meeting with A/S Nuland. Shall they meet in HST-6226?
Thanks and best, Barb

Barbara Dlugos
Assistant to Jonathan Winer
Special Envoy for Libya
U.S. Department of State
NEA/FO
Office: 202-647-7166
E-mail: DlugosB@state.gov
Contractor, OBXtek, Inc.

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

From: Winer, Jonathan
Sent: Wednesday, November 23, 2016 12:09 PM
To: Prieto-Danaher, Ana M
Cc: Dlugos, Barbara
Subject: RE: Would like to catch up on something at your convenience

Believe so, Barb please confirm, want to do, thanks - Jonathan

Official - Transitory
UNCLASSIFIED

From: Prieto-Danaher, Ana M
Sent: Wednesday, November 23, 2016 12:07 PM
To: Winer, Jonathan

Subject: RE: Would like to catch up on something at your convenience

Jonathan –

Are you available at 1000-1015 on Nov 28?

Happy Thanksgiving!
Ana Maria

Official
UNCLASSIFIED

From: Winer, Jonathan
Sent: Tuesday, November 22, 2016 8:01 PM
To: Nuland, Victoria J
Cc: Prieto-Danaher, Ana M
Subject: Re: Would like to catch up on something at your convenience

Sure- Happy thanks till Monday.

Jonathan Winer +

B6

From: Nuland, Victoria J
Sent: Tuesday, November 22, 2016 6:58 PM
To: Winer, Jonathan
Cc: Prieto-Danaher, Ana M
Subject: RE: Would like to catch up on something at your convenience

Yes. I'm out rest of week. Monday ok?

Official
UNCLASSIFIED

From: Winer, Jonathan
Sent: Tuesday, November 22, 2016 12:09 PM
To: Nuland, Victoria J
Subject: Would like to catch up on something at your convenience

In person whenever you are in office and can make 15-30 minutes.

With warm regards, Jonathan

Official
UNCLASSIFIED

From: Nuland, Victoria J <nulandvj@state.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, November 29, 2016 10:23 AM
To: Winer, Jonathan <WinerJ@state.gov>
Subject: RE: Thank you

RELEASE IN PART B6

Of course, Send me good number and time.

B6

Official
UNCLASSIFIED

From: Winer, Jonathan
Sent: Tuesday, November 29, 2016 10:12 AM
To: Nuland, Victoria J
Subject: Re: Thank you

Want to talk briefly further. Some new info want you to be aware of.
 Phone call ok sometime this am? Five minutes is enough.

Sent from my BlackBerry 10 smartphone.

From: Nuland, Victoria J
Sent: Tuesday, November 29, 2016 10:08 AM
To: Winer, Jonathan
Subject: FW: Thank you

They want to pursue some of the things we discussed yesterday, albeit on the system integrity side.

Official
UNCLASSIFIED

From: Silverberg, Daniel [<mailto:Daniel.Silverberg@mail.house.gov>]
Sent: Monday, November 28, 2016 10:57 PM
To: Nuland, Victoria J
Subject: Thank you

Toria,
It was a delight to speak today, notwithstanding the context. You've been a warrior on these issues, and I look forward to speaking further to preserve and wherever possible strengthen the important work you have done. I'll follow up regarding a possible working group meeting.

All the best,
Daniel

Daniel Silverberg
National Security Advisor
The Honorable Steny H. Hoyer
Democratic Whip
U.S. House of Representatives
H-148, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515
(202) 225-3130

From: Winer, Jonathan </O=SBUSTATE/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=JONATHAN WINER49E>
Sent: Saturday, December 10, 2016 2:10 PM
To: Silverberg, Daniel <Daniel.Silverberg@mail.house.gov> **RELEASE IN PART B6**
Subject: Re: Thank you

I've reached out per our call yesterday. Please call me to talk further at your early convenience. Weekend best but can also talk Monday.

Jonathan Winer +

B6

From: Silverberg, Daniel
Sent: Tuesday, November 29, 2016 10:52 AM
To: Nuland, Victoria J
Cc: Winer, Jonathan
Subject: Re: Thank you

Great. Jonathan, I am all ears.

Daniel Silverberg
National Security Advisor
The Honorable Steny H. Hoyer
Democratic Whip
U.S. House of Representatives
H-148, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515
(202) 225-3130

On Nov 29, 2016, at 10:07 AM, Nuland, Victoria J <nulandvj@state.gov> wrote:

Thanks, Daniel. I look forward to continuing our collaboration in whatever capacity life brings.

Copied here is Jonathan Winer, who has some legal ideas that may be of interest to you and Cong. Hoyer. As ever, t

Official
UNCLASSIFIED

From: Silverberg, Daniel [<mailto:Daniel.Silverberg@mail.house.gov>]
Sent: Monday, November 28, 2016 10:57 PM
To: Nuland, Victoria J
Subject: Thank you

Toria,
It was a delight to speak today, notwithstanding the context. You've been a warrior on these issues, and I look forward to speaking further to preserve and wherever possible strengthen the important work you have done. I'll follow up regarding a possible working group meeting.

All the best,
Daniel

Daniel Silverberg

National Security Advisor
The Honorable Steny H. Hoyer
Democratic Whip
U.S. House of Representatives
H-148, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515
(202) 225-3130

From: Dlugos, Barbara <DlugosB@state.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, December 13, 2016 7:49 AM
To: Prieto-Danaher, Ana M <PrietoDanaherA@state.gov>
Cc: Nuland, Victoria J <nulandvj@state.gov>; Winer, Jonathan <WinerJ@state.gov>
Subject: RE: Request for brief meeting Tuesday

RELEASE IN PART B6

Good morning, Ana –

Please let me know a few openings on A/S Nuland's calendar for brief meeting with S/E Winer today. Feel free to call (x77166) if preferred.

