

# Revue de presse américaine

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<b>FRANCE – EUROPE .....</b>	<b>3</b>
Macron's 'radical centrism' sure looks a lot like conservatism .....	3
Macron's Cabinet Gives Glimpse of How He Plans to Govern France.....	3
Emmanuel Macron Names Bruno Le Maire as Economy Minister.....	4
Macron Taps Republican Le Maire for French Finance Ministry .....	4

France's Macron unveils Cabinet, half of them women ..	5
New French President Announces his First Government.....	5
Breitbart : Macron Unveils New French Government ....	5
Police Investigators Accused of Cover-Up in Handling of Berlin Attacker.....	6
Hundreds of Thousands Strike in Greece as Cuts Near Approval.....	6
U.S. and E.U. Confer on Possible Laptop Ban on Trans-Atlantic Flights .....	7

## **INTERNATIONAL.....7**

Putin Dismisses Accusation That Trump Divulged Secrets to Russian Officials .....	8
Israeli Source Seen as Key to Countering Islamic State Threat .....	8
The Dangerous Lives of Undercover ISIS Informants ...	9
Bergman : Can Trump Screw Up the World's Best Intelligence Relationship?.....	10
Iran Nuclear Deal Will Remain for Now, White House Signals.....	11
Iran Nuclear Deal in Play as Hard-Line Candidate Gains on President .....	11
Iran Has Its Own Hard-Line Populist, and He's on the Rise .....	12
Warm Start With Israel Cools as Trump Prepares Visit. What Happened?.....	14
Foreign Trip Comes at Crucial Time, but Trump Is a Reluctant Traveler.....	15
China Is Reluctant to Blame North Korea, Its Ally, for Cyberattack .....	15
Bernstein : The Key to North Korea Is Russia .....	16
Editorial : China's Trillion-Dollar Foreign Policy.....	17
Amb. Haley : 'What About the Refugees?' The U.S. Is Doing More Than Anyone .....	18
Sudan's President to Attend Summit With Trump, Khartoum Officials Say .....	18

## **ETATS-UNIS .....19**

Former FBI Director Robert Mueller Named Special Counsel for Russia Probe (UNE).....	19
Special prosecutor to complicate West Wing life .....	20
Robert Mueller, Former F.B.I. Director, Is Named Special Counsel for Russia Investigation (UNE).....	21
Deputy attorney general appoints special counsel to oversee probe of Russian interference in election (UNE).....	22
Finally something Democrats and Republicans agree on: Former FBI director is right pick for special counsel (UNE) .....	23
How dangerous are the cracks emerging in Trump's wall of support? (UNE).....	24
Conservatives begin to whisper: President Pence.....	26
FBI Counterintelligence Agents Don't Forgive or Forget.....	26
House majority leader to colleagues in 2016: 'I think Putin pays' Trump (UNE).....	27

Trump Team Knew Flynn Was Under Investigation Before He Came to White House .....	29
Congress Steps Up Probes Into Comey and Russia .....	30
How Will the Trump Presidency End? .....	31
Washington Is Abuzz With Surround Sound of Scandal	32
Editorial : A special counsel is essential. But Congress isn't off the hook. ....	33
Editorial : The Special Counsel America Needs .....	33
Editorial : Release the Comey Tapes .....	33
Editorial : The Special Counsel Mistake.....	34
Editorial : Better late than never in appointing Mueller to investigate Trump. Now it's Congress' turn to step up.....	34
Former CIA director: Trump proves he's Russia's 'useful fool' .....	35
Callan : It's still too early to talk about Trump's impeachment .....	36
McCarthy : Robert Mueller - Special Counsel for Donald Trump & Russia Investigation.....	36
Lane : Trump may have broken one D.C. Commandment too many .....	37
E. J. Dionne Jr. : Trump has caused a catastrophe. Let's end it quickly.....	38
Robbins : Donald Trump targeted by intelligence leaks	38
Kristof : Dangerous Times for Trump and the Nation ..	39
Feldman : Special Counsel Can Examine Trump From All Angles .....	39
Bernstein : Trump-Russia Scandal Demands a Senate Select Committee, Too.....	40
Yoo : Forget Watergate. Think Iran-Contra. ....	41
Collins : Trump's Version of Keeping Us Safe .....	42
Henninger : Let Trump Be Trump .....	42
Rove : The Trump Tumult Is Too Much.....	43
Donald Trump Meets With Four Candidates to Lead FBI .....	43
Russian State-Run Bank Financed Deal Involving Trump Hotel Partner (UNE).....	44
Chelsea Manning Released From Military Prison .....	45
Immigration Arrests Rose Sharply in Trump's First 100 Days .....	45
Editorial : Trump's commission on voter fraud is, well, fraudulent .....	46
Erdogan's guards clash with protesters outside Turkish ambassador's D.C. residence .....	46
Editorial : A note to Erdogan and his thugs: You can't beat up protestors here .....	47
Sparer : The Best Replacement for Obamacare Is Medicaid.....	48



## Macron's 'radical centrism' sure looks a lot like conservatism

By James McAuley

5-6 minutes

PARIS — Emmanuel Macron, France's newly inaugurated president, announced his cabinet Wednesday. The country's youngest head of state in decades presented a list with a median age of 54 that ultimately ceded control of the nation's economic affairs to right-wing politicians.

Macron, 39, was elected on the highly unusual platform of muscular centrism — without the backing of either the center-left or center-right parties that have governed France since 1958. His list of cabinet ministers provided an early indication of what his lofty "neither-right-nor-left" platform would look like in practice.

The answer: significantly conservative on the budget and the economy, as Macron — a former investment banker — appointed two well-known conservatives, Bruno Le Maire, 48, and Gérard Darmanin, 34, to lead the Economy and Budget ministries, respectively.

*[Emmanuel Macron's unlikely path*

*to the French presidency]*

These followed Macron's appointment Monday of Édouard Philippe, 46, another member of the center-right Republican party, as his prime minister, France's official head of government. Although other prominent posts were assigned to Socialists — notably, France's Interior and Foreign ministries — many of the leftists who grudgingly rallied behind Macron in the election were already disappointed.

Jean-Christophe Cambadélis, the first secretary of France's Socialist Party, wrote on Twitter after the announcement that Macron's appointments represented a "new government but no government of renewal." If there were certain "guarantees for the left," he wrote, "Matignon and Bercy are on the right." Matignon refers to the French prime minister's headquarters; Bercy to the Paris seat of the economy minister.

Macron's intent to jump-start the French economy was a frequent campaign promise, and his proposals probably contributed to his appeal among the conservative voters who backed him against the far-right Marine Le Pen in the election's final round. As the economy minister under President François Hollande, a Socialist,

Macron was an outspoken advocate of market reforms devised to reboot a faltering economy with very little growth and an unemployment rate that has hovered around 10 percent for years.

Among other things, those reforms sought to expand France's storied 35-hour workweek and to make it slightly easier for French companies to fire employees, who receive a significant number of labor protections. The proposed reforms sparked weeks of protests last year, but they became law in August 2016 after the government pushed them through Parliament.

Despite Macron's service in a Socialist cabinet, his support for these measures — along with his stint as an investment banker at Rothschild, where he made a reported \$2.9 million — earned him a reputation as a neoliberal not fully committed to the leftist cause.

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This was a mainstay of the highly contentious election Macron ultimately won. Throughout the campaign, the far-left Jean-Luc Mélenchon — whose leftist populism received an astonishing degree of support, especially among younger

voters — rallied against Macron. When Macron was elected, Mélenchon said that the "program of the new monarch-style president is known already" and constitutes "a war against the French social system."

*[Macron affirms Franco-German ties, E.U. commitment in meeting with Merkel]*

But continuing market reforms will be key for Macron, especially regarding his pledge to double down on France's commitments to the European Union. Speaking in Berlin this week alongside German Chancellor Angela Merkel, he promised to "apply in-depth reforms" in his country, largely to regain Germany's trust in France's competence in managing its own domestic affairs.

Tellingly, Macron changed the full title of the French Foreign Affairs Ministry to the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, suggesting the primacy of the European Union in his international agenda.

In keeping with Macron's promise to promote representative equality, half of the 18 ministers he named Monday are women. The new government's first cabinet meeting is slated for Thursday morning.



## Macron's Cabinet Gives Glimpse of How He Plans to Govern France

Alissa J. Rubin

5-6 minutes

PARIS — The cabinet announced on Wednesday by the government of France's newly elected president, Emmanuel Macron, is made up of a carefully chosen cast of characters meant to signal how he plans to govern.

It has some appointments from the left and some from the right; it is evenly divided between career politicians and those who come from the private sector or nonprofits. And it has equal numbers of men and women.

"It is a government of renewal," the presidential press office said in a statement on Wednesday.

But legislative elections are scheduled for June 11 and 18, and if Mr. Macron's En Marche! party receives anything less than a decisive majority, he could be forced

to make individual changes or even completely reshuffle his cabinet to better reflect the makeup of the National Assembly.

In the meantime, while he will be able to plan legislation and lay out his agenda with his new team, it is unlikely that any major legislation will be turned into law because Parliament will not be in session until after the elections.

Still, he will be able to use this cabinet to entice others to join his team by pointing out that he is making good on his promise to represent both the right and left sides of the political spectrum.

Mr. Macron is especially looking for more potential support from the moderate wing of the right — a fact that the mainstream right party, the Republicans, sorely resents since its members believe he is trying to split the party and steal voters by pulling away its moderates.

The Republicans are asking all of their legislative candidates to stick with them for now in the hopes they will be able to win a majority in the National Assembly in the legislative elections, choose a prime minister and cabinet, and force Mr. Macron to work with them on their agenda.

Traditionally in France, the party of the president dominates in the legislative elections that are held just a few weeks later. Mr. Macron, however, might not benefit from that momentum, because many voted less for him than they did against his far-right opponent, Marine Le Pen.

If an opposing party wins a majority of votes in the legislative election, it can require the president to nominate a prime minister from their ranks. And that prime minister will have the upper hand in forming the government and making domestic policy.

**Key Members of Emmanuel Macron's Cabinet**

The French president has released the names of the members of his cabinet. Here are some of his picks.

- **Prime minister**

Édouard Philippe, 46

- **Interior minister**

Gérard Collomb, 69

- **Defense minister**

Sylvie Goulard, 52

- **European and foreign affairs minister**

Jean-Yves Le Drian, 69

- **Economy minister**

Bruno Le Maire, 48

- **Justice minister**

François Bayrou, 65

- **Green transition (environmental transition) minister**



Nicolas Hulot, 62

- **Labor minister**

Muriel Pénicaud, 62

The Republicans were quick to exact retribution against the two from their ranks who joined Mr. Macron's government on Wednesday. They said in a statement that those who had joined the government were "no longer part" of the party, although it was unclear whether they would be formally kicked out or if they would leave on their own, as Édouard Philippe, the new prime minister, did after his nomination on Monday.

Mr. Macron and Mr. Philippe also need to win public support for their program, which includes controversial changes to labor law and in how pension benefits are calculated. Those measures could draw hundreds of thousands of

people into the streets in protest.

Nonetheless for now, Mr. Macron can point to his newly named cabinet as emblematic of his style of governance.

Setting aside the prime minister, there will be 11 men and 11 women in the cabinet, making it more equal in that respect than any American cabinet to date, according to the Rutgers Center on American Women and Politics.

Mr. Macron's cabinet will also have more technocrats and individuals with private-sector experience than past governments, in keeping with his promise of a new style of leadership. Ministers include the head of an elite business school, Essec, and a head of a university.

Only a few were nationally well-known figures, including François Bayrou, the leader of the centrist

Democratic Movement, who will become the justice minister, and Nicolas Hulot, a prominent environmentalist, who will lead the Environment Ministry.

While Mr. Macron seems to have achieved his goal of gender equity in his appointments, he was criticized for not delivering on his campaign promise to give the person responsible for women's equality a full-fledged ministry, nominating a lower-ranked state secretary instead.

Of the 11 women Mr. Macron designated for cabinet posts, several came from the left or the center, as well as from civil society. The new health minister, Agnès Buzyn, is a doctor and runs a public health regulatory body. The new culture minister, Françoise Nyssen, runs a publishing house. The new sports minister, Laura Flessel-

Colovic, is an Olympic fencer and gold medalist and a world champion.

The new labor minister, Muriel Pénicaud, has a background in business; among her past jobs, she was a former human resources director for Danone, the global food company. She will work on one of Mr. Macron's most controversial plans, loosening the regulations in the job market.

The post of defense minister also went to a woman, Sylvie Goulard, a member of the Democratic Movement and the European Parliament.

Mr. Macron slimmed down the number of cabinet posts and state secretary positions to 22 from 37. He had only two holdovers from the administration of former President François Hollande.

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

### Emmanuel Macron Names Bruno Le Maire as Economy Minister

Matthew Dalton

3 minutes

May 17, 2017 12:06 p.m. ET

PARIS—French President Emmanuel Macron named Bruno Le Maire, a moderate from the conservative Les Républicains party, as his economy minister, giving another top post to a right-leaning member of France's political establishment.

The appointment comes two days after he named Le Havre Mayor Édouard Philippe, also a member of Les Républicains, as his prime minister.

Mr. Macron appointed Jean-Yves Le

Drian, the current French defense minister and a member of the Socialist Party, as his foreign minister, opting for continuity on his international affairs team at a time when France is involved in overseas conflicts in Syria and Ukraine.

The appointments show Mr. Macron continuing his outreach to French conservatives ahead of next month's legislative elections. Support from members of Les Républicains is likely to be key to allowing Mr. Macron to push his agenda through the National Assembly.

Mr. Macron's new party, La République En Marche, has announced 522 candidates to run in the June 11 legislative elections for the 577 seats in the National Assembly. While a number of

Socialist lawmakers have agreed to join the party, members of Les Républicains have yet to sign up. If the party doesn't win an absolute majority, Mr. Macron will need backing from a mix of socialists and conservatives to control the assembly.

The appointment gives Mr. Le Maire a key role leading Mr. Macron's efforts to shake up France's tightly regulated economy. A former agriculture minister, Mr. Le Maire will have a broad role covering French industry and the government's finances. He ran for president last year but came in fifth in November's Les Républicains primary.

Crucially, Mr. Le Maire will be tasked with clearing France's budget

with the European Commission, the European Union's executive arm, which enforces EU rules calling for governments to keep their deficits under 3% of gross domestic product. France's deficit has been over 3% since the financial crisis of 2008.

Mr. Macron named Lyon Mayor Gérard Collomb as interior minister, giving the socialist the job of leading France's counterterrorism efforts. As defense minister he appointed Sylvie Goulard, a member of the European Parliament who joined Mr. Macron's party last year.

**Write to Matthew Dalton at [Matthew.Dalton@wsj.com](mailto:Matthew.Dalton@wsj.com)**

## Bloomberg

### Macron Taps Republican Le Maire for French Finance Ministry

Mark Deen  
@MarkJDeen

More stories by Mark Deen

4-5 minutes

by and

17 mai 2017 à 09:28 UTC-4 17 mai 2017 à 11:38 UTC-4

- German-speaking Le Maire to strengthen ties with main neighbor
- Goulard to be defense minister, Le Drian takes foreign affairs

President Emmanuel Macron recruited Republican lawmaker Bruno Le Maire as finance minister, scoring a victory in his effort to draw

support from the France's mainstream right and assigning a fluent German speaker to rebuild economic credibility in Europe.

Among 16 ministers appointed Wednesday, European lawmaker Sylvie Goulard, a centrist, was named defense minister and Socialist Jean-Yves Le Drian will take the helm at the renamed ministry of Europe and foreign affairs, signaling the new administration's commitment to the European Union.

Macron, who was elected 10 days ago on a centrist, pro-EU program, needs members of France's Republican party to show that his administration won't just be a re-run of his unpopular predecessor François Hollande's. The 39-year-old president is aiming for a majority

in parliamentary elections in June and the Republicans represent the political force most capable of preventing that.

"This government is mostly anchored with the center and the right," said Jean-Daniel Levy, a pollster at Harris Interactive in Paris. "The fracture on the right is already apparent and it will become more so."

Gerard Collomb, the mayor of Lyon and a longtime Macron backer, was named interior minister and No. 2 in the government after Prime Minister Édouard Philippe. Television presenter Nicolas Hulot was recruited to the ecology ministry and Gerald Darmanin, another Republican, was named budget minister.

"The appointments of Le Maire and Darmanin are a real coup," said Antonio Barroso, a political risk analyst at Teneo Intelligence in London. "The choice of Le Maire is also probably aimed at sending a strong signal to Germany about Macron's commitment to reform."

François Baroin, head of the Republican campaign for next month's legislative elections, said he regretted losing Philippe, Le Maire and Darmanin.

"The three of them are gone, it's their choice," Baroin told Agence France-Presse. "I regret it on a personal level without calling our friendship into question."

The Republican party said it is expelling all three.

## Rural Voters

Macron has also emphasized the need to revive cooperation among EU countries and his cabinet is notable because it contains three fluent German speakers -- Philippe, Le Maire and Goulard. Le Drian, who as a minister under Hollande

oversaw two wars in Africa while selling French jet fighters and submarines, has also worked extensively with Germany.

With an eye on the National Front's strength in rural areas, Macron named his close ally Richard

Ferrand minister for regional cohesion.

"Macron is showing he understood the extent to which the National Front's gains were made in rural France," said Nicolas Lebourg, an analyst at the Fondation Jean Jaures. "It's a structural problem

completely ignored by Hollande and this government is tackling it from the start."

Macron will hold his first cabinet meeting Thursday.

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## France's Macron unveils Cabinet, half of them women

### Story highlights

- Emmanuel Macron names a Cabinet that is evenly divided between men and women
- Gérard Collomb becomes interior minister, and Jean-Yves Le Drian is foreign minister

(CNN)France's newly inaugurated President Emmanuel Macron unveiled his Cabinet on Wednesday, with women filling half of the 22 positions as promised.

Gérard Collomb will become interior minister, former presidential hopeful François Bayrou takes justice and Jean-Yves Le Drian -- who was defense minister under former President François Hollande -- takes foreign affairs and Europe.

Macron faces challenges in parliamentary vote 02:38

Sylvie Goulard will be defense minister, while Muriel Pénicaud becomes labor minister and Agnès Buzyn is health minister. Annick Girardin, who was the minister for public services under Hollande, is now the overseas territories minister.

Bruno Le Maire, who served under former center-right President

Nicolas Sarkozy, has been named as Macron's economy minister.

Hollande also achieved gender parity in his 2012 Cabinet, but commentators noted that most of the heavyweight roles went to men.

According to CNN affiliate BFMTV, the 69-year-old Collomb is a popular Socialist who has been a senator and mayor of Lyon and was one of Macron's early backers. Despite a long political career, it will be his first ministerial position.

France: Half of Macron's legislative election candidates are women

His new role puts him in charge of France's police and, as such, of any terror-related investigations in the country.

Bayrou, also in an important role, joined forces with Macron in February, contributing to his victory by bringing his centrist party Modern on board.

Macron on Monday named center-right politician Edouard Philippe of the Republicans as his Prime Minister.

The far-right National Front criticized Macron's Cabinet picks, saying he had brought back "personalities who have already significantly

demonstrated their complete incompetence."

It added, "The large number of ministers from the ranks of the Republicans, in addition to the Prime Minister himself, also confirms that the Republicans will not be able to claim to be a force opposed to the power in place."

### Legislative elections loom

Speaking at his inauguration Sunday, Macron vowed to bring confidence back to a nation that has been "broken" by a spate of terror attacks and a sluggish economy.

Emmanuel Macron's tricky to-do list after French election

He said he hoped to restore French values and applauded voters for resisting the wave of populism in choosing him over far-right candidate Marine Le Pen.

He will now be looking to the June legislative elections. His centrist La République En Marche! party, which has never held a single seat in Parliament, will need a strong presence there to push Macron's legislative agenda.

The party is scrambling to get 577 candidates together to contest every seat in the country ahead of the vote, on June 11 and 18.

It named 428 candidates last week, half of them women and more than half from outside the political establishment, fulfilling a party pledge made in January. Of the established politicians, the party has attracted candidates from both the left and right, causing panic among traditional parties facing mass defections.

### Seeking a broader appeal

Macron's selection of a prime minister from the ranks of a center-right party outside his own movement was seen as in an attempt to broaden his appeal to right-wing voters ahead of next month's vote.

Macron won the May 7 election with a resounding 66% of the vote, but his mandate may not be as strong as those numbers suggest. Many in France made it clear they were casting their votes against Le Pen.

At 39, he becomes the youngest president in France's history and the youngest leader since Napoleon. He has inherited an extraordinary to-do list and faces some demanding deadlines.

CNN's Pierre Buet, Matou Diop, Angela Dewan and Saskya Vandoorne contributed to this report.



## New French President Announces his First Government

VOA News

2 minutes

Newly elected French President Emmanuel Macron has named his Cabinet.

His first government is comprised of half men and half women, a mix of experienced politicians from a wide range of parties and newcomers from civil society.

Former French defense minister, Socialist Jean-Yves Le Drian, was named foreign minister. During his five years as defense minister under former president Francois Hollande, Le Drian supervised military operations in Mali, Central African Republic, Iraq, and Syria.

He joins Prime Minister Edouard Philippe, who Macron named Monday, a day after taking office as president.

High profile rightwinger Bruno Le Maire was named economy minister -- one of three conservatives in the Cabinet.

The new defense minister is 59-year-old centrist politician Sylvie Goulard, who began her career with the French Foreign Affairs Ministry.

Pro-European Goulard has been a member of the European Parliament since 2009 and also worked as a political advisor to the European

Commission president from 2001 to 2004.

In his inaugural address, Macron vowed to restore France's place in Europe and the world. He also vowed to continue the fight against terrorism.

Macron, a centrist, was elected last week, defeating anti-EU, anti-immigrant candidate Marine Le Pen.

## Breitbart : Macron Unveils New French Government

by Breitbart London17 May 201738

3-4 minutes

On the campaign trail ahead of his election on May 7, Macron pledged

a slimmed-down group of ministers of around 15 people, half of them women and including people from outside politics.

The delay in announcing the names on Tuesday was officially due to the

need to carry out more extensive screening of candidates, but could also reflect the difficulties in carrying out the delicate balancing act.

Macron, a 39-year-old centrist, is seeking to attract support from the

rightwing Republicans party and appointed a prime minister from their ranks, Edouard Philippe, on Monday.

There has been widespread speculation about whether other

young modernisers from the centre-right such as Bruno Le Maire or Nathalie Kosciusko-Morizet could follow suit and join the government.

The announcement will be made at 1300 GMT.

France's youngest ever president has already attracted dozens of Socialist MPs to his side as he seeks to create a new centrist force in French politics that will marginalise the traditional parties of left and right.

He is eyeing parliamentary elections in June when he hopes his new Republique En Marche (REM) party will win a majority, giving

him the freedom to enact his ambitious reform programme.

Others tipped to join the government include veteran centrist leader Francois Bayrou, European lawmaker Sylvie Goulard, Lyon's Socialist mayor Gerard Collomb and well-known environmentalist Nicolas Hulot.

Current Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian is expected to be the only survivor from the government of Francois Hollande, who left office last weekend after an unpopular five-year term.

Early Macron supporter and his top campaign organiser Richard

Ferrand, a Socialist MP, is also expected to be offered a job.

– EU priority –

In his busy first week, Macron is also set to meet EU Council President Donald Tusk in Paris on Wednesday as he tackles his top foreign priority of reforming the European Union.

The meeting was pushed back at the last-minute from its scheduled time of midday until the evening.

Tusk was one of the first prominent European voices to congratulate Macron on his May 7 presidential election runoff victory over far-right

and anti-EU politician Marine Le Pen.

Macron, who ran a staunchly pro-European campaign, kept with tradition by visiting German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Monday in his first trip abroad after taking office.

The pair now at the centre of the European project vowed to give it new impetus, saying they were ready to change treaties if necessary.

Macron has urged a deepening of the EU to fight off a recent surge of populism on the continent.

**THE WALL  
STREET  
JOURNAL.**  
6-7 minutes

## Police Investigators Accused of Cover-Up in Handling of Berlin Attacker

Zeke Turner

May 17, 2017 3:12 p.m. ET

BERLIN—The city of Berlin on Wednesday accused its own police of covering up their failure to arrest the man behind last year's Christmas market terror attack on drug charges more than a month before his rampage in the German capital.

Berlin Interior Minister Andreas Geisel said a criminal complaint had been filed against the investigators in charge of tracking Anis Amri after documents were unearthed suggesting officers had recently altered records. The records, he said, showed the rejected Tunisian asylum seeker should have been arrested last November on serious narcotics charges.

Mr. Geisel didn't disclose the identities of the investigators or say how many were named in the complaint.

Authorities said Amri rammed a stolen truck into one of the capital's busiest Christmas markets on Dec. 19, killing 12 people. He escaped and traveled as far as Milan, where he was fatally shot by Italian police days later.

The accusation against the investigators raises fresh doubts about Germany's ability to tackle its most serious terror threat in decades. Amri was able to carry out the most devastating terror attack in recent German history even though he had been known to authorities for his criminal activities and radical Islamist views, and had been under close surveillance for six months.

Amri's truck rampage followed a string of smaller attacks by Islamist radicals in Germany since last summer that has forced the country to tighten its security laws. But the number of terror investigations has since surged, leaving police and prosecutors stretched thin, security officials have warned, with new arrests occurring almost weekly.

The fact that many terror suspects arrived with the tide of migrants sweeping into Germany over the past two years has caught authorities off guard, complicated investigations and fueled criticism of the government's liberal refugee policy.

Wednesday's news of charges against the investigators showed authorities should "arrest and deport anyone who is a threat, without tolerance," said Karsten Woldeit, a spokesman in Berlin for the anti-immigrant AfD party. "That's the only way to prevent terror successfully."

Authorities in North-Rhine Westphalia and Berlin, the two states where Amri spent most of his time after arriving in Germany from Italy in 2015, have been under pressure to explain why he was able to move about freely despite his criminal activities and radicalism. Officials so far have said none of the allegations against him would have warranted an arrest under German law.

Wednesday's revelations, however, seemed to contradict this defense.

Mr. Geisel told reporters that an independent investigator brought in to audit the police's work on Amri before the attack had helped uncover a document dated Nov. 1, 2016, showing results of surveillance on the man's phone. In

the document, Amri was described as being involved with "commercial-level, gang-related narcotics trafficking."

The evidence "would have been enough to order an arrest warrant," Mr. Geisel said. The charge comes with a minimum sentence of one year in prison.

Bruno Jost, the former federal prosecutor leading the audit, also uncovered a second document written on Jan. 17, 2017, but "apparently backdated to the first of November" describing Mr. Amri's actions as small-time drug dealing—an offense that wouldn't have given authorities swift arrest powers.

"It's clear to say that we're dealing with concealment, a breach of duty, and it's clear to say on this basis, an arrest could have prevented this attack," Mr. Geisel said. "That's the scope we're dealing with here."

The state's criminal complaint against unnamed members of Berlin's criminal investigations squad allege "obstruction of justice, wrongful investigation and breach of duty," Mr. Geisel said.

While Wednesday's allegations are the first to suggest possible wrongdoing by investigators, previous revelations have raised questions about the quality of Germany's law-enforcement and antiterror efforts.

Days after the Christmas market attack, authorities said that top federal and regional security officials had met seven times to discuss the potential danger posed by Amri, known as an Islamist radical since late 2015, but concluded that he wasn't likely to commit an attack. Close surveillance of Amri was dropped weeks before the attack

because he was considered to have become a lesser threat, officials have said.

Amri also managed to register as an asylum seeker under 14 different identities, collect inflated benefits and break the terms of his asylum application by leaving the country without being arrested, German authorities said. Although he was detained at one stage pending deportation, he was released within days after Tunisia failed to immediately issue him travel documents, they said.

In a testimony to the internal affairs committee of Berlin's state parliament, Mr. Jost said immigration offices hadn't always taken Mr. Amri's fingerprints or his photograph, as required by law, when registering his asylum requests.

On the night of the attack, German police first arrested the wrong man and then missed crucial evidence identifying Amri in a first sweep of the stolen truck.

Security experts have blamed Germany's complex federal system for failing to prevent the attack. Some 40 different authorities were involved with aspects of his case—from immigration offices to local prosecutors to federal intelligence and police agencies. Others have pointed the finger at state governments for underfunding the police and prosecutors that are their responsibility under Germany's federal constitution.

—Ruth Bender contributed to this article.

Write to Zeke Turner at [Zeke.Turner@wsj.com](mailto:Zeke.Turner@wsj.com)

**The  
New York  
Times**

## Hundreds of Thousands Strike in Greece as Cuts Near Approval

Niki Kitsantonis

5-6 minutes



A protest in Athens on Wednesday, during a general strike against a new round of austerity cuts. Louisa Gouliamaki/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

**ATHENS** — Hundreds of thousands of Greeks walked off the job on Wednesday, heeding the call of labor unions to join a 24-hour general strike to protest a new round of austerity measures nearing approval in Parliament.

The effects of the strike, which came in response to pledges from the leftist-led government of Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras to Greece's international creditors, were widespread: Flights and public transportation were disrupted, ships remained anchored in ports, government offices were closed and hospitals operated with limited staff.

Public transportation in Athens was disrupted. Costas Baltas/Reuters

Greece has been struggling for years to dig its way out of an economic crisis, and even though there has been progress, unemployment is at 23 percent and the country is largely dependent on outside help.

Demonstrations were held in Athens and in other major cities, including Thessaloniki, Patras and Iraklio, against the new round of belt-tightening, which calls for pension cuts starting in 2019 and tax increases beginning in 2020 that together would save about 5 billion euros, or \$5.5 billion.

In a statement, the Greek civil servants' union, Adedy, called the austerity measures "barbaric." It decried what it called the "looting of wages and pensions" and a "sellout" of state assets, referring to plans to privatize the power board and other public bodies.

"The memorandums have consciously crushed small- and medium-size businesses," Thanos Vasilopoulos of Greece's private sector union, GSEE, told the radio station Sto Kokkino on Wednesday, referring to three foreign bailouts that successive governments have agreed to since 2010. "Basically, they have created an army of 1.5 million unemployed."

The protests were mostly peaceful, although a group of around 20 hooded youths in Athens broke away from a crowd and hurled

stones and flares at riot police officers.

Protesters threw flares riot police officers in Athens. Petros Giannakouris/Associated Press

As is usually the case, only a small fraction of those on strike joined protests in the street. About 12,000 people gathered in the Greek capital, according to police estimates, a small turnout compared with previous rallies, reflecting public fatigue after years of strikes and demonstrations.

Although some members of Mr. Tsipras's government have expressed opposition to the measures, coalition lawmakers are expected to approve them in a parliamentary vote on Thursday.

In an effort to win over wavering lawmakers and to placate a public weary of seven years of austerity, the government has also prepared legislation that would introduce some so-called countermeasures, including social benefits for the poor.

With Greeks taking to the streets, the government is hoping to secure parliamentary approval before the country's finance minister, Euclid

Tsakalotos, meets his eurozone counterparts at a meeting in Brussels on Monday.

A demonstration in Athens on Wednesday. Louisa Gouliamaki/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

Officials at the meeting are expected to sign off on the release of around €7 billion that Greece needs to meet debt obligations due in July. They are also scheduled to discuss relief for Greece's huge debt burden, which is equivalent to nearly 180 percent of gross domestic product.

The country, which has effectively been under the supervision of international creditors since 2010, has imposed wave after wave of austerity measures in return for bailout loans to keep the economy afloat.

The fiscal discipline has improved the country's finances, but it has left one in four Greeks unemployed and cut household incomes by a third, and the ratio of the country's debt to its gross domestic product is the highest in the eurozone.

## The New York Times

3-4 minutes

### U.S. and E.U. Confer on Possible Laptop Ban on Trans-Atlantic Flights

James Kanter

**BRUSSELS** — American and European officials met on Wednesday in Brussels to discuss aviation security after the United States Department of Homeland Security said it was considering a ban on laptop computers and tablets in the cabins of trans-Atlantic flights.

The session, between Elaine C. Duke, the deputy secretary of homeland security, and representatives of various European Union countries and the European Commission, the bloc's executive body, was called after the Europeans asked for clarification about any new restrictions — and the terrorist threats that prompted them.

A senior Trump administration official who briefed reporters on the condition of anonymity to discuss the meeting said that certain European officials were given insight into a developing aviation security threat.

Terrorist groups, the official said, were pursuing various innovations,

including putting explosives in consumer devices.

The official added that the homeland security secretary, John F. Kelly, could impose the measure in the next several days or weeks.

A senior European Union official, also speaking on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the talks, confirmed that the Americans shared information about what was behind the reports about the proposed restrictions.

In March, the United States and Britain barred passengers traveling through airports in a number of Muslim-majority countries from carrying laptop computers, tablets and other devices larger than cellphones aboard direct inbound flights.

The larger items were to be stowed with checked luggage.

Officials said the restrictions were put in place after intelligence showed that the Islamic State was developing a bomb that could be hidden in portable electronic devices.

In Europe, however, there is a deep wariness that extending the

restrictions there would create vast complications for airports and airlines on one of the busiest corridors for international air travel.

Last year, 31 million passengers departed European airports on flights to the United States, and 3.5 million of those passengers connected from flights that originated outside of Europe, according to the International Air Transport Association, an industry group representing 265 airlines.

Some companies restrict their employees from checking laptop computers as stowed luggage to prevent sensitive business information being lost or stolen.

And some aviation experts say that storing so many electronics in an airplane's hold could heighten the risk of lithium-ion batteries catching fire.

On Tuesday, Alexandre de Juniac, the director general of the International Air Transport Association, advised European and American officials to "avoid the concentration of lithium battery-powered devices in the cargo hold of passenger aircraft."

In a letter to Mr. Kelly and Violeta Bulc, the European commissioner for transportation, Mr. de Juniac said the current American prohibition of large electronic devices on flights from countries in the Middle East and North Africa affected about 50 flights each day; extending the ban to Europe would affect a further 390 flights per day and cost passengers \$1.1 billion each year, mostly because of longer travel times and the inability of passengers to work during flights.

Mr. de Juniac suggested there were alternatives to expanding the laptop ban, including the greater use of detection systems to test whether people had handled explosives; asking passengers to turn on their devices to detect possible tampering; using more trained dogs to sniff out explosives on passengers; and using programs to detect low-risk travelers.

According to a joint statement released after the Brussels meeting, the Americans and the Europeans plan to meet next week in Washington to discuss technical issues.

# Putin Dismisses Accusation That Trump Divulged Secrets to Russian Officials

Updated May 17, 2017 4:49 p.m. ET

MOSCOW—Russian President Vladimir Putin added fuel to the political fire in Washington on Wednesday, saying his foreign minister didn't pass on any U.S. secrets after a controversial meeting with President Donald Trump in the Oval Office last week.

At a news conference, Mr. Putin joked that he would have to admonish Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov for not handing alleged secrets to either the Kremlin or intelligence services after his meeting with Mr. Trump. "That was very bad of him," he said.

The Kremlin leader's sardonic remarks provoked laughter among his closest advisers, including Mr. Lavrov, during the news conference with visiting Italian Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni. More tellingly, however, they showed the degree to which Mr. Putin appears to relish the political turmoil that is roiling Washington, controversy in which he plays a role.

"Personally, Putin likes the situation—he likes the chaos, and the chance to see a Western leader as a weakling," said Valery Solovei, a political analyst who teaches at Moscow State Institute of International Relations. "To a Russian, everything that is

happening in Washington shows the weakness of Western democracy."

Russia's political elite had initially pinned hopes on Mr. Trump to lead the way to a rapid rapprochement with Moscow. But a burgeoning political scandal around the Trump presidential campaign's ties to Russia, and Mr. Trump's launch last month of missile strikes against Russian ally Syria, have made warmer ties between Moscow and Washington unlikely.

The Russia controversy engulfing the administration took on additional momentum after the firing of former Federal Bureau of Investigation chief James Comey and allegations that Mr. Trump passed on classified information to Mr. Lavrov in the White House meeting last week.

That meeting even raised concern among some national-security commentators that the visiting Russians may have planted a listening device in the Oval Office.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson was asked by reporters at the start of a meeting with Algerian Foreign Minister Ramtane Lamamra about Mr. Putin's offer to send transcripts of Mr. Lavrov's meeting with Mr. Trump and whether the Russians have bugged the Oval Office.

"I would have no way to know that," he said.

While Russia seems unable to capitalize on the potential Mr. Trump's presidency once held for boosting Russia-U.S. relations, Russian observers say the White House disarray can be used for propaganda purposes to undermine Russians' views of American democracy.

Fyodor Lukyanov, chairman of a prominent council of experts that advises the Russian government on foreign policy, said some in the Kremlin are even considering the possibility that Congress could launch impeachment proceedings against Mr. Trump.

"Many of them believe it's a possibility," he said.

Mr. Lukyanov said there was fear in Moscow that political blowback could grow stronger following a likely meeting between Messrs. Putin and Trump in early July at the Group of 20 major economies.

Diplomatic observers in Moscow say that few global problems will be solved without U.S. participation, and are exasperated by what they see as an atmosphere of Russophobia in Washington.

Russian analysts say the controversy in Washington gives the Kremlin a freer hand in foreign policy. They say U.S. foreign-policy disarray gives Moscow a more space to pursue its own policies in

the Middle East and consolidate its diplomatic gains.

In recent weeks, they note, Russia has put forward a new peace plan in Syria, with Washington only involved as an observer. The Kremlin is also looking to see if it can capitalize on diplomatic intervention in Libya.

Russian officials often openly bristled over criticism from the Obama administration on democratic values and human rights. So the growing chorus of Trump criticism in Washington has given Russia's elite the chance to express a certain amount of public glee.

After his meeting at the White House last week, Mr. Lavrov hit an ironic note when speaking to the Washington press corps. He wondered aloud whether he was talking to a room of grown-ups after being asked about alleged Russian involvement in the U.S. election.

"I never thought I would have to answer such questions, and moreover in the United States, with its deeply developed democratic political system," he said with evident irritation.

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THE WALL  
STREET  
JOURNAL

## Israeli Source Seen as Key to Countering Islamic State Threat

Shane Harris  
7-9 minutes

Updated May 17, 2017 11:16 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON—The classified information that President Donald Trump shared with Russian officials last week came from an Israeli source described by multiple U.S. officials as the most valuable source of information on external plotting by Islamic State.

These officials, who are privy to intelligence about the terrorist group's efforts, said the source of information was particularly valuable for tracking Islamic State's attempts to place explosive devices on commercial airplanes.

However, the officials disagree over how much damage Mr. Trump may have caused to counterterrorism efforts by discussing information gleaned from Israel with the

Russians during an Oval Office meeting last week.

One official said now that the Russians are aware of the source, there is greater risk the source could be compromised in some way. That makes it less likely that the intelligence community will trust future information, the official said.

But another official doubted that the Russians would be able to identify the nature of the source based on Mr. Trump's statements, though Moscow might learn more about where in Syria the intelligence was coming from.

While not the only source of information on the threat to airlines, it was considered the most important, the officials said. Based on cumulative intelligence, the U.S. has barred carry-on laptop computers and other consumer electronic equipment from 10 airports in the Middle East and is considering expanding the ban.

To avoid further damage, the U.S. officials declined to specify whether

the source of information is an individual or part of a technological system. But their unanimous agreement on the importance of the source to one of Washington's top national security objectives—countering international plots by Islamic State—underscores the gravity of the Oval Office conversation and the potential repercussions for Mr. Trump of sharing information that was supposed to be restricted to the U.S. and Israel.

The difficulty in assessing the fallout from Mr. Trump's decision to share the information is likely to be a subject of debate within the intelligence community. A third official said it could take some time to know if the source had been so compromised that it is no longer useful.

All the officials agreed that the president's impromptu revelation had shaken career intelligence officers' confidence in Mr. Trump's ability to keep secrets and exacerbated long-standing tensions

between him and the intelligence community.

During the presidential transition, Mr. Trump accused intelligence officials of leaking information that was politically damaging to him. His first official stop as president was at CIA headquarters, where he stood in front of a memorial and spoke of the size of the crowd at his inauguration a day earlier.

Publicly, Israeli officials have played down the significance of Mr. Trump's conversation with the Russian visitors, Sergei Lavrov, the foreign minister, and Sergei Kislyak, the Russian ambassador to the U.S.

Israeli Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman and the country's intelligence and transport minister, Yisrael Katz, said the U.S.-Israel alliance remains strong. Mr. Katz said he had "complete confidence" in the U.S. intelligence community.

But privately, Israeli intelligence officials are fuming, one of the U.S. officials said, having worried for months that Mr. Trump would



expose state secrets, even unwittingly, because of his lack of experience in handling classified information and his propensity to shoot from the hip.

One veteran intelligence officer said Mr. Trump wasn't the first leader to make indiscreet remarks to foreign counterparts. "Senior officials, to include presidents, do sometimes reveal information that intelligence professionals wish they wouldn't," said Michael Leiter, a former director of the National Counterterrorism Center under Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama.

"In that sense, Trump's discussion with the Russians might be seen as a mistake by an inexperienced president not familiar with the world of classified intelligence. But this is part of a larger pattern of behavior by the president that adds to the distrust between him and the intelligence community," Mr. Leiter said.