Many thanks and best,

Barb

Barbara Dlugos
Assistant to Jonathan Winer
Special Envoy for Libya
U.S. Department of State
NEA/FO
Office: 202-647-7166
E-mail: DlugosB@state.gov
Contractor, OBXtek, Inc.

Official
UNCLASSIFIED

From: Nuland, Victoria J
Sent: Monday, December 12, 2016 10:07 PM
To: Prieto-Danaher, Ana M; Winer, Jonathan
Cc: Dlugos, Barbara
Subject: Re: Request for brief meeting Tuesday

Ok. + Ana

From: Winer, Jonathan <WinerJ@state.gov>
Date: December 12, 2016 at 8:35:41 PM EST
To: Nuland, Victoria J <nulandvj@state.gov>
Cc: Dlugos, Barbara <DlugosB@state.gov>
Subject: Request for brief meeting Tuesday

Something new has come up of which I want you to be aware.

Jonathan Winer



B6



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

February 13, 2019

Case No.: F-2018-00529, F-2018-00827,
F-2018-01063, & F-2018-01467

Michael Bekesha, Esq.
Judicial Watch, Inc.
425 Third Street, S.W., Suite 800
Washington, D.C. 20024

Dear Mr. Bekesha:

I refer you to our letter dated December 12, 2018, regarding the review of certain Department of State material under the Freedom of Information Act (the "FOIA"), 5 U.S.C. § 552.

The review of potentially responsive records is ongoing and has resulted in the retrieval of eight documents responsive to your request. After reviewing these documents, we have determined that one may be released to you in full and seven may be released in part. All released material is enclosed.

Where a document has been released to you in part, all non-exempt material that is reasonably segregable from the exempt material has been released. Where we have made excisions, the applicable exemptions are marked on the document. An enclosure provides information on FOIA exemptions and other grounds for withholding material.

We will keep you advised as your case progresses. If you have any questions, you may contact Trial Attorney Damon William Taaffe at (202) 252-2544 or damon.taaffe@usdoj.gov. Please refer to the case numbers cited above and the civil action number, 18-cv-968, in all correspondence regarding this case.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susan C. Weetman".

Susan C. Weetman
Chief, Programs and Policies Division
Office of Information Programs and Services

Enclosures: As stated

The Freedom of Information Act (5 USC 552)

FOIA Exemptions

- (b)(1) Information specifically authorized by an executive order to be kept secret in the interest of national defense or foreign policy. Executive Order 13526 includes the following classification categories:
- 1.4(a) Military plans, systems, or operations
 - 1.4(b) Foreign government information
 - 1.4(c) Intelligence activities, sources or methods, or cryptology
 - 1.4(d) Foreign relations or foreign activities of the US, including confidential sources
 - 1.4(e) Scientific, technological, or economic matters relating to national security, including defense against transnational terrorism
 - 1.4(f) U.S. Government programs for safeguarding nuclear materials or facilities
 - 1.4(g) Vulnerabilities or capabilities of systems, installations, infrastructures, projects, plans, or protection services relating to US national security, including defense against transnational terrorism
 - 1.4(h) Weapons of mass destruction
- (b)(2) Related solely to the internal personnel rules and practices of an agency
- (b)(3) Specifically exempted from disclosure by statute (other than 5 USC 552), for example:
- | | |
|----------------|---|
| ARMSEXP | Arms Export Control Act, 50a USC 2411(c) |
| CIA PERS/ORG | Central Intelligence Agency Act of 1949, 50 USC 403(g) |
| EXPORT CONTROL | Export Administration Act of 1979, 50 USC App. Sec. 2411(c) |
| FS ACT | Foreign Service Act of 1980, 22 USC 4004 |
| INA | Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 USC 1202(f), Sec. 222(f) |
| IRAN | Iran Claims Settlement Act, Public Law 99-99, Sec. 505 |
- (b)(4) Trade secrets and confidential commercial or financial information
- (b)(5) Interagency or intra-agency communications forming part of the deliberative process, attorney-client privilege, or attorney work product
- (b)(6) Personal privacy information
- (b)(7) Law enforcement information whose disclosure would:
- (A) interfere with enforcement proceedings
 - (B) deprive a person of a fair trial
 - (C) constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy
 - (D) disclose confidential sources
 - (E) disclose investigation techniques
 - (F) endanger life or physical safety of an individual
- (b)(8) Prepared by or for a government agency regulating or supervising financial institutions
- (b)(9) Geological and geophysical information and data, including maps, concerning wells

Other Grounds for Withholding

- NR Material not responsive to a FOIA request excised with the agreement of the requester

From: Rangaswamy, Roopa <RangaswamyR@state.gov>
Sent: Thursday, March 3, 2016 10:50 AM
To: Winer, Jonathan <WinerJ@state.gov>
Subject: RE: ~~(SBU)~~ Libya Update - The March Roadmap For GNA Getting to Tripoli

RELEASE IN PART
1.4(B),B1,B5,1.4(D),1.4(A),B6

Jonathan, on your request, nothing has been pinned down on S's calendar for travel during March 15-30, so I suggest getting an appointment request up soonest even if the timing is notional so that it's on the radar. They'll factor it into planning that's going on now.