Mr. Trump's top aides have defended his actions, and some U.S. officials consider the ensuing

news coverage an overreaction. The U.S.-Israeli relationship, they say, will remain intact because it is mutually beneficial.

But inside the White House, Mr. Trump's exposure of a vital source shocked some staffers. According to an account provided by two officials with direct knowledge of the events, Mr. Trump discussed with the Russians the information obtained by Israel, without identifying the country.

The subject came up in a discussion about threats to commercial aviation, and Mr. Trump spoke about U.S. intelligence that he had seen with enough specificity that some staffers in the room informed their colleagues after the meeting.

Believing that the president had shared highly-classified information, staff who know about the Israeli source alerted the president's homeland security adviser, Tom Bossert, according to the U.S. officials. Mr. Bossert then called officials at the CIA and the National Security Agency to inquire whether

written records documenting the president's meeting now needed to be given a higher classification marking, given what he had discussed, the officials said.

The NSA, which helps protect U.S. intelligence information, told Mr. Bossert that it was unnecessary to reclassify the report about the meeting, the officials said. Mr. Bossert didn't get through to the CIA, they said.

The Israeli source added to a mosaic of recent information about threats from Islamic State. In recent months, the Pentagon and allied military services had identified a number of threat streams emanating from Raqqa, the militant group's de facto capital in Syria, that have long been thought to be posing a threat to European nations and other Western targets.

Some military commanders pushed to more quickly assemble a plan to seize Raqqa because of the increase in operational planning and the city's importance as a base of operations for attacks, U.S. officials said. That included the long-awaited

decision, which came last week, to arm Kurdish fighters who are expected to help the coalition wrest Raqqa from Islamic State, they said.

Defense Secretary Jim Mattis on Wednesday told reporters that he hasn't had to talk to Israel or any other allies about the comments Mr. Trump made about classified operations to the Russian diplomats.

"We always have safeguarded information from our allies and there's nothing that has caused them to, we've received no questions at all," Mr. Mattis said at the Pentagon. "We've received no questions at all from anyone."

—Gordon Lubold and Carol E. Lee and Rory Jones in Tel Aviv contributed to this article.

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Appeared in the May. 18, 2017, print edition as 'Israeli Source Seen as Key to Countering ISIS Threat.'



## The Dangerous Lives of Undercover ISIS Informants

Paul McLeary |  
55 mins ago

8-10 minutes

ERBIL, Iraq — Everyone in Mosul, Iraq's second-largest city, is aware of the warplanes that have killed the commanders of the Islamic State and decimated its weapon factories and training centers while flying tens of thousands of feet over the city, largely impervious to the threats beneath them. A far fewer number know about the undercover all-volunteer army of informants operating in Islamic State-held territory, who risk torture and death every day to relay intelligence to the Iraqi and coalition forces that operate those planes.

"There were people spying from Mosul both from the west and the eastern sides," said Emad al-Rashidi, an advisor to Nineveh Gov. Nawfal Hammadi. "We made airstrikes after confirming the data through volunteers."

"Usually, our guys in Mosul called after midnight for five seconds, before taking out their SIM card," Rashidi said. Islamic State militants have banned phones that actively communicate with the outside world via cellular networks. Anyone caught anyone using a SIM card is usually executed.

Rashidi said these civilians usually receive no compensation for their

covert work and supported the fight because "they love their land."

The informants typically provided their information to the Kurdish or Iraqi forces, who would then pass it to the anti-Islamic State coalition. A former lieutenant in the Iraqi Army and a captain in the Peshmerga focused on infantry intelligence who goes by the pseudonym Sorxan Rekani said he recruited and worked with seven informants and that Italian, German, and U.S. officers, operating on their information, would then use drones to conduct additional reconnaissance or strike the targets directly. Coalition spokesman Col. John Dorrian confirmed the international alliance receives its target lists from civilian informants, among other sources.

Foreign Policy spoke with Rekani and three civilian "agents" who provided information to him. Their collective intelligence led to the deaths of more than 100 Islamic State fighters, and the destruction of multiple weapons factories and training centers, Rekani and the informants said.

"The best way to get new information on the ground is to have someone near the target," Rekani said.

"The best way to get new information on the ground is to have someone near the target," Rekani said. "Terror organizations are very

good at changing their location, but when you have good attacks on important targets, they will lose control."

The informants declined to be identified by name, fearing reprisals against their families by Islamic State sleeper cells. They provided only their agent numbers, by which they were known to the coalition. They are all currently in Iraq outside of Islamic State-held territory, where they live in homes that Rekani helped them find. Their former handler also tried to get them cash assistance but was unsuccessful; he said the coalition told him if informants were rewarded with money, they would start selling information to the highest bidder.

Rekani met Agent 45, a Kurdish informant, in 2008 when they both served in the Iraqi military. The agent reached out to Rekani in August 2014, saying he wanted to provide information. In an interview, Agent 45 said his motivation to help was simple: "There was one reason — we don't like Daesh," using an Arabic acronym for the Islamic State.

As a generator repairman, he had the opportunity to travel throughout the city, covertly learning about Islamic State checkpoints and gatherings. He also noted movements of Islamic State trucks and warned the coalition in advance of the movement of large convoys,

making them easy targets for airstrikes.

Agent 45's life as a spy was full of dread. While out and about, he often thought that someone was following him, especially when he was gathering information. At night, he would call Rekani while lying flat on his back on the roof of his house. He kept the calls very short and hid the phone behind a false wall in a closet in his home.

"My family still does not know what I was doing," he said, even after they escaped during the Iraqi military's push into eastern Mosul. "They did not need to know. It was better for them."

Rekani referred to Agent 40, who worked as a taxi driver during the Islamic State occupation, as perhaps his "best source." Beginning in 2015, he wrote detailed reports that helped the coalition destroy 14 major targets, including a meeting of Islamic State leaders, a militant court, and several car bomb assembly plants.

Rekani told Agent 40, an Arab from Mosul, to check out certain locations in advance. Agent 40 found others on his own. "For example, if I saw many nice cars in some position, I would park nearby, walk around, and see," he said. "Sometimes I'd pick up some passengers who would tell me what was going on." Occasionally he

drove militants and overheard their conversations.

"I was afraid, of course, but I had to do something," he said. "I had to help my people."

By his count, the information he provided led to the deaths of 87 Islamic State members, including high-ranking officials. To confirm the strikes and sate his own curiosity, he took mobile phone video of almost every one of the strikes while his son drove the car.

"I was very happy to see lots of Daesh killed," he said.

"I was very happy to see lots of Daesh killed," he said.

This practice eventually caught up with him. Islamic State fighters conducted a surprise inspection of Agent 40's house and found his wife using a forbidden phone. They waited for him to return and then promptly arrested him, beat him, and shoved him in a cell with seven other men. After they went through the phone and saw the videos he took, they sentenced him to execution.

As he sat there waiting to die, the building quaked, and one of the walls exploded into pieces from an airstrike on an adjacent building. Through the smoke, Agent 40 saw four Islamic State bodies sprawled on the ground. He and six fellow prisoners made their escape through the hole caused by the airstrike — he believes the eighth prisoner was killed.

The informant fled Mosul to Qayyarah, and then to Shirqat, where he was eventually reunited with his family. To this day, he doesn't know whether the airstrike was accidental or a deliberate attempt to free him. Rekani said he does not know either.

Agent 44, also a taxi driver, was able to avoid such close calls in Mosul by hiding his SIM card inside the fruit he collected from his orange tree. His job meant that he spent a great deal of time around the mechanic shops of eastern Mosul. He seized the opportunity, gathering information on the hidden munitions plants in the area.

"I would go up to the mechanics' area and ask about strange people

working there and what my colleagues said. Then I would go to the factory site and confirm with my eyes," the informant said. One of his neighbors worked inside one of the plants and passed him the information.

Agent 44 was most proud of discovering a swimming pool where close to 50 Islamic State fighters trained during the evenings. Thanks to his chats with a pool employee, he told the coalition exactly when and where to strike the target in order to erase dozens of fighters from the conflict.

All three agents said they did their best to prevent civilian casualties but could not claim with 100 percent certainty that their work didn't cause innocent deaths. Rekani and Rashidi said drones would usually surveil targets provided by informants, to confirm that they were indeed Islamic State positions. The jihadi organization, however, has a long-standing practice of using human shields and recruiting workers from the local populace. It's impossible to know how many nonmilitants would have been

present at the time of a given airstrike.

When asked if they would do it again, all three agents said without hesitation that they would, despite the fact that they never got any payment or official acknowledgment for their role. Helping defeat the Islamic State was its own reward.

Still, Agent 40 was happy that the most absurd parts of the experience were over. He said he had found it ever more difficult to keep a straight face while attending mosque on Fridays, which the Islamic State mandated. When the militants called on God to defeat their enemies, Agent 40 made a different prayer.

"They told us to pray, 'Please, God, destroy the Americans and the Peshmerga,'" he said. "I prayed: 'Please, my God, don't listen to them.'"

## The New York Times

# Bergman : Can Trump Screw Up the World's Best Intelligence Relationship?

Ronen Bergman

5-7 minutes

The report of the presidential leak was greeted with anger, but it cannot be said that there was great surprise. At a meeting between American and Israeli intelligence officials a few weeks before Mr. Trump's inauguration, the Americans recommended to the Israelis that they refrain from passing to his White House sensitive secret information, or material that could lead to the baring of sources or methods of intelligence gathering — at least until it became clear that Mr. Trump or members of his staff were not linked inappropriately to the Russians or exposed to extortion by Moscow. An Israeli who took part in that meeting told me it was "a bizarre scene" and "against all the rules of protocol."

Israel has good reason to be concerned about its intelligence making its way to Moscow: Russia is a major player in the war in Syria on Israel's northern border, where it has also become a close ally of Iran and Hezbollah, Israel's sworn enemies. But the problem goes even deeper: If Israeli intelligence that has been shared with the United States — whether the National Security Agency, the

C.I.A., the Defense Department or the White House — is not safely guarded, Israel faces a major threat to its security. Cooperation with America's agencies is deeply embedded in Israel's intelligence community.

This relationship was born in 1956, when an Israeli spy was the first to obtain a copy of the famous speech by Premier Nikita Khrushchev of the Soviet Union admitting Stalin's crimes and handed it over to the C.I.A. Since then, the cooperation has grown beyond the C.I.A.-Mossad liaison to take in other agencies, including in particular the collaboration between the N.S.A. and its Israeli counterpart, Unit 8200 of the Military Intelligence Directorate; the F.B.I. and its parallel internal security agency in Israel, the Shin Bet; and other organizations. The N.S.A. and Unit 8200 have signed a number of secret agreements and have even erected giant N.S.A. satellite antenna dishes southwest of Jerusalem.

In this relationship, Israel has always had an advantage in the recruitment and handling of agents in Arab countries, and the Americans have the edge when it comes to the technology for intercepting transmissions. In practical terms, Israel has become the eyes and ears of the United

States in the Middle East. This arrangement has freed the United States from a heavy intelligence-gathering burden. But it has also forced the Americans to depend upon the Israelis. When the latter failed to see dramatic developments in the arena, or didn't want to see it, the Americans were also blinded, as in the surprise attack of the Arab states against Israel in October 1973.

The intelligence relationship between Israel and the United States suffered a crippling blow in 1985, when it was discovered that Israel was running a spy, Jonathan Pollard, inside United States Naval Intelligence. This act, as well as other breaches of confidence, generated enormous suspicion toward Israel. The United States continued to cooperate with Unit 8200, but it also tapped the encrypted phone conversations between its representatives at the N.S.A. and their commanders here in Tel Aviv.

Ultimately, necessity trumped suspicion. For the past 15 years, the partnership has soared to new heights, with the growth of new common threats: Hamas, Al Qaeda, Hezbollah, the nuclear projects of Iran and Syria, and more recently the Islamic State.

This partnership has produced impressive results in the penetration

and disruption of Iran's nuclear weapons program. The high point was Operation Olympic Games, under which the most deadly computer viruses of the time were created, which caused devastating damage to Iran's uranium-enrichment centrifuges. It was Mossad that headed this operation, but it would not have managed without American assistance. Israel and the United States even shared the one thing countries almost never cooperate in: targeted killing. In February 2008, President George W. Bush, in a highly unusual step, permitted the C.I.A. to cooperate with Israel in the assassination of Hezbollah's military chief, Imad Mughniyeh.

In recent months, Israel has passed on to the United States a great deal of highly sensitive and detailed information about the close coordination between the armed forces of Syria, Iran, Hezbollah and Russia, under Russian command. The problem, according to a former senior Mossad official, lies not in the information but in the most highly sensitive sources, some of whom were cultivated for years: "The Russians are not dumb. They'll realize where it comes from and they or their allies, all Israel's enemies, will take appropriate steps."

The apprehensions voiced at the meeting before Mr. Trump's inauguration related to leaks not only to Russia but also to Iran. "If indeed Trump, out of innocence or ignorance, leaked information to the

Russians, then there is a real danger to sources that it took years to acquire, and to our working methods," the source who was at the meeting said. "We have to rethink what to give the Americans.

Until we are sure that this channel is as secure as secure can be, we must not hand over our crown jewels."

But after six decades of cooperation, it is difficult to picture the two intelligence communities operating separately. It would cause untold damage to both.

**The  
New York  
Times**

Sanger

3-4 minutes

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration signaled on Wednesday that it would not, for now, jettison the Iran nuclear deal, despite the president's harsh criticism of the agreement during the campaign.

Facing a deadline of Thursday, the administration said it was waiving sanctions against Iran, as required under the deal. To have done otherwise would have violated the accord, freeing the Iranians to resume the production of nuclear fuel without any of the limits negotiated by the Obama administration two years ago.

But while acknowledging that the deal would remain in place, the administration imposed modest new sanctions against several Iranian individuals and four organizations, including a China-based network that supplied missile-related items to a key Iranian defense entity.

That appeared to be an effort to mollify Republican critics of the deal, which President Trump has called a "disaster" and said he

## Iran Nuclear Deal Will Remain for Now, White House Signals

Gardiner Harris and David E.

would have negotiated far more skillfully.

"The U.S. and its partners will continue to apply pressure on Iran to protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms for everyone in Iran," said Stuart E. Jones, the acting assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, who will be traveling with Mr. Trump to the Middle East at the end of the week.

The Trump administration has said that it is continuing to study the Iran nuclear deal, leaving a door open to leaving it at some point.

But three months into the administration, Mr. Trump has softened his criticism — just as he has decided so far not to scrap the North American Free Trade Agreement, or pull out of NATO, or impose sanctions on China over currency manipulation.

"From the very beginning, it's been clear they couldn't renege on the deal without cause," said Gary Samore, President Barack Obama's top nuclear adviser in the first term, who helped organize the pressure campaign on Iran that ultimately led it to the negotiating table.

If Mr. Trump had made good on pledges to scrap the arrangement, "the U.S. would have been entirely isolated, and no one else would have resumed sanctions," said Mr.

Samore, who is now the executive director at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard.

The announcement came two days before Iranian elections, and just before Mr. Trump's first overseas trip as president.

His first stops are in Saudi Arabia and Israel, both of which opposed the deal but now concede it is working, at least so far.

A unit inside the National Security Council has been working on ways to counter Iran, but it is unclear whether it had proposed a far harsher approach.

At a moment when Mr. Trump is consumed by troubles at home and viewed with suspicion by allies, however, there was no appetite in the White House for a breach with Iran.

The Office of Foreign Assets Control at the Treasury Department announced that among those targeted for sanctions were two senior Iranian military officials, Morteza Farasatpour and Rahim Ahmadi.

Mr. Farasatpour coordinated the sale and delivery of explosives and other material for the Scientific Studies and Research Center of Syria, while Mr. Ahmadi directs the

organization responsible for Iran's solid-fuel ballistic missile program, according to the Treasury Department.

Those sanctions appeared similar to missile-related sanctions that Mr. Obama put in place in January 2016, as the Iran deal went into effect.

The Treasury Department also announced sanctions against a network of companies associated with a Chinese citizen, Ruan Runling, which supports Syria and supplies technology and financing to aid Iran's missile program.

"This administration is committed to countering Iran's destabilizing behavior, such as Iran's development of ballistic missiles and support to the Assad regime," Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said in a statement, speaking of Syria's president, Bashar al-Assad. "It is alarming that individuals involved with Iran's missile program are assisting the brutal Assad regime, and we are taking action to curtail this behavior."

**Correction: May 17, 2017**

An earlier version of this article misstated the title of Gary Samore. He is the executive director at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, not the director of studies.

**THE WALL  
STREET  
JOURNAL**

11-14 minutes

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TEHRAN—President Hassan Rouhani faces a hard-line opponent in a national vote Friday that is shaping up as one of the most contentious and consequential elections since the founding of the Islamic Republic in 1979.

The contest puts before Iranian voters two candidates with conflicting visions for the country—Mr. Rouhani, who has made an opening to the West, and a political newcomer wary of where such a path leads.

Ebrahim Raisi, a 56-year-old cleric with close ties to Iran's supreme

## Iran Nuclear Deal in Play as Hard-Line Candidate Gains on President

Asa Fitch and Aresu Egbali

leader, has emerged as a tougher-than-expected challenger, taking advantage of economic troubles and railing during campaign rallies against inefficient government and its failure to address corruption.

Mr. Raisi, supported by Iran's hard-line establishment, has used his campaign to criticize the signature accomplishment of Mr. Rouhani's first term: the 2015 nuclear deal with six world powers, including the U.S. The agreement lifted most economic sanctions and expanded oil exports.

The Obama administration pushed the nuclear deal, in part, because it believed the lifting of sanctions would allow Iran to eventually moderate its domestic and foreign policies, according to current and former U.S. officials.

The Trump administration has shifted U.S. rhetoric and imposed

new sanctions on Iran that target entities involved in Tehran's ballistic missile program and alleged human-rights abuses. It sees the election as a gauge of Tehran's future policies, but its antipathy toward Iran is unlikely to change regardless of who wins, a senior Trump administration official said.

Mr. Rouhani has during rallies referenced, though never directly, Mr. Raisi's alleged connections with Iran's deadly 1988 purges as a longtime member of the judiciary. He told a packed stadium in western Iran this month that voters wouldn't support candidates who "executed and jailed" fellow citizens.

Mr. Raisi hasn't addressed Mr. Rouhani's comments in interviews or speeches. A judiciary spokesman, responding to Mr. Rouhani's mention of executions,

said Tuesday that Iran's judiciary has helped fight against terrorism.

"My record is that I was a soldier for this country," Mr. Raisi said Tuesday at a rally in Tehran. "My past was to push away the sinister shadow of terrorists from the country."

Until recently, the election appeared an easy win for Mr. Rouhani, who is seeking a second four-year term. But his popularity has ebbed since last year as Iranians failed to see economic benefits from the nuclear deal, polls show.

"The situation hasn't been good in these four years," said Ali Arjomandi, a 26-year-old medical student who attended a recent rally for Mr. Raisi.

Mr. Rouhani's support among likely voters was around 61%, according to the most recent polls by



Washington-based International Perspectives for Public Opinion; Mr. Raisi was at 27% after Tehran Mayor Mohammad Ghalibaf dropped from the race and gave his support to Mr. Raisi.

Iran's hard-line factions have coalesced around Mr. Raisi, sending him to the campaign trail after a career spent behind the scenes.

Mr. Raisi has promised to create a million jobs a year, address a nearly 13% unemployment rate and revive financially troubled housing projects for the poor. His campaign message mirrors former hard-line President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's in speeches that mix religion, politics and economics.

"In my childhood, I experienced the taste of poverty," he said in a TV interview last month. "Being an orphan, I worked as child and a teenager, and I know how the deprived feel because I experienced it firsthand."

### Religious pride

A victory by Mr. Raisi would bolster his chances to succeed Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who served two terms as president in the 1980s, analysts said. The supreme leader decides most matters of state, while the president manages policy and serves as Iran's face to the world.

Few doubt Mr. Khamenei, 77 years old, is behind Mr. Raisi's rise. In recent speeches, Mr. Khamenei has been critical of Mr. Rouhani's economic management, a view echoed by Iran's hard-line media outlets.

Mr. Khamenei appointed Mr. Raisi last year to oversee the Astan Quds Razavi, a charity worth billions of dollars that is central to state-controlled manufacturing and real-estate enterprises under Mr. Khamenei's control.

Some analysts aren't convinced Mr. Khamenei is wedded to Mr. Raisi as a successor. "It may be that he's a contender and Khamenei wants to take him out for a test ride," said Cliff Kupchan, the chairman of political-risk consultancy Eurasia Group.

At rallies, Mr. Raisi voices a message similar to Mr. Khamenei's, one that opposes dissent and appeals to emotions triggered by religious pride and Iran's perceived loss of prestige. It is a view associated with Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, an economic and military force that owns monopolistic companies and

leads Iran's forces in Syria and Iraq.