Best,
Roopa

Classified by Director, A/GIS/IPS, DoS
on 02/12/2019 ~ Class: CONFIDENTIAL
~ Reason: 1.4(A), 1.4(B), 1.4(D) ~
Declassify on: 02/12/2029

From: Winer, Jonathan
Sent: Thursday, March 03, 2016 10:07 AM
To: Rangaswamy, Roopa
Subject: FW: ~~(SBU)~~ Libya Update - The March Roadmap For GNA Getting to Tripoli

DECONTROLLED

~~(SBU)~~
This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

From: Winer, Jonathan
Sent: Tuesday, March 01, 2016 7:46 PM
To: Finer, Jonathan J; Sullivan, Thomas D; Kenna, Lisa D; Crocker, Bathsheba N; Sison, Michele J; Patterson, Anne W; Feierstein, Gerald M; Desrocher, John P; Miller, Walter R; Desrocher, John P; Nuland, Victoria J; Sloat, Amanda L; McGurk, Brett H; Siberell, Justin H; Kaidanow, Tina S
Cc: Adams, Natasha T; Clancy, Erin J; Wachtel, Howard; NEA-LIBYADESK; LoGerfo, Gregory D; Bodde, Peter W (LEO); Kiser, Kathryn A (LEO); Hammad, Hammad B (LEO); Newman, Daniel W (LEO); LaFave, Helen G (LEO); Ziadeh, Susan L; Quanrud, Pamela G; Wolff, Terry
Subject: ~~(SBU)~~ Libya Update - The March Roadmap For GNA Getting to Tripoli

Colleagues,

[Redacted content] 1.4(B)
1.4(D)
B1
B5

~~(SBU)~~ **Get Beyond the HoR:** The first step in Kobler's roadmap is to move beyond the House of Representatives (HoR) by giving it one last chance for a vote in Tobruk Monday, March 7. Kobler has agreed to send a letter to HoR Speaker Agila Issa today, which states that the HoR is in breach of its responsibility under the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA) to vote on the Cabinet proposal within 10 days of its presentment. The Kobler letter then calls on him to accept the HoR majority's written endorsement of the Cabinet as a valid stand-in for the vote blocked by the hardliners. Kobler will elaborate on this letter tomorrow during his UN Security Council briefing. Neither Kobler nor we expect that Agila will do what the letter requests or that the HoR will vote on the Cabinet: Agila already has violated the promise he made to

S and other Ministers in Munich on February 12 to secure that vote. But Kobler would like to satisfy the Libyans who want this one last chance that we've done everything possible to exhaust the HoR process. I'm not sure this "last chance" is essential, but we can live with it as long as we get to the second, more useful step quickly.

[Redacted]

1.4(B)
1.4(D)
B1

[Redacted]

1.4(B)
1.4(D)
B1

~~(SBU)~~ **International Support:** The international community will need to provide support for this roadmap throughout, and we should work to hold Kobler to it tomorrow in New York and Thursday here in Washington. I'm planning to attend the proposed Political Dialogue in Tunis next week, along with other Ambassadors and Envoys. We played a role in keeping the Skhirat signing on track, and this event will likely have its own dramas. After the Dialogue, the UK plans to take the pen on a UNSC PRST March 11. On March 15, Italy will host a force-sensing conference for the Libya International Assistance Mission (LIAM). This could send a useful message on international commitment to Tripoli security just as the GNA's leaders get there, if they keep to Kobler's calendar.

~~(SBU)~~ **Rome Format Ministerial:** Kobler also proposed a Rome Format ministerial in the third or fourth week of March. If Kobler keeps to the rest of his roadmap, this may be worth S' time as a way to solidify the GNA's international standing. We'll need the same countries that came to Rome in December aligned on Libya again now: Russia and China for a unified UNSC; Egypt and UAE to make it clear to would-be eastern spoilers there is no alternative to the GNA; and Qatar and Turkey to seat the GNA in Tripoli.

[Redacted]

1.4(A)
1.4(B)
1.4(D)
B1

[Redacted]

1.4(B)
1.4(D)
B1

[Redacted]

1.4(B)
1.4(D)
B1

Jonathan M. Winer
Special Envoy for Libya
US Department of State
2201 C Street NW Suite 6250
Washington DC 20520
+1 202 647 9548 (o) [Redacted] (c)

B6

~~SBU~~

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

RELEASE IN PART
1.4(B),B1,B5,1.4(D),1.4(A),B6

From: Nuland, Victoria J <nulandvj@state.gov>
Sent: Friday, March 25, 2016 5:30 PM
To: Winer, Jonathan <WinerJ@state.gov>; Finer, Jonathan J <FinerJJ@state.gov>
Subject: Re: ~~(SBU)~~ Libya Update - GNA Says It Is Entering Tripoli This Weekend

Congrats! U need to work on s, as finer will explain. Would be awful from my vantage to break faith w eu now.

Classified by Director, A/GIS/IPS, DoS on 02/12/2019 ~ Class: CONFIDENTIAL ~ Reason: 1.4(A), 1.4(B), 1.4(D) ~ Declassify on: 02/12/2029

DECONTROLLED

From: Winer, Jonathan <WinerJ@state.gov>
Date: March 25, 2016 at 8:56:42 PM GMT+1
To: Finer, Jonathan J <FinerJJ@state.gov>
Cc: Siberell, Justin H <SiberellJH@state.gov>, Adams, Natasha T <AdamsNT@state.gov>, Patterson, Anne W <pattersonaw@state.gov>, Sloat, Amanda L <SloatAL@state.gov>, Nuland, Victoria J <nulandvj@state.gov>, Wolff, Terry <WolffT@state.gov>, Rangaswamy, Roopa <RangaswamyR@state.gov>, Hammad, Hammad B (LEO) <HammadHB@state.gov>, Flynn, Joan H <FlynnJH@state.gov>, Desrocher, John P <desrocherjp@state.gov>, NEA-LIBYADESK <NEALIBYADESK@state.gov>, Rapp, Laurel T <RappLT@state.gov>, LoGerfo, Gregory D <LoGerfoGD@state.gov>, Wachtel, Howard <wachtelh@state.gov>, Feierstein, Gerald M <FeiersteinGM@state.gov>, Crocker, Bathsheba N <CrockerBN@state.gov>, Quanrud, Pamela G <QuanrudPG@state.gov>, Sison, Michele J <SisonMJ@state.gov>, Kim, Yuri J <KimYJ@state.gov>, Ziadeh, Susan L <ZiadehSL@state.gov>, Miller, Walter R <MillerWR@state.gov>, Shannon, Thomas A <ShannonTA@state.gov>, Sullivan, Thomas D <SullivanTD@state.gov>, Kiser, Kathryn A (LEO) <KiserKA@state.gov>, McGurk, Brett H <McGurkBH2@state.gov>, LaFave, Helen G (LEO) <LafaveHG@state.gov>, Kenna, Lisa D <kennald@state.gov>, Newman, Daniel W (LEO) <NewmanDW@state.gov>, Bodde, Peter W (LEO) <BoddePW@state.gov>, Clancy, Erin J <ClancyEJ@state.gov>
Subject: Re: ~~(SBU)~~ Libya Update - GNA Says It Is Entering Tripoli This Weekend

+ P + for D Kim and Rapp

On Tripoli security:

Our work was primarily on the Central Bank money issues essential for enhancing their entry. Tripoli security per se has been first and foremost a matter of local politics and that has been worked on for the past month by the Temporary Security Committee, UNSMIL and some key cabinet members and Presidency Council members. Regional players not so important at this particular moment but will be again soon if this takes - or goes visibly south.

[Redacted]

B5

Jonathan Winer [Redacted]

B6

From: Finer, Jonathan J
Sent: Friday, March 25, 2016 3:50 PM
To: Winer, Jonathan
Cc: Sullivan, Thomas D; Kenna, Lisa D; Crocker, Bathsheba N; Sison, Michele J; Patterson, Anne W; Feierstein, Gerald M; Desrocher, John P; Miller, Walter R; Nuland, Victoria J; Sloat, Amanda L; McGurk, Brett H; Siberell, Justin H; Adams,

Natasha T; Clancy, Erin J; Wachtel, Howard; NEA-LIBYADESK; LoGerfo, Gregory D; Bodde, Peter W (LEO); Kiser, Kathryn A (LEO); Hammad, Hammad B (LEO); Newman, Daniel W (LEO); LaFave, Helen G (LEO); Ziadeh, Susan L; Quanrud, Pamela G; Wolff, Terry; Rangaswamy, Roopa; Flynn, Joan H
Subject: Re: ~~(SBU)~~ Libya Update - GNA Says It Is Entering Tripoli This Weekend

Thanks, Jonathan.

B5

On Mar 25, 2016, at 5:15 PM, Winer, Jonathan <WinerJ@state.gov> wrote:

Colleagues -

~~(SBU)~~ **GNA Tells Us and Tells UN It Will Enter Tripoli Imminently.** The stage appears to be set for the Government of National Accord (GNA) to make its initial entry in Tripoli as early as this weekend. Members of the Presidency Council have told us they intend to move tomorrow (Saturday). While slippage in Libya is always possible, we have been told that the GNA's Temporary Security Committee has massaged its contacts in Tripoli, revived dormant army and police units, and solidified relationships with key militias that will be critical to protecting the GNA in its early stages.

~~(SBU)~~

1.4(A)
1.4(B)
1.4(D)
B1

~~(SBU)~~

~~(SBU)~~

1.4(B)
1.4(D)
B1

[Redacted]

1.4(B)
1.4(D)
B1

[Redacted]

1.4(B)
B5
1.4(D)

[Redacted]

1.4(B)
1.4(D)
B1

[Redacted]

1.4(B)
1.4(D)
B1
B5

(U) Libya remains dynamic and unpredictable. But we appear to be at a significant inflection point. Over the course of this weekend, If we hear of any developments on this, for good or bad, we will alert promptly

Jonathan M. Winer
Special Envoy for Libya
US Department of State
2201 C Street NW Suite 6250
Washington DC 20520
+1 202 647 9548 (o) [Redacted] (c)

B6

~~SECRET~~

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

From: Winer, Jonathan </O=SBUSTATE/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=JONATHAN WINER49E>
Sent: Wednesday, March 30, 2016 10:05 AM
To: Nuland, Victoria J <nulandvj@state.gov>
Subject: RE: ~~(SBU)~~ Libya Update - GNA Has Arrived in Tripoli
Attach: GNA Starts Work in Tripoli.jpg-large

RELEASE IN PART
1.4(B),B1,B5,1.4(D),B6

And check out this one – they are showing the Libyan people they are starting work. It looks like a governmental office of some kind. Thank goodness. But I have a really big problem with certain elements of our government. Really big.

DECONTROLLED

~~SBU~~

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

Classified by Director, A/GIS/IPS, DoS on
02/12/2019 ~ Class: CONFIDENTIAL ~ Reason:
1.4(B), 1.4(D) ~ Declassify on: 02/12/2029

From: Nuland, Victoria J
Sent: Wednesday, March 30, 2016 10:03 AM
To: Winer, Jonathan
Subject: Re: ~~(SBU)~~ Libya Update - GNA Has Arrived in Tripoli

Congrats, Jonathan.