Iran is the main Shiite power in the region—where Shiites are outnumbered by Sunni Muslim countries, led by Saudi Arabia and its Persian Gulf neighbors, most of which are close U.S. allies. These Sunni nations have increasingly battled against what they view as Iranian meddling—and what Iran sees as its role helping suppressed Shiites.

Iran's strategy, which has put it in conflict with the West, is carried out by the power Mr. Raisi is closest to—Mr. Khamenei and his inner circle, including the Revolutionary Guard.

Mr. Rouhani, 68 years old, is a regime loyalist, but he represents a more technocratic approach to governing that appeals to younger, wealthier and better-educated Iranians. Many in Iran were born after the revolution. Some want to move past the fervor that drove out the shah, triggered the 444-day hostage crisis at the U.S. embassy and frayed ties between the countries.

If Mr. Raisi wins, Iran's foreign policy would likely break from the Rouhani-led engagement that yielded Iran's agreement to put limits on its nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief. A victory by Mr. Raisi also could change Iran's view on foreign investment. Western companies, including Boeing Co., have made billions of dollars in sales to Iran since the nuclear agreement.

"Raisi appears to be much more in line with traditional hard-line Iranian thinking about the economy, namely, that integration with the West is costly, and comes with strings attached," said Behnam Ben Taleblu, a senior Iran analyst at the Washington-based Foundation For Defense of Democracies.

Mr. Raisi has promised to abide by the deal. But he might not be willing or able to persuade the Revolutionary Guard—which sees foreign competition as a threat to its economic power—give up any market share, Mr. Taleblu said.

Mr. Rouhani has been blunt in his critique of the Revolutionary Guard. During the final presidential debate, he criticized the test-firing of a ballistic missile that carried the slogan, "Israel should be wiped off the Earth," soon after the nuclear deal took effect last year. He said at a rally that monopolies weren't good for Iran, a veiled reference to the Revolutionary Guard.

"We are at the edge of a great historical decision," Mr. Rouhani told supporters at a rally Saturday in Tehran. "Our nation this week will announce whether we return to 2012 or head to 2021, if it continues on the path of peacefulness or if it will choose tension."

Differences between the two candidates stood out during Iran's three live TV debates. The first exposed Mr. Raisi's inexperience; he went on the attack in the last two. Mr. Rouhani mostly appeared polished, although criticism from hard-line candidates in the first debate seemed to put him off-balance.

Some voters welcome Mr. Raisi's promise to increase cash handouts despite strains on the government's budget. "We want him to save us from hunger and misery," said Ahmad, age 43, a father of five who works in a bakery. "What will my sons do when they grow up? I want them to be able to earn money and get married and have children."

### Up the ranks

Mr. Raisi rose through clerical and judicial institutions. In the 1970s, he became a devotee of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, Iran's first supreme leader, while studying in Qom, home to Shiite Islam's most influential seminaries.

After the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Mr. Raisi became a member of the ruling clique, and in 1980 he began a decadeslong judicial career with his appointment as the assistant public prosecutor in Karaj, west of Tehran.

At age 23, Mr. Raisi reinforced his establishment ties by marrying the daughter of cleric Ahmad Alamolhoda, a close ally of Mr. Khamenei, the current supreme leader. The couple have two daughters. In the 1980s, Mr. Raisi became the deputy to the prosecutor in Tehran's Islamic Revolutionary court, a special judicial system known for handling politically sensitive cases.

In July of 1988, after eight destructive years of war with Iraq, Mr. Khomeini ordered that political prisoners be questioned by three-member panels made up of a cleric, prosecutor and intelligence official. Any prisoner who professed allegiance to the banned opposition groups was executed, according to international human-rights groups.

Thousands of people were believed killed, these groups say, although the precise number is unknown.

Tehran has long denied any such executions.

Mr. Raisi sometimes stood in as a prosecutor on a three-member panel with a religious judge and an intelligence ministry official, according to a report by the Abdorrahman Boroumand Foundation, a human-rights group based in Washington, D.C. Mr. Raisi hasn't responded to the report.

After Mr. Khamenei became Iran's supreme leader in 1989, Mr. Raisi's career began to advance. He became head of the judiciary's General Inspection Organization in 1994 and, a decade later, the first deputy head of the judiciary.

Mr. Raisi's best chance at beating Mr. Rouhani may come if hard-line organizers can get out the rural vote, which accounts for about 20% of the population and tends to vote conservative, said Mr. Kupchan, of the Eurasia Group.

If Mr. Rouhani wins, as most expect, he may be weakened by his public criticism of the Republican Guard and indirect references to the 1988 executions.

"He's the guy who attacked some of the core values of the Islamic Republic by airing dirty laundry," said Ray Takeyh, a fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations in Washington. "That creates problems for him in the next four years."

Mr. Khamenei said as the election approached that anyone who disrupts state security "should know that they will definitely be slapped in the face," a message that unrest won't be tolerated.

In 2009, Iranians demonstrated against the re-election of Mr. Ahmadinejad, and authorities arrested thousands of people who were led by supporters of defeated presidential candidate Mir Hossein Mousavi. Mr. Mousavi remains under house arrest.

Mr. Raisi, who was deputy head of the judiciary, promised at the time that those arrested would be dealt with "in a way that will teach them a lesson," according to the official Islamic Republic News Agency.

—Jay Solomon contributed to this article.

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TEHRAN — For months now, a black-turbaned cleric from eastern Iran has been campaigning in provincial cities, presenting himself as an anticorruption hero as he rallies support among the poor and the pious in an underdog effort to win the presidency in Friday's election.

While the candidate, Ebrahim Raisi, 56, a hard-liner who made his career in Iran's judiciary, seems to have come out of nowhere, he is seen as a favorite and possible successor to Iran's 78-year-old supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Winning the presidency, many analysts say, could be a major step in his ascent to that all-powerful position.

"When he speaks I hear our leader Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei," said Hadi Seifollah, 32, who runs a shop selling prayer mats, religious rings and the white-and-black checkered scarves worn by Iran's paramilitary basij forces.

"Raisi believes first in the Islamic Republic, its ideology," he added. "He will deal with corruption. Other candidates only talk about the economy."

A recent poll put Mr. Raisi in second place in the race for the presidency, with 27 percent of the projected vote. The same poll, by the Iranian Students Polling Agency, projected that the incumbent president, Hassan Rouhani, will get around 42 percent, depending on the turnout on Friday.

On Monday, though, the second-most-popular conservative in the race, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, the mayor of Tehran, suspended his campaign and threw his support to Mr. Raisi, possibly raising what analysts say are his chances of pulling off an upset.

While Mr. Ghalibaf is nominally a conservative, he bases his appeal on his management skills, not ideology, so it is unclear how much, if at all, he might actually help Mr. Raisi.

In 1979, the impoverished and religious masses from what was then a vast rural population were the driving force behind the revolution. Iran today is far more urban and educated, but the split endures. Mr. Raisi is calculating that by pounding away at the themes of inequality and corruption he can reap enough votes from the declining provincial sector to propel him to victory.

Many of those voters, who strongly believe in the Islamic Republic's anti-Western ideology or feel strangled by poverty, hail Mr. Raisi as a savior, ready to set Iran back on the right course.

At the same time, Mr. Raisi has refrained from raising any of the social issues his faction usually cares so much about, such as Islamic dress codes and segregation of men and women, as they might put off potential voters.

His critics see him as a hypocrite, a consummate insider who has suddenly adopted the stance of a populist outsider and corruption fighter. "Mr. Raisi misuses religion and makes empty promises," said Hossein Ghayyoumi, a reformist cleric who supports Mr. Rouhani. "Why has he not fought corruption within the judiciary, where he has been for the past 38 years?"

He also has a dark episode in his past as a judiciary official, accused of involvement in the mass execution of political opponents in 1988 — something that Mr. Rouhani is not shy about mentioning.

Mr. Raisi and Mr. Rouhani are both Shiite Muslim clerics and staunch defenders of the idea of an Islamic Republic ruled by clerics, with some direct elections. But the similarities end there. To a surprising extent, their differences mirror those in Europe and the United States: the establishment versus populism, globalists versus nationalists.

Mr. Rouhani is the globalist, seeing the way forward in outreach to other countries and foreign investment to reinvigorate the ailing economy. A critical element in that strategy was the completion of the nuclear agreement with the United States and other world powers, which the president sold as an essential first step. It has not worked out that way, however, as existing, unilateral United States sanctions have hindered foreign investment and banking.

Sensing Mr. Rouhani's vulnerability, Mr. Raisi as nationalist has criticized the pact, saying on Wednesday, "Where in the world does a government weaken its defensive potentials, missiles for preventing wars?"

He says the solutions for Iran's problems must be found "inside the country" and asserts that one of the main reasons Iran is stable and secure is its military support for Shiite fighters in Iraq and Syria.

"The only attitude to solve problems is a revolutionary spirit," Mr. Raisi said in an interview with state television. He has promised to create millions of jobs using what he likes to call "jihadi management,"

and to increase monthly cash handouts for the poor.

"He will bring the economists and experts who have been neglected in past years and fix things," said Hamidreza Taraghi, a hard-line political analyst.

Mr. Raisi's campaign has been quick to pick up on new opportunities offered by social media, now available in Iran. He regularly posts on Instagram and has channels on Telegram, where his campaign spreads video clips of him speaking or meeting personalities.

However, liberal economists dismiss Mr. Raisi's ideas as fanciful and dangerous. "His economic and social policies are like those from former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad: disastrous," said Saeed Laylaz, an economist close to President Rouhani. "What foreign company will invest in Iran if he becomes president?"

Mr. Raisi enjoys the support of many in Iran's security forces, including the powerful Revolutionary Guard Corps and the members of the paramilitary basij forces. He also appears to have the support of Ayatollah Khamenei, who like Mr. Raisi is a staunch guardian of the country's anti-Western ideology.

A poster for Mr. Raisi in front of his campaign office in Karaj. A recent poll put Mr. Raisi in second place in the race for the presidency. Abedin Taherkenareh/European Pressphoto Agency

In a recent speech he criticized the government's signing of a Unesco agreement on education and the equal rights of men and women, which he said was contrary to Iran's cultural values. "Why have they signed this?" he asked publicly.

Ayatollah Khamenei has also criticized the liberal economic policies of the Rouhani government, stressing that Iran must be self-sufficient and embrace what he calls the "resistance economy," which presumably is not that different from Mr. Raisi's "jihadi management."

Nevertheless, Ayatollah Khamenei is also a pragmatist who has signed off on important decisions — like negotiating directly with the great Satan, the United States, in brokering the nuclear agreement — that contradict some of the Islamic Republic's longstanding political views. After the deal was completed, Iran opened up further politically by inviting European and Asian leaders long shunned by hard-liners.

Moreover, in Iran presidents typically serve two terms. Mr.

Khamenei is generally not one to break with tradition, so while anything can happen in the voting, he may be comfortable with a second term for Mr. Rouhani, especially after a bruising fight that leaves the president weakened.

But Mr. Raisi is not to be lightly dismissed. Believed by adherents to be a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad, he is currently the custodian of the Shrine of Imam Reza, the wealthiest religious endowment in the Middle East.

He was born and raised in the eastern city of Mashhad, the son of a cleric, and joined the revolution at a young age. During those turbulent days, the 20-year-old was propelled into a series of sensitive positions, serving as a prosecutor in several cities and trained by Ayatollah Khamenei as a promising young bureaucrat. In 1985, he became the deputy prosecutor of Tehran.

It was in that position that Mr. Raisi was implicated in one of the bloodiest episodes in the history of the Islamic Republic. He and three others, including the current minister of justice, Mustafa Pourmohammadi, sat on a committee that sent thousands of political prisoners to their deaths.

Mr. Raisi has not commented specifically on the event, but has said that as a prosecutor he "never sent anyone to their deaths."

He is married to the daughter of the hard-line Friday prayer leader of Mashhad, Ahmad Alamolhoda, who recently led a successful fight against pop concerts there, saying they do not befit a holy city.

In a campaign video Mr. Raisi elaborated on the controversy, saying, "I remember when there was such a hype over the concerts, I told my friends, the government should think up a solution for the concerts of poor people, the concerts of slum-dwellers, and the concerts of salaries below 1 million toman," about \$250. The government should listen to the complaints of the poor, Mr. Raisi said, before worrying about pop concerts.

As the head of the Astan Quds Razavi, the religious foundation, Mr. Raisi potentially has access to billions of dollars, a fact that Mr. Rouhani has raised repeatedly in recent attacks.

In his campaign video, however, Mr. Raisi played down the power of the institution.

"Right now I am in charge of a very small foundation," he intoned. "Just imagine what we could achieve if it was at the national level."

# Warm Start With Israel Cools as Trump Prepares Visit. What Happened?

Ian Fisher

7-9 minutes

JERUSALEM — President Trump's visit to Jerusalem next week has spun into a difficult diplomatic test with Israel, one of the United States' firmest allies.

Not only has Mr. Trump given Russian diplomats intelligence that officials say came from Israel, but some of his aides have also publicly questioned whether one of the holiest Jewish sites, the Western Wall, truly belongs to Israel. And an accompanying host of small diplomatic misunderstandings and missteps have begun adding up to more than their parts.

Mr. Trump is also testing Israeli politics in a way few on the right here envisioned when he became president and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told him Israel had "no greater friend."

At the heart of it all is Mr. Trump's quest, with the wider Arab world, for "the ultimate deal" to finally bring peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians. And during Mr. Trump's visit here, it is his friend and ally Mr. Netanyahu who is most likely to be seen as the least cooperative, given the pressure he faces from settlers in the occupied West Bank and members of his own coalition, most of them deeply opposed to the idea of a two-state solution — one for Israelis, one for Palestinians.

At the same time, the Palestinian Authority president, Mahmoud Abbas, seen by many as hesitant, or even obstructionist, may seem to be more open to what Mr. Trump wants.

It is at once a case study in why this region is so unpredictable and a test of whether the new president is in over his head or knows something his many failed predecessors did not.

"We are close allies and share the same worldview," Shuli Moalem-Refaeli, a member of Parliament from the Jewish Home party, said of Mr. Trump. But she urged Mr. Netanyahu, whose party is a coalition partner with hers, not to discuss two states even if Mr. Trump pushes that as a solution.

"I pray that the process with the U.S. administration will not come to any harm to our close relations," she added. "I hope we will continue

to have good relations, even if we don't agree."

Israeli officials are keeping silent on the intelligence breach with the Russians, so it is hard to tell whether it has hurt Mr. Trump's position with Israel. Some experts speculate that the new tension may make Mr. Trump more likely to fulfill an Israeli dream: having the United States move its embassy to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv, tacitly supporting Israel's claim that the divided city is its eternal capital.

But no one expects huge progress on Mr. Trump's trip, which has already been tangled in diplomatic stumbles. In one, a scheduled trip to Masada, where Mr. Trump wanted to deliver a speech at the Roman-era mountaintop retreat that stands as a symbol of Israel's unwillingness to surrender, was called off on Tuesday.

Feelings here were wounded when American officials declined to allow Israeli leaders, Mr. Netanyahu among them, to accompany Mr. Trump on the first visit of a sitting American president to the Western Wall. (The United States and most other nations have not recognized Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem after the 1967 war, thus it remains, in policy, occupied land.)

All of this, mixed with a slowly building apprehension here that Mr. Trump might not, after all, be in the mood to give the Israeli right everything it wants, has left the distinct appearance that Mr. Netanyahu will be on the defensive as the president arrives. The two leaders took pains on Tuesday to reassert their working relationship in a phone call, but some chill is likely to last.

On the Palestinian side, there is little to lose in being solicitous of Mr. Trump.

Mr. Abbas's advisers say that meetings with Mr. Trump's team here and in Washington have been highly productive and that Mr. Abbas, 82, wishes to be the Palestinian leader who finally makes a deal. Critics note that he is highly unpopular at home and that his survival depends on maintaining power. Thus he has few options other than to restart talks if that is what Mr. Trump and regional Arab leaders want.

"What we want is a state of our own to live side by side with Israel," said Majdi al-Khalidi, Mr. Abbas's diplomatic adviser.

The Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas and Mr. Trump in the Oval Office this month. Stephen Crowley/The New York Times

David Keyes, Mr. Netanyahu's spokesman, said the prime minister had consistently called on Mr. Abbas to negotiate but had repeatedly been turned down. "No external pressure is required for him to begin negotiations, and no domestic pressure will prevent him from doing so," Mr. Keyes said.

The Israeli government's rising tension with Mr. Trump is a departure from the mood here in the days just after his election, which the Israeli right celebrated with vigor after eight tumultuous years with President Barack Obama. Mr. Trump had promised to move the American Embassy to Jerusalem, a step other nations have not taken, and he remained silent as the right announced renewed settlement building and even possible annexation in the West Bank.

There is much less fervor now. Mr. Trump decided not to move the embassy immediately, out of fear of backlash among Palestinians and the Arab world. He also publicly asked Mr. Netanyahu to exercise restraint on Jewish settlements in the West Bank, which would mean less land for a possible Palestinian homeland.

While Mr. Trump's national security adviser, Lt. Gen. H. R. McMaster, said last week that the president intended to "reaffirm America's unshakable bond to the Jewish state," he also said Mr. Trump would "express his desire for dignity and self-determination for the Palestinians." This has made many of Mr. Netanyahu's allies nervous.

The embassy move remains an issue. Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson, who will be traveling with the president in Israel, has said that no final decision has been made and that the administration is still mulling "what impact such a move would have" on peace talks.

Mr. Trump has until June 1 to decide: United States law calls for such a move, but his predecessors, concerned about reaction in the Arab world, signed waivers delaying the move every six months. (Mr. Tillerson also ruffled feathers here by referring to "Palestine," a name Israel sees, and rejects, as a recognition of a Palestinian state.)

In what the Israeli news media declared on Monday was the "first" disagreement with Mr. Trump about

this visit — suggesting more to come, and they did — Mr. Netanyahu answered Mr. Tillerson by saying that moving the embassy would only advance peace "by shattering the Palestinian fantasy according to which Jerusalem isn't the capital of Israel."

Though Mr. Abbas has opposed such a move as a de facto recognition of Israeli sovereignty over all of Jerusalem — the Palestinians demand East Jerusalem as their future capital — he has been mostly silent on the issue these days.

Reaction in Israel to Mr. Trump's information-sharing with Russia was uncharacteristically muted, with most outlets sticking to citing foreign news reports. It did not appear that any office-holding politician commented on it, and other analysts did so with the greatest of caution.

Among the most pressing questions, though, is whether any of the men — Mr. Trump, Mr. Abbas or Mr. Netanyahu — is capable of reaching deals that escaped the likes of Yitzhak Rabin and Bill Clinton, to name but a few.

"Most Palestinians have lost trust in Mahmoud Abbas's ability to reach a fair and just deal," said Fadi Quran, a young Palestinian activist and senior campaigner at Avaaz, a liberal advocacy group.

Oded Revivi, the mayor of Efrat, a Jewish settlement, who attended the inauguration of Mr. Trump and has met with his envoy here, has been one of the most prominent voices in arguing that two states is a failed enterprise. He asked, "Can any of the three deliver?"

Gilead Sher, a former Israeli negotiator under Prime Minister Ehud Barak and now a senior fellow with the Institute for National Security Studies in Tel Aviv, said an almost incalculable number of variables would have to fall in place.

Mr. Netanyahu, he said, could overhaul his government with politicians who support a deal, such as those from the Labor Party. And, he said, Mr. Trump would have to be able to get regional Arab players — Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and the United Arab Emirates — on board, as well as restart talks directly between Israelis and Palestinians.

And Mr. Trump himself?

"He's so unpredictable you cannot know what he will do," he said. "It's



quite odd, but he might be the man to do it."

**The  
New York  
Times**

Haberman

6-8 minutes

WASHINGTON — President Trump leaves on Friday for a nine-day, five-city foreign excursion, his first trip outside of the United States as the country's leader and top diplomat.

He doesn't really want to go.

In recent days, Mr. Trump has grouched to several friends that he is not looking forward to leaving his new White House cocoon for high-profile, high-pressure meetings with dozens of world leaders in unfamiliar settings.

At one point, he barked at an aide that he thought his first tour abroad should be only about half as long. He will have to abandon his well-known preference for sleeping in his own bed (or in one at the hotels or golf resorts he owns) as he hops between Saudi Arabia, Israel, Belgium, Italy and the Vatican — all places without a Trump-branded property.

But the trip comes at a critical moment for Mr. Trump's young presidency. It is his first opportunity to deliver specifics about his "America first" worldview to a global audience that has watched his initial, chaotic months in the White House with a mix of amusement, befuddlement and alarm.

The president's packed schedule is filled with opportunities for Mr. Trump to slip up, publicly or privately: back-to-back discussions with the leaders of other nations, many of whom are veteran negotiators well versed in issues they care deeply about.

By contrast, it could also serve as a much-needed change of subject for a president besieged at home with an agenda frozen by scandal.

"I'll meet scores of leaders," Mr. Trump told Coast Guard cadets on Wednesday as he spoke at their commencement. He pledged that during his global travels he will

## Foreign Trip Comes at Crucial Time, but Trump Is a Reluctant Traveler

Michael D. Shear  
and Maggie

"strengthen old friendships and will seek new partners."

Even before heading to Connecticut for that speech, Mr. Trump was brooding in the White House over the latest broadside from the F.B.I. director he fired, James B. Comey. Planning for the foreign trip has proceeded haltingly, with Mr. Trump resisting some of the pageantry that is usually a hallmark of a president's travels. A visit to Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial museum in Jerusalem, was cut short at his request.

Preparation — a standard part of the weeks before a big foreign trip — has also been hit-or-miss in recent days.

As allegations of obstruction of justice and giving secrets to Russia consumed Mr. Trump's administration, aides sought to focus the president's fleeting attention on the vital foreign policy issues he will confront and the nuts-and-bolts difficulty of taking the White House around the globe.

Jared Kushner, Mr. Trump's son-in-law and senior adviser, led briefings, including one on European leaders, last week in the Oval Office. The president conferred with the defense secretary about the Middle East and discussed his Saudi Arabia meetings with his secretary of state. Among the touchy issues in Israel: whether to move the United States Embassy to Jerusalem, something the president has decided not to announce during the trip.

But even as he sat with briefing books and stacks of news clippings about global events, Mr. Trump has generally just skimmed through, according to several people familiar with his preparations. Instead, he has focused on the chaos swirling around his White House.

In an attempt to capture his interest, aides threaded Mr. Trump's own name through the paragraphs of one of the two-page memos they wrote for him.

"You have to be prepared. These things tend to be heavily prepared on both sides so everyone knows what the expectations are," said

James B. Steinberg, a diplomat for former President Barack Obama who traveled extensively around the world. Of Mr. Trump, he said, "The fact that he doesn't go in for the typical preparations complicates these things."

Mr. Steinberg said Mr. Trump's first trip should not be that difficult since he is meeting largely with allies at a time of relative peace and prosperity.

"A trip like this is an easy trip," he said. "There's no crisis. It's a relationship-building trip. It's hard for it not to be a success unless something goes wrong."

Still, in private, Mr. Trump's advisers acknowledge that they are concerned about his off-script eruptions, his tendency to be swayed by flattery and the possibility that foreign leaders may present him with situations he does not know how to handle. They worry he will accidentally commit the United States to something unexpected, and they have tried to caution him about various scenarios.

Mr. Trump's last major venture overseas — a visit to one of his new golf courses in Scotland while he was campaigning for the presidency last summer — quickly went off script.

Arriving just as Britons voted to leave the European Union, Mr. Trump held a highly anticipated news conference where he bragged about predicting the outcome of the vote and waxed extensively about the beauty of his new golf course.

"This is one of the big votes in the history of Europe and Scotland and everywhere," he said that day in June. He then spoke at length about the golf course and resort, noting a lighthouse that sits on the course.

"We've taken the lighthouse, which is a very, very important building in Florida — I mean, in Scotland — and we've taken that building and made it something really special," he said. "It has incredible suites. Golfers will stop, and they'll have something to eat."

Stephen J. Hadley, who was former President George W. Bush's national security adviser and traveled the world with him, said that White House staff members do everything they can to avoid surprises when a president is out of the country.

"You really hope that he sticks to the script, executes the trip as planned and avoids distractions, because the whole world is watching," Mr. Hadley said.

Mr. Trump's first trip is planned with that in mind. His travels will start in Saudi Arabia and Israel, where Mr. Trump's counterparts are pleased to have him in office. He will have a brief but highly choreographed meeting with the pope. And his interactions with European allies in Belgium and Italy will keep the president away from the country's most difficult adversaries.

Still, long trips are rarely error-free, and often presidents veer off the carefully constructed narrative for their trip.

President Bush once tried to leave after a news conference in Beijing, only to find the ornate door he was trying to go through locked. "I was trying to escape. Obviously, it didn't work," he joked later.

Mr. Bush's father, President George Bush, threw up during a ceremonial dinner in Japan. And President Bill Clinton was caught during a trip in Senegal banging a bongo drum, strumming a guitar and chomping on a cigar — all in celebration of a judge's decision throwing out a sexual harassment lawsuit.

Mr. Hadley said the first foreign trip for any president is especially a challenge, and perhaps more so for Mr. Trump, who has had little practice on the world stage and has often proved himself unwilling to stick to his prepared remarks.

But Mr. Hadley said Mr. Trump should not be underestimated.

"Remember, Trump is a nothing if not a showman," Mr. Hadley said. "He's been very public for decades and very conscious about how he comes across in the media. This is not a novice on stages."

**The  
New York  
Times**

6-8 minutes

## China Is Reluctant to Blame North Korea, Its Ally, for Cyberattack

Paul Mozur and  
Jane Perlez

HONG KONG — North Korea tests nuclear weapons less than 100 miles from China's border. It launched a missile hours before a major speech by President Xi Jinping of China on Sunday, a move

Chinese analysts called a diplomatic slap in the face. Its counterfeiting of Chinese and American currency costs China millions of dollars a year.

North Korea's history of erratic behavior has embarrassed China in many ways. But through it all, China has remained stoic about its neighbor and ally.

As evidence mounts that North Korea may have links to a ransomware attack that destroyed more than 200,000 computers globally — and hit 40,000 institutions in China — China's response has been muted. Which raises the question: How far can North Korea go without getting disciplined by its more powerful neighbor?

China has been one of the biggest victims of the attack, which crippled computers at universities, major businesses and local governments, adding a potentially dangerous new element to a relationship that has increasingly tested Chinese leaders.

"North Korea has been a constant threat in terms of missiles and nuclear weapons," said Cheng Xiaohu, an associate professor of international relations at Renmin University. "All of a sudden, it poses a cyber threat."

He added: "This time if it's from North Korea, the malware was targeted indiscriminately against all computers. That's a big change. It harms and threatens China."

Amid these tensions, Beijing is not eager to call attention to its deteriorating relations with its longtime ally. North Korea's missile launch took place hours before Mr. Xi addressed an international gathering in Beijing to promote China's "One Belt, One Road" project — an enormous infrastructure undertaking that is expected to build projects in Asia, Europe and Africa.

Even though the timing of the launch suggested it was a deliberate ploy to embarrass Mr. Xi at an inopportune time, it was not reported in the Chinese state media.

Regarding the ransomware attack, China analysts say Beijing will hesitate before directly casting blame on North Korea even if evidence, still inconclusive, directly ties the North to the attack. Beijing is more likely to single out other actors, particularly the United States, experts say.

The attack took advantage of vulnerabilities in Microsoft Windows software through a tool stolen from the United States' National Security Agency. That plays into broader Chinese concerns about its overreliance on American software.

China's influence over North Korea's hacking efforts has been significant. By some accounts, the idea to experiment with cyberattacks came to North Korea from China.

Initially, the North Korean government viewed the internet as a threat. But in the early 1990s, a group of computer experts returned from China with the idea of using the web to take secrets and attack government enemies, according to one defector.

Since then, North Korean hackers have attended schools in China and used it as a staging ground for attacks. As North Korea devoted more resources to those efforts — eventually selecting child math prodigies for training and assembling an army of more than 6,000 — it established a large outpost for its secretive hacking unit in China.

Security analysts say North Korean hackers operate out of hotels, restaurants and internet cafes in northeastern Chinese cities like Shenyang and Dandong, which are outposts for trade with North Korea. Though many still operate in China, North Korean hackers have increasingly moved further afield, to countries in Southeast Asia, where government surveillance and control is less strict.

An internet cafe in China. Around 40,000 institutions in China have been hit by a recent cyberattack. Sim Chi Yin for The New York Times

The moves are also intended to protect cyberattack options in the event of a war on the Korean Peninsula. Security analysts say some attacks are also carried out from North Korea, but are limited by the fact that the country has only one main portal to the internet,

through China's state telecom operator China Unicom.

Despite evidence suggesting a North Korean role in the ransomware attack, the most common reaction among experts and on Chinese social media was to blame the United States.

"Many criticized the U.S. government, saying that it was responsible for this spread of ransomware. Obviously this accusation is reasonable," the editor in chief of state-run Global Times wrote in a prominent commentary on Monday.

"Attacks always happen," said Chen Zhong, a professor in computer science at Peking University. "What catches our eyes this time is that the attack used a tool that leaked from the N.S.A.," he said.

On the social media site Weibo, users almost uniformly blamed the United States for the attack.

"Hell, if North Korea could do this they would have showed it off long ago," said one user. "North Korea would have become a major power if they can pull this off," said another.

But Mr. Cheng of Renmin University said that if events more definitively linked the attack to North Korea, it was likely to pose a new test to China's increasingly rocky relationship with Pyongyang.

"Since North Korea started its nuclear program in 2006, China-North Korea relations have gradually deteriorated, and are currently at an abnormal level. If we add another virus, the image of North Korea in the eyes of China will be even worse."

China's news organizations, both state-run and private, reported on the hacking attacks, as well as the possible links to North Korea, hours after it occurred, but they did so in a controlled fashion that was confined to inside pages of newspapers, and played in modest ways on websites.

Still, several news portals wrote that cybersecurity firms like Kaspersky

Lab had found initial evidence that pointed to North Korea. The news portal Sina pointed to previous attacks — in Bangladesh, against Sony and the South Korean subway — that may have originated from the North.

Should the evidence against North Korea mount, it would add to other indignities China has suffered at the hands of its neighbor.

Over the years, North Korea has flooded northeastern China with counterfeit \$100 bills of American currency. It has also mass manufactured counterfeit Chinese renminbi, but China says little about the problem.

This year, South Korea accused the North of assassinating the half brother of the North Korean leader, Kim Jong-un, at the international airport in Kuala Lumpur, the capital of Malaysia. The relative, Kim Jong-nam, was considered a friend of China and he had lived in the Chinese-controlled territory of Macau, where he was protected by state security.

Chinese state-run media reported on the killing but refrained from associating Mr. Kim, the half brother, with China.

In 2013, an uncle of Kim Jong-un, who was the main financial conduit between China and the North, was executed by a firing squad that used antiaircraft guns, according to South Korea's National Intelligence Service.

South Korean intelligence said the killing of the uncle, Jang Song-thaek, was ordered by Mr. Kim as he was consolidating power over North Korea. His death meant that China lost its most important interlocutor with the North, and was an early signal from Mr. Kim that under his rule relations between China and North Korea would not be business as usual. But China withstood the insult without public recrimination.

base on Guam. It fell in the Sea of Japan -- according to U.S. reports, just 60 miles south of the Russian port of Vladivostok. The White House said in a statement, "With the missile impacting so close to Russian soil -- in fact, closer to Russia than to Japan -- the President cannot imagine that Russia is pleased."

Putin's response was quick and unfriendly. While restating that Russia was against the proliferation



## Bernstein : The Key to North Korea Is Russia

@Bershidsky  
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Leonid Bershidsky

8-10 minutes

Russia

Unfortunately, the idea of a grand bargain with Russia is less popular in Washington than ever before.

by

18 mai 2017 à 00:10 UTC-4

Countdown.

Photographer: STR/AFP/Getty Images

The idea of a grand bargain between the U.S. and Russia is less popular in Washington than ever before. And yet one of the biggest foreign policy problems for the U.S. -- that of North Korea -- cannot be resolved without Russia's

participation. In recent years, Russian President Vladimir Putin has made sure to rebuild a close relationship with North Korean dictator Kim Jong-un, and it's no longer enough to talk to China to mitigate the Stalinist state's aggressiveness.

QuickTake North Korea's Nukes

Last Sunday, North Korea tested a ballistic missile that might be capable of reaching the U.S. military

of nuclear weapons, including to North Korea, he said on Monday:

We need to go back to dialogue with the Korean People's Democratic Republic, stop intimidating it and find peaceful ways of resolving these issues.

"Stop intimidating North Korea" is tougher rhetoric than that used by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in April, when he urged "all parties to refrain from inflammatory statements and deeds." Unlike Beijing's ostensibly conciliatory stand, the Kremlin blames the U.S. for the escalation. With that kind of full-throated support, it's no wonder Russia was first to receive Kim's lunar New Year's greetings this year, before China.

Given that North Korea doesn't have meaningful economic ties with any country but China makes honoring Russia even more surprising. Trade with Russia hasn't amounted to more than \$100 million a year for more than a decade, though in the 1970's and 1980's, the Soviet Union was North Korea's biggest trading partner with up to 53 percent of its total trade turnover (\$2.2 billion in 1990). The two countries have set a goal to increase trade to \$1 billion a year by 2020, but the growth hasn't quite materialized yet.

Trade, however, isn't the best way to win trust in the land of the Kims, whose governing ideology, *juche*, is one of self-sufficiency. Russia has lately come through for the isolated country when it needed help.

In May, 2014, less than two months after the Crimea annexation and with Western nations seeking to punish Russia, Putin signed away 90 percent of North Korea's \$11 billion debt to Russia, an amount comparable with the debtor state's GDP. The other 10 percent, according to the deal Putin signed, could be used for joint Russian-North Korean projects. That same year, Russia delivered 50,000 tons of wheat as humanitarian aid to North Korea.

The North Koreans are also helping with one of Putin's pet plans, reviving the Far East. About 50,000 North Korean citizens -- up from about 21,000 in 2010 -- work at construction sites and lumber yards in Russia that are under the open surveillance of the North Korean intelligence services. The North Korean state takes most of the pay they earn, but the remaining share is still so big by North Korean standards that competing for this work -- described by the United Nations and human rights activists as slave labor -- requires a bribe. If any of the workers get ideas and try to defect, Russian authorities hand them over. Russia's previous, pro-Western president, Boris Yeltsin, allowed some of the defectors to hide out in his country -- but those days are gone.

Russia is pushing to reduce North Korea's international isolation. In 2013, it finished renovating the railroad link between the two countries, and this month, ferry traffic opened between Vladivostok

and the North Korean port of Rason.

Putin's Russia never does anything for free, and it can't hope to get any economic benefits from North Korea on a scale that might interest its oligarchy or its mammoth state companies. Like China, it's making political investments in a country seen as a buffer state separating it from the U.S. military bases in South Korea. No matter what Putin says about nuclear proliferation, he wants North Korea to be militarily strong. So to the Russian military, the North Korean ballistic missile didn't fall as close to Vladivostok as the White House said: It reported that the missile's flight terminated 310 miles from Russian territory.

Kim Jong-un knows his regime's continued existence depends on its credibility as a buffer. That makes any spontaneous act of aggression on North Korea's part highly unlikely: it would bring war right to the borders of Russia and China, rendering Kim useless to the two powers. He needs to rattle his weapons just loud enough to deter the U.S. from acting and remain useful to North Korea's bigger neighbors.

If that rattling is getting too loud for Washington, China isn't the only partner with whom to discuss it. Its economic leverage isn't so big in absolute terms that Russia couldn't take over some or even most of the financial burden China carries today. Moscow has positioned itself as the next in line for a deal with Kim.

But then, talking to the Russians is almost more toxic for the current U.S. administration than talking to Kim himself. That makes it all but impossible to stop North Korea from running its increasingly ambitious tests and stepping up its threats to the U.S. Nor is military intervention a good option without both China's and Russia's consent: For both, a U.S. strike would be too close to home.

Threatening anyone who helps North Korea with sanctions, as Nikki Haley, the U.S. ambassador to the U.N., did this week, isn't particularly effective: Western sanctions against Russia only made it more paranoid about the possibility of a Western attack and pushed it, among other things, to work closer with Kim.

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Since 2014, Putin has tried to build a stock of things to sell to the U.S. in exchange for a free hand in the former Soviet Union, including Ukraine. He has leverage on the Syrian regime and the North Korean one, leverage in Iran and Libya. So far, he has found no takers. But avoiding a deal with him means trouble with his clients; unless the U.S. wants to risk using force in North Korea, it needs Putin's cooperation in resolving the crisis.

This column does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the editorial board or Bloomberg LP and its owners.

## The New York Times Editorial : China's Trillion-Dollar Foreign Policy

5-6 minutes

Golden Cosmos

To hear the world leaders who gathered in Beijing last weekend boast about China's ambitious plans to spend more than \$1 trillion on roads, ports, energy and other major projects in 60 countries, linking Asia, Europe and Africa, is to be reminded how America's vision and influence have shrunk under President Trump.

While Mr. Trump pushes an America First agenda of isolationism and protectionism and embroils himself in controversies that raise doubts about his competence, President Xi Jinping of China exudes purpose and confidence as he tries to remake the global economic and political

order and lure nations into Beijing's orbit.

Mr. Xi held the Beijing forum to showcase his One Belt, One Road initiative, which is aimed at creating a modern version of the Silk Road, a network of trading routes from China to Africa and Europe. Dozens of world leaders, including President Vladimir Putin of Russia, attended. Many of them praised Mr. Xi's vision, which he first voiced in 2013, and were enthusiastic about locating projects in their countries, financing them, building them or managing them. The plan offers many ways countries can participate; Britain and Singapore, for instance, seem eager to handle private financing.

China's leader has advantages in promoting his agenda. He's in control. (It's worth remembering that he is hardly a democrat.) His government has lots of money to invest. His propaganda machine is disciplined and relentless. And Mr.

Xi himself is a Barnum-like salesman. "Development holds the master key to solving all problems," he said at the forum, as if One Belt, One Road were the ultimate cure-all.

No less important, many countries are desperate for infrastructure investment and jobs. China itself is eager to open new markets to nourish its own growth and to absorb an overproduction of steel, cement and machinery. Completing just a small fraction of the projects could help lift millions of people out of poverty and stabilize poor nations.

Still, there are reasons to wonder how much of this grand plan can be achieved. There will be security risks in regions torn by sectarian and political warfare; legal obstacles in nations with different laws; and bureaucratic hurdles in countries with inept governments and corrupt officials.

So far, investments have been focused on Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and other countries that are geopolitical priorities for China but have weak economies. Conference delegates expressed concern that such countries would find it hard to pay back loans from Chinese companies and banks and emphasized that more projects must be "high quality" and commercially viable.

There is also the issue of how local people feel about a project. Whatever the economic benefits, a project cannot be allowed to run roughshod over individuals or trample on the environment. Mr. Xi stressed that consultation, transparency and people's "well-being" are vital, but China's track record is not encouraging. One example: Kyaukphyu, Myanmar, where a Chinese-Myanmar oil and gas pipeline was pursued in secret, stomped on farmers' property rights



and did significant environmental damage.

China clearly aims to dominate the international system. If it succeeds — shaping how vast sums are spent and where, and which laws are followed or not — it could upend a system established by Washington and its allies after World War II. And there are military concerns: For instance, many Burmese and foreign experts worry

that China could use the Kyaukphyu ports for military purposes.

Mr. Trump has already ceded ground to Beijing by withdrawing from the Trans-Pacific Partnership that President Barack Obama negotiated to ensure that the United States and its allies set the rules for Asian trade. This has led many Asian countries to question America's commitment to the region and to look more seriously to China.

Like most of its Western allies, the United States has been wary of Mr. Xi's initiative. While Mr. Putin sent himself, it was only at the last minute that the Trump administration upgraded its delegate to the forum from a Commerce Department functionary to Matthew Pottinger, Mr. Trump's senior Asia adviser. American companies eager for a share of the One Belt, One Road business hope

for greater enthusiasm going forward so their interests will be protected.

Whatever obstacles lie ahead for One Belt, One Road, it is no exaggeration to say that if the United States and its Western allies turn inward, Mr. Xi could prevail by default.

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Nikki Haley

5-6 minutes

May 17, 2017 3:00 p.m. ET

I was onstage at the end of a very long day when the heckling started.

I was telling an international women's conference about how, earlier that day, I had stood up in the United Nations Security Council to condemn Syria for a chemical-weapons attack that had put dead children on the front pages of the world's newspapers. I was about to get to the part about how the U.S. would act to stop future chemical attacks when someone in the audience shouted: "What about the refugees?"

The heckling was rude, but the question was legitimate. The Syrian war has created one of the greatest refugee crises of our time, with 12 million Syrian men, women and children—half the prewar population—killed or forced to flee their homes. What is happening in Syria and its neighboring countries is a true humanitarian crisis. But those who accuse the U.S. of heartlessness in the face of this crisis are wrong.

No country has invested more in protecting, housing, feeding and caring for Syrian refugees than the U.S. We have provided nearly \$6.5

billion in emergency assistance for Syria since the start of the crisis. Inside Syria, some four million people benefit from U.S. assistance for essentials like food and shelter every month.