From: Winer, Jonathan
Sent: Wednesday, March 30, 2016 9:03 AM
To: Finer, Jonathan J; Sullivan, Thomas D; Kenna, Lisa D; Crocker, Bathsheba N; Sison, Michele J; Patterson, Anne W; Feierstein, Gerald M; Desrocher, John P; Miller, Walter R; Nuland, Victoria J; Sloat, Amanda L; McGurk, Brett H; Siberell, Justin H
Cc: Adams, Natasha T; Clancy, Erin J; Wachtel, Howard; NEA-LIBYADESK; LoGerfo, Gregory D; Bodde, Peter W (LEO); Kiser, Kathryn A (LEO); Hammad, Hammad B (LEO); Newman, Daniel W (LEO); LaFave, Helen G (LEO); Ziadeh, Susan L; Quanrud, Pamela G; Wolff, Terry; Rangaswamy, Roopa; Adams, Natasha T; Flynn, Joan H; Rapp, Laurel T
Subject: RE: ~~(SBU)~~ Libya Update - GNA Has Arrived in Tripoli

Update:

The Presidency Council including the Prime Minister arrived safely in Tripoli by sea at the Naval Base in Tripoli, landing circa 7:45 am EDT. Enclosed is a photograph documenting the event. They advise they will be issuing a public statement shortly. I talked with the head of the Central Bank this morning, and they are ready to authorize transfer of authorities over funds immediately, and have already cut off all known sources of funding to Khalifa Ghweil.

Jonathan M. Winer
Special Envoy for Libya
US Department of State
2201 C Street NW Suite 6250
Washington DC 20520
+1 202 647 9548 (o) [redacted] (c)

B6

~~SBU~~

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

From: Winer, Jonathan

Sent: Tuesday, March 29, 2016 7:14 PM

To: Finer, Jonathan J; Sullivan, Thomas D; Kenna, Lisa D; Crocker, Bathsheba N; Sison, Michele J; Patterson, Anne W; Feierstein, Gerald M; Desrocher, John P; Miller, Walter R; Nuland, Victoria J; Sloat, Amanda L; McGurk, Brett H; Siberell, Justin H

Cc: Adams, Natasha T; Clancy, Erin J; Wachtel, Howard; NEA-LIBYADESK; LoGerfo, Gregory D; Bodde, Peter W (LEO); Kiser, Kathryn A (LEO); Hammad, Hammad B (LEO); Newman, Daniel W (LEO); LaFave, Helen G (LEO); Ziakeh, Susan L; Quanrud, Pamela G; Wolff, Terry; Rangaswamy, Roopa; Adams, Natasha T; Flynn, Joan H

Subject: ~~(SBU)~~

[Redacted]

1.4(B)
1.4(D)
B1

[Redacted]

1.4(B)
1.4(D)
B1
B5

[Redacted]

1.4(B)
1.4(D)
B1

1.4(B)
1.4(D)

B1

1.4(D)
B1

1.4(B)
1.4(D)
B1

1.4(B)
1.4(D)
B1
B5

1.4(B)
1.4(D)
B1

Jonathan M. Winer
Special Envoy for Libya
US Department of State
2201 C Street NW Suite 6250
Washington DC 20520
+1 202 647 9548 (o) [redacted] (c)

B6

~~SBU~~
This email is UNCLASSIFIED.



RELEASE IN FULL

From: LoGerfo, Gregory D <LoGerfoGD@state.gov>
Sent: Friday, April 1, 2016 10:36 PM
To: Winer, Jonathan <WinerJ@state.gov>; LoGerfo, Gregory D <LoGerfoGD@state.gov>; Desrocher, John P <desrocherjp@state.gov>; Fischer, Jonathan S <FischerJS@state.gov>
Subject: Re: Forwarding Update From Martin Kobler on Libya

RELEASE IN PART B5, B6

We will have the memo ready early next week

Gregory LoGerfo

DECONTROLLED

From: Winer, Jonathan
Sent: Friday, April 1, 2016 20:25
To: LoGerfo, Gregory D; Desrocher, John P; Fischer, Jonathan S
Subject: Fw: Forwarding Update From Martin Kobler on Libya

For your awareness.

Jonathan Winer



B6

From: Patterson, Anne W <pattersonaw@state.gov>
Sent: Friday, April 1, 2016 7:18 PM
To: Feierstein, Gerald M; Alford, Edward M; Winer, Jonathan
Subject: FW: Forwarding Update From Martin Kobler on Libya



B5

From: Finer, Jonathan J
Sent: Friday, April 01, 2016 6:58 PM
To: Patterson, Anne W; Sullivan, Thomas D; Kenna, Lisa D; Kennedy, Patrick F; Starr, Gregory B; Shannon, Thomas A
Cc: Feierstein, Gerald M; Winer, Jonathan; Alford, Edward M; Desrocher, John P
Subject: Re: Forwarding Update From Martin Kobler on Libya

Thanks, Anne. We'll look fwd to the proposal.



From: Patterson, Anne W
Sent: Friday, April 1, 2016 5:55 PM
To: Finer, Jonathan J; Sullivan, Thomas D; Kenna, Lisa D; Kennedy, Patrick F; Starr, Gregory B; Shannon, Thomas A
Cc: Feierstein, Gerald M; Winer, Jonathan; Alford, Edward M; Desrocher, John P
Subject: FW: Forwarding Update From Martin Kobler on Libya

Here's the readout from the UN rep Martin Kobler with Jonathan's comments. Now that the GNA is back in Tripoli, they need rapid international support.



B5



From: Winer, Jonathan

Sent: Friday, April 01, 2016 5:53 PM

To: Finer, Jonathan J; Sullivan, Thomas D; Kenna, Lisa D; Crocker, Bathsheba N; Sison, Michele J; Patterson, Anne W; Feierstein, Gerald M; Desrocher, John P; Miller, Walter R; Nuland, Victoria J; Sloat, Amanda L; McGurk, Brett H; Siberell, Justin H

Cc: Adams, Natasha T; Clancy, Erin J; Wachtel, Howard; NEA-LIBYADESK; LoGerfo, Gregory D; Bodde, Peter W (LEO); Kiser, Kathryn A (LEO); Hammad, Hammad B (LEO); Newman, Daniel W (LEO); LaFave, Helen G (LEO); Ziadeh, Susan L; Quanrud, Pamela G; Wolff, Terry; Rangaswamy, Roopa; Adams, Natasha T; Flynn, Joan H; Rapp, Laurel T

Subject: Forwarding Update From Martin Kobler on Libya

Colleagues - reports from Libya have by and large been uncharacteristically happy since the Presidency Council entered Tripoli Wednesday. The first 48 hours have passed with minimal problems and with many positive elements, as reflected in this report from UN SRSG Martin Kobler, which I provide you in full, with his report in **black** with a few comments of my own in **red**.

I'm sure we will face bumps of one kind or another soon enough. But the news, for now at least, is really very good as we enter the weekend.

Jonathan M. Winer
Special Envoy for Libya
US Department of State
2201 C Street NW Suite 6250
Washington DC 20520
+1 202 647 9548 (o) [redacted] (c)

B6

From: Martin Kobler [mailto:[redacted]]

Sent: Friday, April 01, 2016 5:04 PM

Dear colleagues

In the place of my normal weekly personal message, this and forthcoming daily updates will take its place. These are extraordinary times, so I imagine you will appreciate information being shared faster. Cheers, Martin

POLITICAL

Quiet Continues: The morning was quiet, which was expected given the Friday prayers. PM Serraj inspected army and police units in Tripoli, then left the naval base to go to Friday prayers, at the historic Mizan Mosque in the middle of Tripoli. From there, he and other PC members moved to Tripoli's Algeria square to have some refreshments, sitting at a local café in the company of residents. **Winer Comment:** [redacted]

B5

he was invisible. He has chosen to be very visible since entering Tripoli. The many online photographs of his meetings with ordinary Libyans, as well as with military, police, and political figures, have documented an enthusiastic and happy city, and likely are helping to establish hope. His messages have been all about reconciliation and inclusivity, and have struck just the right tone.

Supporting Statements: There have been a number of statements today welcoming the PCs move to Tripoli: The UN Security Council has issued a press statement, noting this “important step towards bringing stability to the country and bringing the political process back on track to implement the Libyan Political Agreement signed in Skhirat on 17 December 2015, which was welcomed by Security Council resolution 2259 (2015).” A similar, supportive statement was issued by the UN Secretary-General last night. The League of Arab States has issued a statement, as has Algeria. **Winer Comment:**

B5

[Redacted]

EU sanctions come into effect: The recent EU decision to add the names of three Libyan personalities on its sanctions’ list came into effect today. The three are: GNC President Abusahmein, National Salvation Government PM Ghweil, and HoR President Agila. **Winer Comment:**

[Redacted]

Receding Opposition?: The picture is still not clear with regard to the position of the opposition is handing over power. The PM of the National Salvation Government Ghweil issued a statement last night, in which he said that he is not looking for power or positions. He expressed his intention to oppose the PC through peaceful and legal means, and without force or incitement. GNC President Nuri Abusahmein also issued a mild statement characterising the Tripoli arrival of the PC as an “illegitimate coup” but declaring that he still supported the Libyan Political Dialogue. The GNC also released a statement on 31 March in which it confirmed that it has always favoured dialogue and backed the UN-led process. Thus far most actors have made calls against violence. In a notable exception, the Grand Mufti Saqua Al-Gharyani has called for the departure of the PC, threatening to “open the door of Jihad”. Meeting with the Mufti is priority for me once we are able to enter the city. **Winer Comment:**

[Redacted]

Support grows for GNA: National institutions and actors have been lining up to pledge support to the PC, including the oil field guard unit. On Thursday western ten cities declared their support. We can only hope that this momentum continues. **Winer Comment:**

[Redacted]

State Council: according to some interlocutors, plans are underway to convene a session for the State Council either on Monday or Tuesday. **Winer comment:**

[Redacted]

SECURITY

A peaceful prayer day: The security situation in Tripoli remains calm with no overt signs of GNA-related violence. The PC enjoyed relative freedom of movement under the protection of the loyal regular forces. Armed groups have either withdrawn to their barracks or outside the city – this, however, will need to be verified.

B5

Winer Comment: [Redacted]

[Redacted]

Supportive demonstrations: Media reported that Tripoli’s Martyr’s Square has witnessed demonstrations in support of the GNA for the second consecutive day.

Code of Conduct: PM Serraj and the PC are expected to engage with the armed groups in the very near future, and to begin to negotiate the Code of Conduct and guarantees in-line with the LPA. **Winer Comment:** [Redacted]

[Redacted]

Mitiga Airport: is reported secure, open and functioning,

Logistical support: logistically the pro-GNA forces on the ground can self-sustain; their only critical shortfall remains communications equipment for which they will (continue to) request international assistance.