In the coming days, I will travel to two neighboring countries that have performed an admirable service in taking in Syrian refugees: Jordan and Turkey. The purpose of my visit is to see firsthand what news reports and official briefings can't fully convey: how refugees are coping, day in and day out. I will talk to government leaders about how U.S. programs are working to help both those displaced by the violence in Syria and the communities that host them.

Turkey today is host to almost three million Syrian refugees, while Jordan feeds, houses and educates some 659,000 refugees, more than half of whom are children.

In both countries, I will go to refugee camps, some of which are large cities with schools, shops, water systems and medical facilities. Couples are wed in these camps, babies are born, and entrepreneurs start businesses. I will visit with refugee families participating in an innovative U.S.-funded food program in which families are given electronic cards to shop at stores in the camps. This program allows refugees the dignity of being able to

purchase and cook the food of their choosing rather than donated foodstuffs.

I will also see firsthand U.N. efforts to ship humanitarian assistance from Jordan and Turkey, despite obstacles erected by the Syrian regime. The dictator Bashar Assad attempts to control who does—and who does not—receive humanitarian assistance in Syria. His ruthless regime continues to hold entire towns and villages hostage, denying aid to the people inside.

But in 2014 the U.N. Security Council authorized the U.N. and its implementing partners to use four border crossings to ship food, medicine and other lifesaving assistance into and around Syria. Through these cross-border aid programs, the U.N. and its partners have delivered more than 13,600 trucks full of humanitarian supplies to desperate civilian populations otherwise unreachable through aid programs that originate inside Syria. As a result of these programs and U.S. funding for them, millions of Syrians have been helped.

Another humanitarian aid operation I will observe is a U.N. World Food Program project that conducts high-altitude airdrops of emergency food and other aid to Syrians in an area under siege by ISIS. With the support of the U.S., this program

has successfully conducted more than 230 drops since it began last year.

In addition, I will visit U.S.-funded schools that are educating both Syrian refugee and local children. Jordanian schools have been so overwhelmed by Syrian children that they have had to institute double shifts. I will meet with Syrian students who attend their school in the afternoon, after Jordanian students attend in the morning. In Turkey I will visit a U.S.-funded school built for Syrian children.

With American help, Syria's neighbors have made the difference between life and death for millions of Syrians. The U.S. and the U.N. will continue to do a great deal of heavy lifting for these desperate people.

There won't be a fully adequate response to the question "What about the refugees?" until there is peace in Syria—when ISIS is defeated and when the Assad regime no longer terrorizes its people. The U.S. is striving toward both of these goals. Until they are realized, we are committed to easing the suffering of Syrian refugees and supporting the countries that host them.

*Ms. Haley is U.S. permanent representative to the United Nations.*

## Amb. Haley : 'What About the Refugees?' The U.S. Is Doing More Than Anyone

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Nicholas Bariyo in Kampala, Uganda, and Margherita Stancati in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

4-5 minutes

Updated May 17, 2017 1:02 p.m. ET

Sudanese officials said President Omar al-Bashir, wanted by the International Criminal Court on charges of genocide and other war

crimes, will participate in a summit of Muslim leaders in Saudi Arabia that is to be attended by President Donald Trump.

A foreign ministry official in the Sudanese capital Khartoum on Wednesday said Mr. Bashir would attend the Riyadh summit, convened by Saudi Arabia's King Salman to mark Mr. Trump's two-day visit to the kingdom, which starts on Saturday and inaugurates

his first overseas trip as U.S. president.

The U.S. isn't a member of the ICC, but in response to reports that Mr. Bashir will attend the summit, the State Department voiced its opposition.

"The United States has made its position with respect to Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir's travel clear. We oppose invitations, facilitation, or support for travel by

any person subject to outstanding ICC arrest warrants, including President Bashir," a department official said in Washington.

Mr. Bashir's attendance at the summit could pose a diplomatic challenge for Mr. Trump, whose visit to Saudi Arabia is aimed at reassuring America's most important ally in the Arab world and sending a conciliatory message to Muslims in Middle East and beyond. After visiting Saudi Arabia, Mr.

## Sudan's President to Attend Summit With Trump, Khartoum Officials Say

Trump is to travel to Israel, the Vatican and Brussels.

Rabie Abdelaty, a top official in Sudan's ruling National Congress Party, said Mr. Bashir would arrive on Saturday in the Saudi capital, adding that it wasn't clear whether he would meet Mr. Trump.

"The final program isn't yet out, and arrangements are still under way, but President Bashir would welcome such a meeting," Mr. Abdelaty said.

In Saudi Arabia, the status of Mr. Bashir's attendance at the summit was unclear.

An official said Sudan was among the countries invited to attend the

gathering but didn't say whether Mr. Bashir would represent Khartoum.

So far, Mr. Bashir hasn't been included on the official list of invited officials. The kingdom began sending invitations to Muslim leaders last week and has been announcing the names of likely attendees in the official Saudi Press Agency.

Mr. Bashir, who has ruled Sudan since 1989, is the first person to be charged by the ICC for the crime of genocide in connection with his government's efforts from 2003 to 2008 to put down an insurgency in the southwestern region of Darfur.

In addition to three counts of genocide, Mr. Bashir also faces five

counts of crimes against humanity and two counts of war crimes.

The ICC issued warrants for Mr. Bashir's arrest in 2009 and 2010 but the Sudanese leader has continued to travel abroad to destinations where local authorities haven't enforced the warrants and turned him over to The Hague-based court.

In its waning days, the Obama administration, citing Khartoum's progress confronting terrorism, eased sanctions imposed against Sudan for the government's actions in Darfur.

Since Mr. Trump took office, Sudanese officials have been in regular contact with officials in Washington, Mr. Abdelaty said,

declining to provide details. Sudan is one of the majority-Muslim nations listed on Mr. Trump's travel ban.

Saudi Arabia is an important ally of Sudan. In a show of support for Riyadh, Khartoum was one of a handful of countries that severed diplomatic ties with Tehran in early 2016 following an attack by protesters on Saudi diplomatic compounds in Iran.

—Matina Stevis in Nairobi, Kenya, and Felicia Schwartz in Washington contributed to this article.

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## ETATS-UNIS

THE WALL  
STREET  
JOURNAL

### Former FBI Director Robert Mueller Named Special Counsel for Russia Probe (UNE)

Del Quentin Wilber and Aruna Viswanatha

9-11 minutes

Updated May 17, 2017 11:59 p.m. ET

Former FBI Director Robert Mueller III was appointed Wednesday as special counsel to oversee the federal investigation into Russia's alleged interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, giving him wide latitude to explore potential collusion between the Trump campaign and Moscow.

Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein said in a statement he was naming a special counsel due to the inquiry's "unique circumstances." The public interest, he said, "requires me to place this investigation under the authority of a person who exercises a degree of independence from the normal chain of command."

Mr. Rosenstein cautioned that his decision wasn't the result of a "finding that crimes have been committed or that any prosecution is warranted." He said he has made no such determination.

The appointment, an unusual step, marks a significant new phase in the high-stakes investigation into alleged Russian electoral meddling, which has swept up the Trump administration, bogged down Congress and distracted lawmakers from their agenda.

The Justice Department didn't specify the parameters of the probe beyond noting that Mr. Mueller would oversee the previously confirmed Federal Bureau of Investigation inquiry into Russia's role in last year's election. Russian officials have denied meddling in the race.

In a statement late Wednesday, President Donald Trump said: "There was no collusion between my campaign and any foreign entity. I look forward to this matter concluding quickly." He didn't mention the appointment of a special counsel.

Mr. Rosenstein gave the White House very short notice that he was making the appointment.

The naming of Mr. Mueller, who served under presidents of both parties and is widely respected, could make it harder for partisans on either side of the aisle to question the results of the Russia investigation. With few limits on his mandate, Mr. Mueller could conduct a broad, open-ended investigation with no deadline for completion.

Mr. Mueller was the sixth director of the FBI, a position he took one week before the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and held for 12 years, making him the bureau's longest-serving director after J. Edgar Hoover.

His appointment as special counsel was announced amid increasing calls in Congress for an independent inquiry into Russia's

alleged meddling in the election and the escalating controversy surrounding Mr. Trump's firing last week of former FBI Director James Comey, who was spearheading the Russia investigation.

Mr. Mueller could theoretically investigate allegations that Mr. Trump improperly sought to pressure Mr. Comey to back off an investigation of former national security adviser Michael Flynn, who resigned in February after giving conflicting statements about his conversations with the Russian ambassador to the U.S.

Mr. Comey prepared a memo describing a February meeting with the president in which he wrote that Mr. Trump asked him to "let this go," referring to the inquiry into Mr. Flynn, according to two people close to the former FBI director. Mr. Trump has denied asking Mr. Comey to back off the Flynn probe.

The decision to tap a special counsel was striking in part because Mr. Rosenstein had resisted such calls, saying he felt federal prosecutors and FBI agents were independent enough to handle the investigation. Justice Department spokeswoman Sarah Isgur Flores declined to comment beyond the news release her office issued Wednesday evening.

Mr. Rosenstein's thinking on the issue evolved in recent days as he came to conclude that an independent prosecutor was needed to prove to the public that the investigation would be thorough

and impartial, according to a person close to the deputy attorney general.

He had been sharply criticized by some who said he may have been trying to quash the investigation by writing a memo that criticized Mr. Comey's handling of the FBI probe into Democrat Hillary Clinton's use of a private email server when she served as secretary of state, the person said.

In his memo, Mr. Rosenstein didn't outright call for Mr. Comey to be fired but said the bureau had lost the trust of the public and Congress under the former director's tenure.

He next sought out help from Mr. Mueller, who led the bureau under President George W. Bush and President Barack Obama. Mr. Obama won approval from Congress to extend Mr. Mueller's 10-year-term an additional two years, through 2013.

In signing the order Wednesday, Mr. Rosenstein relied on a 1999 regulation governing the appointment of a "special counsel" to oversee investigations involving a conflict of interest or extraordinary circumstances.

Mr. Rosenstein had the authority to appoint the special counsel because Attorney General Jeff Sessions recused himself from any aspects of investigations involving the 2016 election following reports he hadn't disclosed meetings with the Russian ambassador last year. Mr. Rosenstein has been

overseeing the investigation ever since.

Mr. Rosenstein will oversee Mr. Mueller's work and has the power to end his investigation. But the regulations note that Mr. Mueller won't be "subject to the day-to-day supervision of any official in the department." If Mr. Rosenstein disagrees with a course of action Mr. Mueller would like to pursue, the deputy attorney general is required to give "great weight" to the special counsel. If Mr. Rosenstein decides to block an action, he is required to provide an explanation to Congress.

The Justice Department has relied on the regulation just once: when Attorney General Janet Reno in 1999 appointed former Sen. John Danforth to investigate the "Branch Davidian" siege near Waco, Texas. Then-Deputy Attorney General James Comey in 2003 appointed Patrick Fitzgerald, then the U.S. attorney for the Northern District of Illinois, to be a special counsel to oversee the investigation into the leaking of a Central Intelligence Agency operative's identity. Mr. Comey didn't rely on the regulation because Mr. Fitzgerald was already a Justice

Department prosecutor.

Mr. Mueller has stepped down from his role as partner at the law firm WilmerHale. "I accept this responsibility and will discharge it to the best of my ability," Mr. Mueller said in a statement Wednesday night.

At the FBI, Mr. Mueller was credited with transforming the agency to take on a greater intelligence gathering role. Mr. Obama eventually nominated Mr. Mueller's successor, Mr. Comey, who was recently fired by Mr. Trump.

The initial reaction from Capitol Hill to Mr. Mueller's appointment was largely positive. Some Republicans viewed the appointment with something akin to relief.

Rep. Ryan Costello (R., Pa.) said the appointment removes pressure from Congress since lawmakers have been asked daily for their thoughts on how the investigation should be handled. "It takes it off the table for the time being," Mr. Costello said.

Mr. Costello also spoke highly of Mr. Mueller. "I think that his record, from what I understand, is

unimpeachable in terms of his integrity and experience," he said.

Democrats agreed. "Former Director Mueller is exactly the right kind of individual for this job," said Sen. Chuck Schumer of New York, the chamber's Democratic leader. "I now have significantly greater confidence that the investigation will follow the facts wherever they lead."

But not everyone was on board. "I don't see the need for one," said Rep. Peter King, a New York Republican. "To me, it's a bad precedent to set, if any time there's an investigation of an administration, you have to have a special counsel. These guys go on forever."

Some Democrats, such as Rep. Nancy Pelosi of California, the House Democratic leader, said they still wanted an independent outside commission to investigate because the Trump administration still would have some influence over Mr. Mueller.

"A special prosecutor is the first step, but it cannot be the last," Mrs. Pelosi said. "Director Mueller will still be in the chain of command under the Trump-appointed

leadership of the Justice Department. He cannot take the place of a truly independent, outside commission that is completely free from the Trump administration's meddling."

Mr. Rosenstein's move came as the White House appeared to be moving closer to selecting an FBI director to succeed Mr. Comey, a position that requires Senate confirmation. The naming of a special counsel could mean the new director has less direct influence over the Russia investigation because that will now be spearheaded by Mr. Mueller, likely with several FBI agents detailed to his operation.

—Natalie Andrews and Byron Tau contributed to this article.

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Appeared in the May. 18, 2017, print edition as 'Ex-FBI Chief to Lead Russia Probe.'

## POLITICO Special prosecutor to complicate West Wing life

By Samuelsohn  
Darren  
5-6 minutes

Working in President Donald Trump's White House is about to get a whole lot harder.

Robert Mueller, the former FBI director named Wednesday as the special counsel for investigations into Russian interference in the 2016 election, starts his job with an unlimited time and budget to pursue leads wherever they go.

Story Continued Below

Veterans of previous scandals from Whitewater on say that kind of scrutiny can exact a toll even on a well-functioning White House—which Trump's, consumed as it is by constant infighting and drama, isn't.

"There's always a mood in a White House. If you have a special prosecutor, that can dampen the spirit. It just changes things. It makes life more complicated for people who are completely innocent," said Peter Wehner, a former senior aide to President George W. Bush during the investigation into the leak of CIA agent Valerie Plame's identity.

"If you're guilty, obviously it makes it much more difficult. People are fearful whatever they've done and

transgression they've committed is going to be revealed," added Wehner, who was called to testify before a grand jury during the Plame investigation.

The pressure won't be limited just to senior staff. From the interns up, having a special prosecutor in place means responding to urgent tasks that have nothing to do with the day-to-day business of the presidency.

One example: searching through thousands of documents for materials relevant to a subpoena. Personal communications also can take on uncomfortable new dimensions as colleagues fret over whether their words can be misconstrued or used against them in grand-jury testimony—and where the penalties for perjury and obstruction of justice have caused serious harm to the reputations and careers of aides who served before them.

"The key was to have a team dedicated to dealing with the [independent counsel] so the rest of the administration could focus on real work," said Jake Siewert, who served as President Bill Clinton's final press secretary, in the wake of the Whitewater investigation and the Monica Lewinsky scandal. "Easier said than done, but not impossible."

In the Clinton world, the internal strategy included a rule that the White House press secretary didn't take questions on the ongoing investigations. Instead, reporters working on those stories had to go through specific communications staff who'd been tasked with working just with the White House counsel's office—a practice that was later adopted by the Obama administration amid repeated congressional investigations, including the Benghazi inquiry.

Aides and lawyers who have been swallowed up by previous White House investigations point to President Ronald Reagan's troubles defeating veto overrides during the Iran-Contra affair as well as the way Clinton was politically paralyzed in his second term.

"The risk is that you lose control of your agenda," said Robert Luskin, a Washington white-collar attorney who represented Bush senior adviser Karl Rove in the Plame investigation, as well as a pair of Clinton senior officials during Whitewater. "It's an enormous distraction. It's an energy suck. As long as the clouds hang over a presidency it becomes much more difficult to get anything else done."

"You don't realize how much of your political capital you're spending combating and responding to these

investigations," added a former senior Reagan aide.

Many former White House aides acknowledged a take-cover mentality is likely to grow for the Trump administration as aides start seeking out their own personal legal counsel.

"If anyone is in position to give testimony or provide evidence they damn well better have the advice of counsel," said former Clinton White House counsel Jack Quinn. "That really is important because if you are anything less than careful, you put yourself in jeopardy even though you may never have gotten near the facts and events that give rise to the investigation."

Already, Trump's former campaign manager Paul Manafort, whose work in Ukraine has come under review, has a lawyer. So does former White House national security adviser Michael Flynn, who last week got served with a subpoena by the Senate Intelligence Committee.

White House press secretary Sean Spicer earlier Wednesday—before the Mueller news was announced—sidestepped a question about whether Trump himself was considering hiring a personal lawyer to represent him in the ongoing investigation. "If I have any updates for that at some point I'll let you



know," he told reporters on Air Force One.

Asked if he was representing Trump in a personal capacity on the Russia investigation, Trump's longtime personal lawyer Michael Cohen

replied in a phone interview, "I don't know if he's made a complete decision. There's several mitigating factors."

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**The  
New York  
Times**

## Robert Mueller, Former F.B.I. Director, Is Named Special Counsel for Russia Investigation (UNE)

Rebecca R. Ruiz and Mark Landler

7-8 minutes

WASHINGTON — The Justice Department appointed Robert S. Mueller III, a former F.B.I. director, as special counsel on Wednesday to oversee the investigation into ties between President Trump's campaign and Russian officials, dramatically raising the legal and political stakes in an affair that has threatened to engulf Mr. Trump's four-month-old presidency.

The decision by the deputy attorney general, Rod J. Rosenstein, came after a cascade of damaging developments for Mr. Trump in recent days, including his abrupt dismissal of the F.B.I. director, James B. Comey, and the subsequent disclosure that Mr. Trump asked Mr. Comey to drop the investigation of his former national security adviser, Michael T. Flynn.

Mr. Rosenstein had been under escalating pressure from Democrats, and even some Republicans, to appoint a special counsel after he wrote a memo that the White House initially cited as the rationale for Mr. Comey's dismissal.

By appointing Mr. Mueller, a former federal prosecutor with an unblemished reputation, Mr. Rosenstein could alleviate uncertainty about the government's ability to investigate the questions surrounding the Trump campaign and the Russians.

Mr. Rosenstein said in a statement that he concluded that "it is in the public interest for me to exercise my authorities and appoint a special counsel to assume responsibility for this matter."

Continue reading the main story

"My decision is not a finding that crimes have been committed or that any prosecution is warranted," Mr. Rosenstein added. "I have made no such determination."

In a statement, Mr. Trump said, "As I have stated many times, a thorough investigation will confirm what we already know — there was no collusion between my campaign and any foreign entity. I look forward to this matter concluding quickly. In the meantime, I will never stop fighting for the people and the

issues that matter most to the future of our country."

Mr. Mueller's appointment capped a day in which a sense of deepening crisis swept over Republicans in Washington. Republican congressional leaders, normally reluctant to publicly discuss White House political drama or the Russia investigation, joined calls for Mr. Comey to share more about his encounters with Mr. Trump.

The Republican chairmen of the Senate Judiciary and Intelligence committees and the House Oversight Committee all asked Mr. Comey to testify before their panels. They also requested that the F.B.I. turn over documentation of Mr. Comey's interactions with his superiors in both the Obama and Trump administrations, including a memo Mr. Comey is said to have written about Mr. Trump's request that he quash the investigation into Mr. Flynn.

While Mr. Mueller remains answerable to Mr. Rosenstein — and by extension, the president — he will have greater autonomy to run an investigation than other federal prosecutors.

As a special counsel, Mr. Mueller can choose whether to consult with or inform the Justice Department about his investigation. He is authorized to investigate "any links and/or coordination between the Russian government and individuals associated with the campaign of President Donald Trump," according to Mr. Rosenstein's order naming him to the post, as well as other matters that "may arise directly from the investigation." He is empowered to press criminal charges, and he can request additional resources subject to the review of an assistant attorney general.

Mr. Trump was notified only after Mr. Rosenstein signed the order, when the White House counsel, Donald F. McGahn II, walked into the Oval Office around 5:35 p.m. to tell him. Mr. Trump reacted calmly but defiantly, according to two people familiar with the situation, saying he wanted to "fight back."

He quickly summoned his top advisers, most of whom recommended that he adopt a conciliatory stance. But his son-in-law, Jared Kushner, who had pushed Mr. Trump to fire Mr.

Comey, urged the president to counterattack, according to two senior administration officials.

After a brief discussion, however, the majority prevailed. Aides huddled over a computer just outside the Oval Office to draft the statement accepting Mr. Rosenstein's decision and asserting the president's innocence.

By the end, Mr. Trump was uncharacteristically noncombative, according to people close to him.

Mr. Rosenstein, who until recently was United States attorney in Maryland, took control of the investigation because Attorney General Jeff Sessions recused himself after acknowledging he had failed to disclose meetings he had with the Russian ambassador to Washington, Sergey I. Kislyak, when Mr. Sessions was an adviser to the Trump campaign.

As the announcement was being made, Mr. Rosenstein and the acting director of the F.B.I., Andrew G. McCabe, were briefing the leaders of the Senate and the House and the heads of the congressional intelligence committees. The lawmakers said nothing afterward.

It was only the second time that the Justice Department has named a special counsel. The first was in 1999, the year the law creating the position took effect. Attorney General Janet Reno appointed John Danforth, a former Republican senator from Missouri, to investigate the botched federal raid on the Branch Davidian compound in Waco, Tex., in 1993 that killed 76 people.

Mr. Mueller's appointment was hailed by Democrats and Republicans on Capitol Hill, who view him as one of the most credible law enforcement officials in the country.

Senator Ben Sasse, a Nebraska Republican and a member of the Judiciary Committee, said Mr. Mueller's "record, character, and trustworthiness have been lauded for decades by Republicans and Democrats alike."

Senator Ben Cardin, Democrat of Maryland and the ranking member of the Foreign Relations Committee, said Mr. Rosenstein "has taken an important step toward restoring the

credibility of the D.O.J. and F.B.I. in this most serious matter."

Mr. Mueller served both Democratic and Republican presidents. President Barack Obama asked him to stay two years beyond the 10-year term until he appointed Mr. Comey in 2013, the only time a modern-day F.B.I. director's tenure has been extended.

Mr. Mueller and Mr. Comey are close — a relationship forged while standing up to President George W. Bush's use of executive power. Mr. Mueller backed up Mr. Comey, then the deputy attorney general, in March 2004 after he threatened to resign when the White House overruled the Justice Department finding that domestic wiretapping without a court order was unconstitutional.

Mr. Mueller is expected to announce his resignation from the law firm WilmerHale. The firm employs lawyers for Mr. Kushner and for Mr. Trump's former campaign chairman, Paul Manafort.

The appointment is certain to soothe nerves at the F.B.I., where agents have felt under siege since Mr. Comey's firing and amid Mr. Trump's repeated criticism of the Russia investigation.

Mr. Mueller is known for his gruff, exacting management style — and for saving the F.B.I. after the Sept. 11 attacks, when there were calls to break it up and create a separate domestic intelligence agency. Mr. Mueller, who came to the agency just one week before the attacks, beat back those efforts and is credited with building the modern F.B.I. He led inquiries into Al Qaeda while transforming the bureau into a key part of the national security infrastructure.

Mr. Mueller is renowned inside the Justice Department for being a senior prosecutor under the elder President George Bush, and then returning years later as a working-level prosecutor in Washington.

"He came in as a line assistant and he was legendary. He was the first guy there every single day," said Preston Burton, a Washington defense lawyer who served in the United States attorney's office with Mr. Mueller. "All of a sudden he's doing street crime? Literal street

crime. He's inexhaustible. He's the embodiment of integrity."



## Deputy attorney general appoints special counsel to oversee probe of Russian interference in election (UNE)

<http://www.facebook.com/matt.zapotosky>

11-14 minutes

The Justice Department appointed a special counsel Wednesday to investigate possible coordination between President Trump's associates and Russian officials — a clear signal to the White House that federal investigators will aggressively pursue the matter despite the president's insistence that there was no "collusion" with the Kremlin.

Robert S. Mueller III, a former prosecutor who served as the FBI director from 2001 to 2013, has agreed to take over the investigation as a special counsel, Deputy Attorney General Rod J. Rosenstein announced. The move marks a concession by the Trump administration to Democratic demands for the investigation to be run independently of the Justice Department. Calls for a special counsel intensified after Trump fired FBI Director James B. Comey last week.

*[Everything you need to know about the Russia investigation's 'special counsel']*

"In my capacity as acting attorney general I determined that it is in the public interest for me to exercise my authority and appoint a special counsel to assume responsibility for this matter," Rosenstein said in a statement. "My decision is not a finding that crimes have been committed or that any prosecution is warranted. I have made no such determination. What I have determined is that based upon the unique circumstances the public interest requires me to place this investigation under the authority of a person who exercises a degree of independence from the normal chain of command."

Mueller, often described by those who worked for him as a stern and press-averse disciplinarian, issued a characteristically terse statement: "I accept this responsibility and will discharge it to the best of my ability."

Lawmakers reacted to news that the Justice Department will appoint a special counsel to investigate possible coordination between Trump associates and Russia. Lawmakers reacted to news on May 17 that the Justice Department will appoint a special counsel, Robert

Mueller, to investigate possible coordination between Trump associates and Russian officials in the 2016 election. (Victoria Walker, Jayne Orenstein, Dalton Bennett/The Washington Post)

(Victoria Walker, Jayne Orenstein, Dalton Bennett/The Washington Post)

Trump reacted to the news by saying "a thorough investigation will confirm what we already know — there was no collusion between my campaign and any foreign entity. I look forward to this matter concluding quickly. In the meantime, I will never stop fighting for the people and the issues that matter most to the future of our country."

In a series of tweets early Thursday, Trump decied that a special counsel was not named to investigate what he alleged were "illegal acts" by the Obama administration and the campaign of Hillary Clinton.

"With all of the illegal acts that took place in the Clinton campaign & Obama Administration, there was never a special council appointed!," Trump wrote, misspelling the word counsel.

Less than 15 minutes later, he tweeted: "This is the single greatest witch hunt of a politician in American history!"

The White House did not learn of Rosenstein's decision until just 30 minutes before the public announcement was made. Rosenstein called White House Counsel Donald McGahn at 5:30 p.m. to inform him, at which point McGahn walked downstairs from his second-floor office to the Oval Office to notify Trump.

Trump summoned his senior staff to the Oval Office, and together they drafted a statement reacting to the decision, coming from the president, that was distributed to reporters shortly after 7 p.m.

One senior White House official who was present for the discussions described Trump as "unbelievably calm and measured."

Team Trump's ties to Russian interests

"I expected him to be ranting and raving, but he was like, 'Fine, let them do what they have to do, but we'll be focused on our agenda,'" said this official, who spoke on the

condition of anonymity to describe the private talks.

Democrats cheered the announcement as a step forward in resolving the unanswered questions about Russian meddling in last year's presidential election — and whether the president or anyone at the White House has interfered with the investigation.

*[Here's how an independent investigation into Trump and Russia would happen]*

Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.) said Mueller "has the expertise and experience, guts and backbone to uncover the truth." He said Mueller must be given all the resources necessary to "pursue the facts wherever they lead," including whether anyone may have tried to obstruct justice.

Rep. Jason Chaffetz (R-Utah), chairman of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, cheered the choice, writing on Twitter: "Impeccable credentials. Should be widely accepted."

But some Democrats said Mueller's appointment does not preclude the need for an independent commission to examine Russian interference in the election.

"An independent commission doesn't govern the FBI investigation, an independent commission doesn't make charging decisions," said Rep. Adam B. Schiff (Calif.), the ranking Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, which is conducting its own probe of Russian meddling. "The value an independent commission adds is you have a body that is truly independent of any political consideration. And also has all the resources it needs and a single focus on the oversight of what Russia did, how we need to respond in the future, and it brings that political independence and staff and resources on task. So those are two different needs, and I think they're complementary, not in competition with each other."

The special counsel law grants Mueller the authority to probe possible attempts to stymie his investigation.

The decision to appoint a special counsel comes a day after revelations that notes taken by Comey in February recount a conversation with the president in which Trump asked him to drop an

investigation into his former national security adviser, Michael Flynn. Associates of Comey said he took detailed notes of multiple conversations with the president, and lawmakers are now demanding access to those memos and any other related records held at the FBI.

The decision also comes amid intense pressure on the senior official who has been overseeing the Russia probe, Rosenstein, to appoint a special counsel.

Rosenstein was put in charge of the Russia probe after Attorney General Jeff Sessions recused himself. Democrats have challenged Rosenstein's impartiality in the Russia probe because he wrote a memorandum initially used as the rationale for Comey's firing. In the memo, Rosenstein said Comey had violated long-standing Justice Department practices in his handling of the investigation into Clinton's use of a private email server, but shortly after the announcement of the firing, the president said he had decided to fire Comey before he received the recommendation from Rosenstein.

Rosenstein is scheduled to brief the full Senate in a closed session on Thursday.

Former colleagues said Rosenstein's move may help restore his battered reputation among current and former government lawyers. "He got absolutely pummeled by people that he knows," said a former senior Obama administration lawyer, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to talk candidly. "I think this move, as so often happens in Washington, where there is the opportunity to wash away your sins, was a thorough scrubbing."

Under the order signed Wednesday by Rosenstein, Mueller is tasked with investigating "any links and/or coordination between the Russian government and individuals associated with the campaign of President Donald Trump" as well as "any matters that arose or may arise directly from the investigation" and any other matters that fall under the scope of the Justice Department regulation covering special counsel appointments.

It wasn't immediately clear from the language of the order where Mueller might draw the lines as to which matters are related to the Russia investigation.

That language seems to suggest that Mueller could also take over ongoing investigations into leaks of classified information connected to the Russia probe. As the FBI director, Mueller assiduously discouraged leaks by his subordinates and oversaw investigations that sought to criminally charge leakers of government secrets.

"If the special counsel believes it is necessary and appropriate, the special counsel is authorized to prosecute federal crimes arising from the investigation of these matters," the order states.

Another potential legal complication could arise from the law firm where Mueller worked until his appointment as special counsel. That firm, WilmerHale, has represented Trump's former campaign chairman Paul Manafort, who has been under investigation relating to his work and payments for advising Ukrainian government officials. Officials referred questions about possible recusals on those

subjects to Mueller, who didn't respond to requests for comment.

Officials said the appointment was being made under a Justice Department statute that has only been used once, in 1999, although the Justice Department has made other special counsel appointments more recently under different authority.

Peter Zeidenberg, who has worked for a past special counsel, called Mueller an "inspired choice" because he comes to the job with automatic credibility among both parties.

"He's nominally a Republican, but he's really not a political person at all," said Zeidenberg, a lawyer now in private practice, who cautioned that such an investigation is likely to take a long time and may not ultimately satisfy the public's demand for a full accounting. "People are waiting for public answers to what happened, but that's not his job. There won't be a report or a news conference at the

end of this from him, that's not his role."

When he was FBI director, Mueller worked closely for a time with Comey — who as deputy attorney general was nominally Mueller's boss during the George W. Bush administration — and while the two men agree on much, they have very different personalities. Mueller was a harsh taskmaster who eschewed expressions of warmth with his staff. Comey, in contrast, has written holiday greetings to staff that have been described as moving.

Checkpoint newsletter

Military, defense and security at home and abroad.

The special counsel gets money and personnel from the Justice Department, but Mueller can ask for specific individuals to join the case. WilmerHale lawyers James Quarles and Aaron Zebley also stepped down from WilmerHale Wednesday, and a firm spokesman said they were expected to join Mueller. Zebley, a former FBI agent and

assistant U.S. attorney, was Mueller's chief of staff at the FBI. Quarles was an assistant special prosecutor on the Watergate Special Prosecution Force.

Given the extremely sensitive nature of the counterintelligence probe, it is likely that Mueller will also work with many of the current FBI agents assigned to the case, although the decision is ultimately his to make. The budget for the investigation will still have to be approved by Rosenstein.

In his new role, Mueller answers to, and in theory could be fired by, Rosenstein, but in practice a special counsel is not subject to daily supervision by any Justice Department official. And given that Mueller's appointment came about largely because of the firing of the FBI director, it would probably touch off a new political firestorm if Mueller were ever dismissed.

Philip Rucker, Ellen Nakashima and Julie Tate contributed to this report.

**The  
Washington  
Post**

## Finally something Democrats and Republicans agree on: Former FBI director is right pick for special counsel (UNE)

<https://www.facebook.com/madebonis>

9-12 minutes

Congressional Republicans and Democrats praised the Justice Department's decision to appoint Robert S. Mueller III as special counsel to investigate possible coordination between Trump associates and Russia in the 2016 campaign — sparking a rare moment of bipartisanship on Capitol Hill over a politically charged issue.

Nevertheless, the Senate and House committees conducting their own inquiries pledged to move forward, setting up a complex landscape of potentially conflicting investigations — and competing goals. Democrats have accused Republicans of making a show of investigating the Trump campaign's ties to Russia. Several of them, along with some Republicans, said Wednesday that the news of a special counsel investigation should not slow down Congress's work — and Republican leaders pledged that it wouldn't.

Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Richard Burr (R-N.C.), whose panel is conducting one of five congressional probes that are directly or indirectly looking into Russian activity, was among those who hailed the news while also declaring that "our task hasn't changed."

"By having someone like Bob Mueller head the investigation assures the American people that there's no undue influence, be it here or be it at the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue, or within the Justice Department or FBI," Burr said.

Rep. Adam B. Schiff (Calif.), the ranking Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, was more forceful. "The appointment of a special counsel is not a substitute for a vigorous investigation in Congress and the House Intelligence Committee will take steps to make sure our investigations do not conflict and ensure the success of both efforts," he said. "We will also want to make certain that the special counsel has all the resources it needs to undertake this important task."

Lawmakers reacted to news that the Justice Department will appoint a special counsel to investigate possible coordination between Trump associates and Russia. Lawmakers reacted to news on May 17 that the Justice Department will appoint a special counsel, Robert Mueller, to investigate possible coordination between Trump associates and Russian officials in the 2016 election. (Victoria Walker, Jayne Orenstein, Dalton Bennett/The Washington Post)

(Victoria Walker, Jayne Orenstein, Dalton Bennett/The Washington Post)

The announcement came toward the end of a day in which a growing number of congressional Republicans expressed fresh concerns about the news that President Trump had divulged highly classified information to Russian officials — and the report that he had urged former FBI director James B. Comey to drop his investigation into former Trump national security adviser Michael Flynn's ties to Russia.

Throughout the day, lawmakers sounded some of their most aggressive notes toward Trump since he took office. Some GOP lawmakers drew parallels to Richard M. Nixon and the Watergate scandal that sank his presidency, while others raised the possibility of impeachment if Trump's conversation with Comey is determined to have been an obstruction of justice.

Rep. Justin Amash (R-Mich.), who has often clashed with Trump and other GOP leaders, replied "yes" when a reporter asked whether there could be grounds for impeaching Trump, if Trump's request of Comey was confirmed.

Meanwhile, the Senate Intelligence and Judiciary committees asked the FBI for documents related to Comey, who was leading an investigation into Russian interference in the election before Trump fired him last week.

The widespread approval of Mueller's appointment followed several weeks during which many congressional Republicans, including House Speaker Paul D. Ryan (Wis.) and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (Ky.), declined to call for one. Before Wednesday, many of them touted the congressional investigations as sufficiently independent entities.

But in the hours after Deputy Attorney General Rod J. Rosenstein announced the move, Republicans spoke mostly about its positive tones.

"My priority has been to ensure thorough and independent investigations are allowed to follow the facts wherever they may lead," Ryan said in a statement. "That is what we've been doing here in the House. The addition of Robert Mueller as special counsel is consistent with this goal, and I welcome his role at the Department of Justice."

By Wednesday evening, McConnell had not commented on Mueller's appointment.

Rep. K. Michael Conaway (R-Tex.), who is leading the House Intelligence Committee's investigation into Russian meddling, said his panel's investigation will continue. "If we find criminal things ... we'll definitely refer those to Justice," he said. "But the importance of our investigation I

don't think is diminished in the least."

That sentiment was echoed by many lawmakers already participating in ongoing investigations.

"This effort should in no way be allowed to impede the ability of the Senate Intelligence Committee to conduct and conclude its investigation into the same subject," said Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.). "It is my hope that these investigations will now move expeditiously."

Lawmakers also heaped praise on Mueller's credentials.

"Mueller is a great selection. Impeccable credentials. Should be widely accepted," tweeted House Oversight and Government Reform Committee Chairman Jason Chaffetz (R-Utah).

Rep. Mike Coffman (R-Colo.), one of his party's most imperiled lawmakers in next year's elections, said Mueller "has got a good background in terms of not being partisan and I hope he gets down to the bottom of what really is a growing list of allegations." Rep. Barbara Comstock (R-Va.), another embattled incumbent, tweeted that appointing Mueller was the "Right thing to do and the right choice."

But senior Democrats cautioned that Mueller should be permitted a wide berth as his investigation commences.

"A special prosecutor is the first step, but it cannot be the last," House Minority

Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) said in a statement. She reiterated her caucus's support for an independent commission to also probe the matter, saying that Mueller "does not negate the need for vigorous congressional investigations."

Pelosi called on the Justice Department to allow Mueller to review "Trump's attempt to intervene" on behalf of Flynn. Similarly, Sen. Patrick J. Leahy (D-Vt.), a senior member of the Judiciary Committee, said Mueller's probe "should extend to the circumstances that led to the president's abrupt dismissal of James B. Comey, and to other critical matters that arise."

Rep. Mark Meadows (R-N.C.), chairman of the generally pro-Trump House Freedom Caucus, was one of the few lawmakers to offer some caution about Mueller's appointment. Although Meadows called the appointment "a prudent move," he also suggested that Mueller "comes with more credibility on the Democrat side than on the Republican side," a remark he said was based on "sworn testimony that he's given here on Capitol Hill since I've been here."

Earlier in the day, Republicans were leveling serious criticism against Trump over his controversies and edging closer to acquiescing to the long-standing Democratic demands for an independent investigator.

Still, many rank-and-file GOP members said Wednesday that they were not alarmed by the explosive

reports about the president's conversations with Comey and Russian officials. Ryan and McConnell spent much of the day trying to direct public attention beyond the firestorm.

Rep. Robert B. Aderholt (R-Ala.) was among the lawmakers who claimed to be untroubled by the developments. "It's very clear there are a lot of people who want to see the president distracted," said Aderholt, adding that back in Alabama, there is "a lot of frustration that they're not allowing him to do his job."

The uneven response has fueled widespread anxiety on Capitol Hill about the future of the ambitious agenda Republicans embarked on after assuming control of Congress and the White House in January. Republicans recognize that if they turn fully against Trump, they will lose their most critical legislative partner. But they are also showing increasing worry that standing firmly with a president blanketed in controversy is no longer tenable.

"It is a serious issue the way other scandals have been serious issues," said Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), who the previous evening had compared the current imbroglio to the Watergate saga.

"What I was saying was that these scandals need to be completely — all the information needs to get out as quickly as possible so we can resolve the issue and move forward," said McCain.

The revelation that Comey had written in a memo that Trump pressured him to drop an investigation into Flynn compounded earlier worries about Trump's decisions to share highly classified material with Russia and abruptly oust his FBI chief.

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Asked if the allegations facing Trump concern potentially impeachable offenses, Rep. Mike Simpson (R-Idaho) said, "I don't want to go there. I don't know yet."

But the beginnings of the scandal that ultimately prompted Nixon's resignation, Simpson said, "was a lot similar to what was going on now: Ah, 'fake news,' 'bad reports,' 'that didn't happen,' etc., etc., etc. Well, yeah, this did happen, and then the next day something else happens, and pretty soon you've got an avalanche of stuff."

Asked about GOP lawmakers making comparisons to the Watergate scandal, White House press secretary Sean Spicer said Trump was focused on his visit Thursday with the Colombian president and preparing for his trip to the Middle East and Europe that begins on Friday.

Paul Kane, David Weigel, Aroun Demirjian, Kelsey Snell and Amber Phillips contributed to this report.

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The  
Washington  
Post

## How dangerous are the cracks emerging in Trump's wall of support? (UNE)

<http://facebook.com/fisherm>

11-14 minutes

The world spins faster these days, but in Washington, as President Trump is now learning, the essential chemistry of crisis — quick to boil, difficult to dampen — hasn't changed in four decades.

Tom Railsback, one of the last surviving members of the House Judiciary Committee that voted to impeach Richard M. Nixon, recalls the moment he knew he and his party finally had to break with their wayward president. "I personally liked Richard Nixon," said Railsback, a Republican from Illinois who is now 85. "He campaigned for me. But I reached a point — a number of us did — where we all felt that this was the most important decision of our lives."

No such decision confronts - Republicans in Congress or the administration right now, but within the president's party this week, what had been a fairly solid wall of support has suddenly developed cracks — the latest being the appointment late Wednesday of a special counsel to investigate Russia's role in Trump's election. Are those cracks dangerous splits in the foundation of Trump's support or merely cosmetic chinks that might be patched by, say, a successful presidential trip to Europe and the Middle East?