ANALYSIS

The reasons for optimism are mounting; with the lack of violence today, and the tightening grip of the TSC in the city, the handover of power may be commencing.

The GNC has been muted in its protest - which at least in its statement is calling for peace and wishes to have discussions. While the demands of the GNC may be challenging to accommodate, their willingness to speak (if genuine) is an entry point. With the EU sanctions in place since today, and the growing popular support for the PC, the opposition is more and more isolated. This pressure will hopefully bring them to the table in a meaningful manner so that the implementation of the LPA can continue and state can be stabilized.

At this time, the more support the GNA receives, the further the momentum will grow behind them – which is why further statements of support by the international actors are welcome.

Winer Comment: [Redacted]

[Redacted]

~~SBU~~

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

From: Winer, Jonathan </O=SBUSTATE/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=JONATHAN WINER49E>
Sent: Thursday, May 12, 2016 11:03 AM
To: Sison, Michele J <SisonMJ@state.gov>
Subject: FW: Libya Update

RELEASE IN PART
1.4(B),B1,B5,1.4(D),B6

Yes, this was exactly one week ago. So it's getting out of date. best

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

Classified by Director, A/GIS/IPS, DoS on 02/12/2019 ~ Class: CONFIDENTIAL ~ Reason: 1.4(B), 1.4(D) ~ Declassify on: 02/12/2029

From: Winer, Jonathan
Sent: Thursday, May 05, 2016 10:51 PM
To: Finer, Jonathan J; Kenna, Lisa D; Sullivan, Thomas D; Patterson, Anne W; Feierstein, Gerald M; LoGerfo, Gregory D; Bodde, Peter W (LEO); Desrocher, John P; Sison, Michele J; Crocker, Bathsheba N; Kenney, Kristie A; Rangaswamy, Roopa; Kim, Yuri J; Rapp, Laurel T; Nuland, Victoria J
Subject: Libya Update

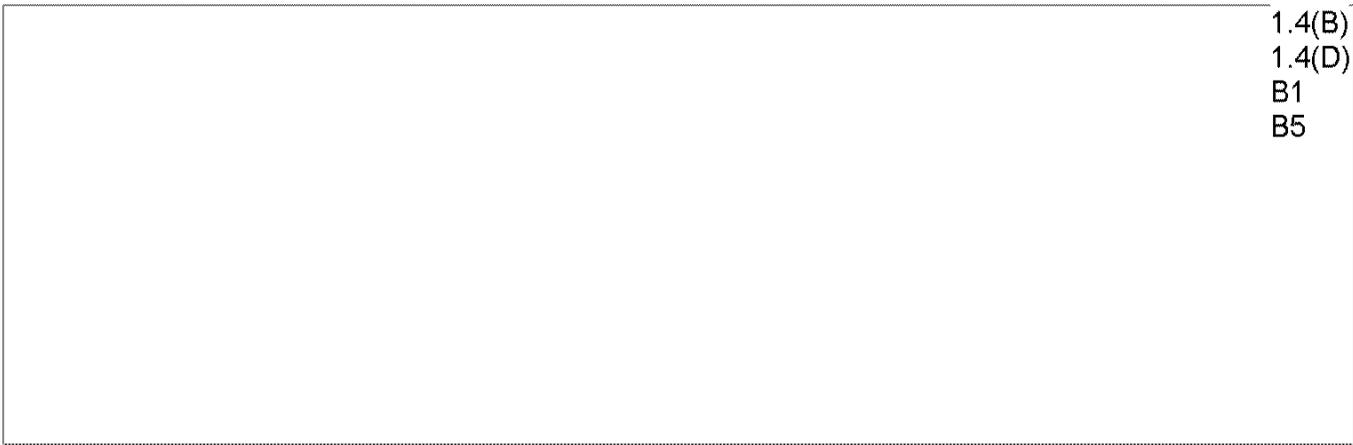
(U) Ahead of Friday's PC, and as we prepare for a May 16 Vienna Ministerial, I wanted to provide this update of the latest dynamics on Libya.

[Redacted content]

1.4(B)
1.4(D)
B1

[Redacted content]

1.4(B)
1.4(D)
B1
B5



Jonathan Winer

B6

From: [redacted] CIV (US) [redacted]
Sent: Friday, June 10, 2016 10:17 AM
To: Winer, Jonathan <WinerJ@state.gov>
Subject: Note...

B6

CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED

DECONTROLLED

**RELEASE IN PART
1.4(B),B1,B5,1.4(D),B6**

Hello Jonathan,

I'm writing something for the Chairman on Libya, spoke with John and Greg earlier in the week, and they passed me this.

Curious if there is anything more you might share subsequent to Kerry meetings with MbZ....

Thanks much. [redacted]

B6

[redacted]
Foreign Policy Advisor to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Pentagon [redacted]
[redacted]

-----Original Message-----

From: LoGerfo, Gregory D [<http://redirect.state.sbu/?url=mailto:LoGerfoGD@state.gov>]
Sent: Tuesday, June 07, 2016 4:29 PM
To: [redacted] W CIV (US)
Subject: FW: Update on Libya for S Ahead of UAE Meeting

All active links contained in this email were disabled. Please verify the identity of the sender, and confirm the authenticity of all links contained within the message prior to copying and pasting the address to a Web browser.

Here you go

**Classified by Director, A/GIS/IPS, DoS on 02/12/2019 ~
Class: CONFIDENTIAL ~ Reason: 1.4(B), 1.4(D) ~ Declassify
on: 02/12/2029**

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

From: Winer, Jonathan
Sent: Monday, June 06, 2016 11:03 PM
To: LoGerfo, Gregory D; Fischer, Jonathan S; NEA-LIBYADESK; Kiser, Kathryn A (LEO); Siberell, Justin H; Kaidanow, Tina S; Miller, Walter R; McGurk, Brett H; Wolff, Terry; Quanrud, Pamela G; Rubinstein, Daniel H (Tunis); Rapp, Laurel T; Kim, Yuri J; Kenney, Kristie A; Shannon, Thomas A; Starr, Gregory B; Bass, John R
Subject: Fw: Update on Libya for S Ahead of UAE Meeting

For your awareness to add to those who received this first. May be more than many of you outside of NEA will want but it's a fresh review of where we are on Libya and crosses many lines of effort and geography.

Jonathan Winer



From: WinerJ@state.gov <Caution-<http://redirect.state.sbu/?url=mailto:WinerJ@state.gov>>

Sent: Tuesday, June 7, 2016 6:47 AM

To: Jonathan Finer; Kenna, Lisa D; Sullivan, Thomas D; SESTravel1, User; Anne Patterson; Amb. Peter Bodde; Leaf, Barbara A; Ziadeh, Susan L

Cc: Ambassador Michele Sison; Crocker, Bathsheba N; Nuland, Victoria J

Subject: Update on Libya for S Ahead of UAE Meeting

Update on Libya Ahead of S Meeting in Abu Dhabi

[Redacted]

1.4(B)
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[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

1.4(B)
1.4(D)
B1

[Redacted]

B1

1.4(B)

1.4(D)

[Redacted]

1.4(B)

1.4(D)

B1

[Redacted]

1.4(B)
1.4(D)
B1

(SDF)

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

B5

[Redacted]

B5

[Redacted]

1.4(D)
B1
B5

3) Helping the GNA Deliver. The UAE (and Egypt) are rightly concerned that the GNA's performance on service delivery and the economy will be essential to building domestic support. The Secretary should ask MbZ to help al-Sarraj on this by providing quick aid during Ramadan. The UAE should press the Zintan, Haftar's forces, and others to allow restored oil production under the oversight of the technocratic, Tripoli-based National Oil Corporation (NOC). The UAE should also remain vigilant against Emirati involvement in attempted oil smuggling outside of traditional channels by eastern hardliners and prevent a repeat of the Distya Ameya incident from April.

[Redacted]

1.4(D)
B1
B5

CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED

From: Winer, Jonathan </O=SBUSTATE/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=JONATHAN WINER49E>
Sent: Friday, July 22, 2016 1:04 PM
To: Patterson, Anne W <pattersonaw@state.gov>; Ziadeh, Susan L <ZiadehSL@state.gov>
Subject: FW: Summary of Agreed Points at Quadrilateral Libya Ministerial July 20, 2016

Should have had you on this too.

DECONTROLLED

RELEASE IN PART
1.4(B),B1,1.4(D),B6

~~SBU~~

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

From: Winer, Jonathan
Sent: Friday, July 22, 2016 1:03 PM
To: NEA-LIBYADESK; LoGerfo, Gregory D; Fischer, Jonathan S; Bodde, Peter W (LEO); LaFave, Helen G (LEO); Asuncion, Mark R (LEO); O'Neal, Jeffrey M (LEO); Desrocher, John P; Rangaswamy, Roopa; Leaf, Barbara A; Wolff, Terry; McGurk, Brett H; Siberell, Justin H; Nuland, Victoria J; Crocker, Bathsheba N; Sison, Michele J; Kim, Yuri J; Shannon, Thomas A
Subject: FW: Summary of Agreed Points at Quadrilateral Libya Ministerial July 20, 2016

~~SBU~~

For your awareness, summary of four-country talks on Libya (Egypt, Italy, UAE, US) at Ministerial, July 20, 2016, shared with members of those delegations per instruction of Secretary Kerry.

Jonathan

Classified by Director, A/GIS/IPS, DoS on
02/12/2019 ~ Class: CONFIDENTIAL ~ Reason:
1.4(B), 1.4(D) ~ Declassify on: 02/12/2029

~~SBU~~

This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

From: Winer, Jonathan
Sent: Friday, July 22, 2016 1:00 PM
To: 'Faris Mohammed Al Mazrouei'; [REDACTED] 'Giansanti Luca'
Cc: Finer, Jonathan J; Pelofsky, Eric
Subject: Summary of Agreed Points at Quadrilateral Libya Ministerial July 20, 2016

B6

Colleagues, as promised, below I provide my read-out of the Quadrilateral Discussion among our Ministers that took place in Washington on July 20, 2016, as directed by Secretary Kerry, subject to any changes you may recommend in light of your understanding of the meeting. Please share this as appropriate with your colleagues

I remain available to each of your governments on an ongoing basis on all matters relating to Libya.

Summary of Discussion and of Agreed Implementation Steps at Quadrilateral Libya Ministerial July 20, 2016

Discussion

[Redacted]

1.4(B)
1.4(D)
B1

Agreed Near-Term Implementation Steps

[Redacted]

1.4(B)
1.4(D)
B1

Thank you for your help on all matters Libya, I remain,

Jonathan M. Winer
Special Envoy for Libya
US Department of State
2201 C Street NW Suite 6250

Washington DC 20520

+1 202 647 9548 (o) [redacted] (c)

B6

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