"The danger he faces is his own party, with a growing chorus of leading Republicans who want to distance themselves from Trump because he has the smell of a wounded animal," said Douglas Brinkley, a presidential historian who met with the president-elect at the Mar-a-Lago Club in Palm Beach, Fla., in December as Trump

prepared to take office. "Right now, there aren't many Republicans in the Congress facing reelection who are going to want to be in photo opportunities with him. He's a man without coattails."

*[Lawmakers demand FBI, White House hand over records.]*

The Justice Department appointed special counsel to investigate Trump and Russia on May 17. The Washington Post's Devlin Barrett explains the Justice Department's decision to appoint Robert Mueller as special counsel to investigate possible connections between the Trump campaign and Russian officials. (Peter Stevenson, Jason Aldag, Whitney Leaming/The Washington Post)

(Peter Stevenson, Jason Aldag, Whitney Leaming/The Washington Post)

Rep. Mike Simpson (R-Idaho) is old enough to recall watching Republicans turn against Nixon in the latter phases of the Watergate investigation. "What I'm worried about is, in the early 1970s, politicians like me were standing around saying, 'Nixon's okay; he didn't do anything,' and look what it led to," said Simpson, who was in dental school as the Nixon presidency crumbled.

Now, with revelations dominating the news almost daily, "you find Republican politicians kind of a little leery about saying either they support Trump or 'Oh, no, this is all made-up, fake news bulls--- stuff,'" Simpson said. "They've seen what's happened in the past, and as long as this continues, it's hard to stand behind him, I'll tell you in all honesty."

But where some see the start of a snowballing opposition, others



caution that a momentary crisis does not necessarily imply collapse.

"I see the parallels with Watergate, but the differences are enormous," said David Greenberg, a historian at Rutgers University who has written books on Nixon and the politics of media coverage. "We are so far from the mountain of evidence we had in the spring of 1973. Some Republicans feel it's imperative now to furrow their brows about Trump's behavior, but for the most part, they are still very much on board with him. We're in the early stages, certainly not the endgame."

*[Rosenstein's Senate appearance Thursday will be a big moment for him — and for Trump]*

In the Watergate scandal, hard evidence — including the burglary at the Democratic National Committee headquarters and the discovery of Nixon's White House taping system — as well as convictions of some of the president's aides made it easier for Republicans to break with their president, Railsback said. He does not think that the crisis that has engulfed the Trump presidency has reached that point, but he viscerally recalls the feeling of collapsing confidence that led him and his fellow Republicans to discard core beliefs about loyalty and party discipline.

"It was easier then because things were a lot more nonpartisan, and in those days I had very good friends that were Democrats," he said. "But there came a point when both parties had to tone down the rhetoric and look for the common good."

Congressional Republicans spoke with reporters about President Trump's conversations with former FBI Director James B. Comey. (Thomas Johnson/The Washington Post)

(Thomas Johnson/The Washington Post)

On Capitol Hill and in the conservative media Wednesday, by word and by gesture, Republicans edged away from the president whose world-shaking election last fall had put them where they'd dreamed of being since 2007 — in charge of the whole kit and caboodle in Washington, finally in position to turn their ideas into action.

But after a whirlwind first hundred days of china-breaking rhetoric and frustratingly stalled progress on Trump's biggest initiatives, this new presidency has become mired in the mud of scandal: The firing of the

FBI director, who was leading an investigation into any role Russia may have played in Trump's election. The president's decision to share classified information with Russian officials. A report that Trump had asked FBI chief James B. Comey whether he might shut down an investigation into Trump's former national security adviser, Michael Flynn. Then, on Wednesday, the Justice Department announced the appointment of a special counsel, heightening the sense of an administration under siege.

*[Special counsel appointed to oversee probe of alleged Russian interference in 2016 election.]*

Republicans in Congress moved from ritual statements of solidarity to worries about Trump's "troubling" behavior, and from assurances that the process was working to outright calls for independent investigations of the president's actions. But only two Republicans joined with 197 House Democrats to sponsor a bill that would have created a commission to look into suspected Russian interference in the 2016 election; GOP lawmakers on Wednesday blocked a vote on the bill. Still, Republican leaders of committees in both chambers of Congress demanded that the White House produce documents and any tapes, if recordings exist, that might shed light on reports that Trump pressed Comey to halt his investigation.

Sometimes, silence spelled out the shift in Republican support for the president. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) ignored questions from reporters about the controversies. On Fox News, where Republican lawmakers are most comfortable speaking to their base, anchor Bret Baier on Tuesday night told viewers that he had found no one to defend the president. "We've tried tonight to get Republicans to come out and talk to us, and there are not Republicans willing to go on camera tonight," he said. "This story changed the dynamic on Capitol Hill."

Current politicians, as well as those who served during the Nixon and Bill Clinton impeachment processes, said they based their decisions about a president's ability to serve on some combination of public opinion, consensus among political and media voices, and their own moral compasses.

Although his constituents are not following every twist in the D.C. drama, Rep. Carlos Curbelo (R-Fla.) said: "I do think it's taking a toll on the psyche of our country. You

know, this constant dose of scandal, of controversy, of intrigue, it's just not healthy. What it does is it erodes the trust and confidence in our institutions."

Curbelo, whose South Florida district voted for Hillary Clinton for president by a wide margin, said he has decided to make public the discussion of impeachment that has become commonplace in private chatter on the Hill.

"If any congressional committee documents and concludes that any federal official is guilty of obstruction of justice," he said, "certainly that would rise to the level of impeachment. ... I don't think that's what will likely end up happening. But is it something that's on people's minds around here? Yes. I happen to be saying it publicly; most members are saying it privately."

After Rep. Jason Chaffetz (R-Utah), chairman of the House Oversight Committee, announced an inquiry into the Trump-Comey meeting, he said, "I had a number of members send me a personal text saying, 'Thank you, good job, keep it up. Glad we're out there, not ducking this.'"

Chaffetz said his party's credibility is at stake. "The public is really good at sensing authenticity," he said. "If we fall anywhere short of being thorough, responsible and complete in our investigation, the public will get it and they'll get rid of us."

Although Trump's approval ratings are historically low for a new president, they remain well above the depths that Nixon and George W. Bush experienced at the nadirs of their presidencies. "The thing that would make these cracks really widen would be hard evidence directly linking Trump or top aides to Russia, or showing a deliberate plan to snuff out the investigation," Greenberg said.

"I don't think this has reached the point for an impeachment inquiry, but both parties have to move quickly to complete a careful investigation," Railsback said. "It's overheated now — some of that has been brought on by the president, but the media has been overly aggressive and too speculative."

Trump loyalists — and the president himself — have sought to paint the snowballing media coverage of the Comey memo and Trump's disclosures of classified information to Russian officials as evidence of a partisan, anti-Trump bias.

"Look at the way I've been treated lately, especially by the media," the

president said during his commencement address Wednesday at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy in New London, Conn. "No politician in history — and I say this with great surety — has been treated worse or more unfairly."

Presidents have faced the ultimate sanction mainly when there was bipartisan consensus that they had lost the trust of the nation. "With Watergate," Greenberg said, "from fairly early on, there were at least some Republican voices that were critical, and that shaped public opinion. With the Clinton impeachment, it was very hard to argue at any point that this was anything other than partisan. Until you have that bipartisanship, talk of impeachment is wishful thinking by Democrats."

At this early stage in the Trump presidency, there is still ample opportunity to build support, Brinkley said. "He could do a prime-time address to the American people like Ronald Reagan did in the Iran-contra crisis," the historian said. "He still has a core base of supporters, but he hasn't sought to unite Americans beyond his base."

For decades, Trump has boasted that he thrives along the edges of failure, that he and risk are the most comfortable of bedfellows.

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At the Coast Guard Academy on Wednesday, Trump told the graduates that they will face rough passages, just as he is facing today. "Never, ever, ever give up," he said. "Things will work out just fine."

Thirty years ago, as he was amassing his first fortune, Trump explained why he had such a voracious appetite for properties and publicity: "I do it to do it," he wrote in his bestseller, "Trump: The Art of the Deal." "But in the end, you're measured not by how much you undertake, but by what you finally accomplish."

In that same book, however, Trump — always brimming with confidence that he can land any deal, vanquish any rival — made one concession. "Making choices," he wrote by way of explaining why he would rather run his own company than take his business public, "is a lot easier when you have to answer only to yourself."

Mike DeBonis, Paul Kane and Carol D. Leonnig contributed to this report.

## Conservatives begin to whisper: President Pence

Matthew Nussbaum

6-7 minutes

Not since the release of the Access Hollywood tape, in which Donald Trump bragged about groping women by the genitals, have some conservatives thought so seriously, if a bit wistfully, about two words: President Pence.

The scandals clouding Trump's presidency — including, most recently, his firing of FBI Director James Comey, his alleged leak of classified information to Russian officials, and reports that he urged Comey to drop an investigation into a top aide — have raised once more the possibility that Trump could be pushed aside and replaced by Vice President Mike Pence.

Story Continued Below

"If what the [New York Times] reported is true, Pence is probably rehearsing," one House Republican who asked not to be named quipped Wednesday. "It's just like Nixon. From the standpoint that it's never the underlying issue, it is always the cover-up."

The still far-fetched proposition of removing Trump from office has increasing appeal to Republicans who are growing weary of defending Trump and are alarmed by his conduct in office. But such whispers are cringe-worthy for Pence and his aides, who have made an art of not upstaging the mercurial president. Pence's press secretary declined to comment for this article.

On the campaign trail, Pence would shut down any conversations about the possibility of his own future bid should Trump lose, telling donors who raised the prospect that he was entirely focused on the race at

hand. Aides said that sentiment was sincere — even if they engaged in some thinking about what Pence's future could entail after a likely loss.

Still, some conservatives are hinting that Pence looks like a particularly good alternative right now, especially as the Justice Department moves ahead with a special prosecutor for the FBI's Russia probe.

Erick Erickson, a conservative pundit who was a strong Never Trumper but then pledged to give the president a chance, wrote on Wednesday that Republicans should abandon the president because they "have no need for him with Mike Pence in the wings."

And conservative New York Times op-ed writer Ross Douthat, argued that abandoning Trump now should be easier because someone competent is waiting in the wings. "Hillary Clinton will not be retroactively elected if Trump is removed, nor will Neil Gorsuch be unseated," Douthat wrote in Wednesday's Times.

The pining for Pence is nothing new, however. From Capitol Hill to K Street, the notion that many Republicans prefer Pence to Trump in the Oval Office is perhaps the worst-kept secret in Washington.

Just ask Republican lobbyists who have watched the Trump administration struggle to move tax reform, health care and other top priorities.

"I find it unlikely that Trump is going anywhere," one GOP lobbyist, who spoke on condition of anonymity, wrote in an email. "That being said, Pence is well-liked on the Hill, fairly predictable, and doesn't stir up much unnecessary drama."

A number of Republican lobbyists already view Pence as a source of

stability in an otherwise tumultuous White House. Many of Pence's top staffers — including his chief of staff, Josh Pitcock — worked for Pence during his years in the House and are deeply familiar with the legislative process. Other former Pence staffers from his House days are working elsewhere in the administration, including Marc Short, the legislative affairs director, and Russ Vought, deputy director of the Office of Management and Budget.

While Pence may not be as commanding a figure in Trump's White House as Dick Cheney was in George W. Bush's, Trump has leaned on him heavily. Lobbyists who set up meetings between Pence and their clients must warn them that the vice president may be an hour and a half late or have to leave after 10 minutes because Trump is constantly calling him into the Oval Office to confer with him, according to one Republican lobbyist.

But that doesn't mean a Pence transition would be smooth. In the unlikely event that Trump is removed from office, Pence would assume the presidency amid a constitutional crisis. He could also be considered tainted by his past devotion to Trump.

Only once in American history has a president been forced from office by scandal, when Richard Nixon resigned amid Watergate. Ford assumed the presidency and sparked controversy by pardoning Nixon, a move that may have cost him the 1976 election but one that historians have since praised.

Ford, like Pence, had enjoyed a career in the House of Representatives and rose to a leadership position. There are other echoes, too.

"It's almost an eerie comparison that a more mild-mannered, religious conservative Republican Gerald Ford came in," said Douglas Brinkley, a presidential historian at Rice University. "He's much like Pence in temperament and personality. He doesn't have that acerbic side that Nixon and Trump had."

And, like Ford, Pence "has made so few enemies," Brinkley said.

"Having Pence in reserve is one of the few things, I think, that is calming Republican nerves," he added. "It would just be a more mild-mannered Pence who never says anything offensive, who doesn't take to Twitter, who goes to Church every Sunday."

But unlike Pence, Ford was appointed to the job after the resignation of Vice President Spiro Agnew. Ford did not have the baggage of having campaigned for and championed Nixon.

Almost like a reminder of Pence's political ambitions, news broke on Wednesday that Pence had formed a new leadership political action committee called the Great America Committee. It is unusual for a vice president to form his own PAC, as the vice president would traditionally merge his political operation with the Republican National Committee.

A spokesman confirmed the existence of the new committee and said it is being overseen by Marty Obst and Nick Ayers, two former Pence campaign aides and close confidants of the vice president.

*Rachael Bade and Kenneth P. Vogel contributed to this report.*

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## FBI Counterintelligence Agents Don't Forgive or Forget

Paul McLeary | 59 mins ago

8-10 minutes

President Donald Trump wasn't content with merely firing James Comey from his position as FBI director. He also attacked his credibility, competence, and integrity for pursuing the counterintelligence investigation into Russia's interference in the 2016 presidential election and the potential collusion of the Trump campaign. We now have reason to

believe this came after the president tried repeatedly to shut down that investigation, including requesting directly that Comey do so.

Only Comey knows how he reacted to the insults that accompanied his firing. But it's worth noting that a subset of the FBI almost certainly felt implicated in Trump's bullying: the FBI special agents who conduct foreign counterintelligence investigations, known within the intelligence community as FCI cases. These agents are their own breed within the FBI, spending their careers working silently on cases of immense national security interest.

And Trump may soon regret picking a fight with them.

First, a disclaimer: I am not privy to any of the facts of the Russian investigation underway by the FBI other than what has been published in the media. But I have served in the FBI for 28 years, for the most part working counterintelligence and counterterrorism cases under what is now known as the National Security Branch, so I have a good sense of how those agents working on the Russian investigation must feel.

Ever since Comey confirmed to the House Intelligence Committee in March that the FBI is investigating the Russian role in the election, including "the nature of any links between individuals associated with the Trump campaign and the Russian government and whether there was any coordination between the campaign and Russia's efforts," there have been indications that the president wants the investigation closed. On May 16, the *New York Times* reported that Trump had asked Comey in February to end the FBI investigation into former National Security Advisor Michael

Flynn, an offshoot of the original investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election. (It won't come as a surprise to FBI agents that Comey immediately noted this conversation in a memo. As a new agent, I was taught to contemporaneously document all sensitive conversations because "if it's not on paper, it doesn't exist." It's not a tape recording, but it's the next best thing.)

But Trump's private pressuring of Comey has always been accompanied by public disparagement of the Russia investigation. When former Deputy Attorney General Sally Yates testified on May 8 before the Senate Judiciary Committee about the investigations into Flynn's contact with Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak, Trump tweeted, "The Russia-Trump collusion story is a total hoax, when will this taxpayer funded charade end?" Tweeting on May 12, the president wrote, "Again, the story that there was collusion between the Russians & Trump campaign was fabricated by Dems as an excuse for losing the election."

The president may have calculated that he can afford to make disparaging public comments about the investigation Comey was overseeing, because the FBI and its rank and file are reputed to be more conservative than the public. But this will probably prove a fateful mistake.

First, the FBI is not politically monolithic and the political views of agents rarely line up neatly with partisan political categories.

First, the FBI is not politically monolithic and the political views of agents rarely line up neatly with

partisan political categories. Generally, FBI agents may lean conservative, but, above all, they tend to reflect the politics of the regions in which they choose to live and work. Agents in the Midwest and South are more conservative than those in Seattle, where I spent my last eight years in the bureau. In any given FBI field office, you're liable to hear in private the same types of political conversations around the water cooler that you would hear in any large, diverse, multinational company. Some agents support Democrats, others back Republicans, but few in such rabid or ideological fashion that it interferes with their work.

But FCI officers, who are concentrated in Washington and New York, are different. Tasked with investigating national security matters, these FBI agents are mission-driven in a unique way. Almost without exception, they are extraordinarily sensitive — perhaps more than anyone else in the U.S. government — about the national security threats posed by Russian and other hostile foreign intelligence services. They tend to subordinate their political beliefs to a mindset that revolves around defending the country from external enemies that wish Americans harm.

They are also under extraordinary psychological strain. They defend the most valuable secrets of the nation from theft, abuse, misuse, and accidental disclosure while making no public judgment about the political motives of the Americans they are sworn to protect, including those they investigate. These cases, in which the primary goal is to gather intelligence about the objectives and capabilities of the foreign or

domestic target and prevent the disclosure of U.S. secrets to foreign agents, are generally very slow to develop and investigations can last for years.

FCI case agents are well aware that they are fated to seldom get the accolades and publicity that their colleagues working criminal cases do. FCI cases are by their nature classified, even when they involve criminal violations like espionage, so agents working FCI matters don't ever talk about their work with family or friends, or even to other agents with the same level of clearances. Finally, even when prosecuted, FCI cases are often dealt with covertly with guilty pleas offered in closed hearings with many caveats and agreements between the parties, so as not to reveal any government secrets unnecessarily.

Russian cases are particularly closely held, primarily because Russian intelligence has a large presence in the United States, especially in Washington and New York, and those cases are among the most sensitive in the bureau. During the time I worked FCI cases for the FBI, the intelligence community referred to Russia's various intelligence services collectively as hostile intelligence services, or HOIS. They are considered the most hostile of all HOIS, in fact, and among the best in the world at what they do, which is to collect intelligence and subvert other countries in the interest of the Russian Federation's long-term goals and objectives.

Because of the hostile intent Russia and certain other nations have toward the United States, FBI agents of the National Security

Branch working FCI cases take great pride in their work, which is conducted without acknowledgement, except among the members of the intelligence community. How they feel about the latest Russian faux pas by the president and the firing of Comey is something we may never know completely, but it's certainly possible to imagine. The same is true for how they are likely to respond to the president's consistent interference in their work.

FCI agents won't use the president's actions as justification to unethically undercut his administration. The men and women working on the investigation will "support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic," as they promised on the day they entered service with the FBI. That includes following all internal rules and regulations ensuring the integrity and secrecy of any facts they uncover during their investigation. Revealing that information to the public is not the role of the FBI, but rather now rests with Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein.

But one thing is certain:

The Russian investigation will continue unabated.

The Russian investigation will continue unabated. The president may think the power still lies in his hands, since he still has the power to name Comey's replacement. But the agents have the power of their own principles and integrity, and they now have the added fuel of not just public opinion, but personal anger and professional pride.



## House majority leader to colleagues in 2016: 'I think Putin pays' Trump (UNE)

By Adam Entous

11-14 minutes

The Post's Adam Entous discusses a 2016 conversation of GOP leaders in which House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) made an explosive claim. The Post's Adam Entous discusses a 2016 conversation between GOP leaders in which House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) made an explosive claim about Donald Trump. (Video: Bastien Inzaurrealde/Photo: Melina Mara/The Washington Post)

(Bastien Inzaurrealde/The Washington Post)

KIEV, Ukraine — A month before Donald Trump clinched the Republican nomination, one of his closest allies in Congress — House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy — made a politically explosive assertion in a private conversation on Capitol Hill with his fellow GOP leaders: that Trump could be the beneficiary of payments from Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"There's two people I think Putin pays: Rohrabacher and Trump," McCarthy (R-Calif.) said, according to a recording of the June 15, 2016, exchange, which was listened to and verified by The Washington Post. Rep. Dana Rohrabacher is a Californian Republican known in Congress as a fervent defender of Putin and Russia.

House Speaker Paul D. Ryan (R-Wis.) immediately interjected, stopping the conversation from further exploring McCarthy's assertion, and swore the Republicans present to secrecy.

Before the conversation, McCarthy and Ryan had emerged from separate talks at the Capitol with Ukrainian Prime Minister Vladimir Groysman, who had described a Kremlin tactic of financing populist politicians to undercut Eastern European democratic institutions.

News had just broken the day before in The Washington Post that Russian government hackers had penetrated the computer network of the Democratic National Committee, prompting McCarthy to shift the

conversation from Russian meddling in Europe to events closer to home.

Some of the lawmakers laughed at McCarthy's comment. Then McCarthy quickly added: "Swear to God."

Ryan instructed his Republican lieutenants to keep the conversation private, saying: "No leaks. . . . This is how we know we're a real family here."

The remarks remained secret for nearly a year.

[Read the transcript of the conversation among GOP leaders obtained by The Post]

The conversation provides a glimpse at the internal views of GOP leaders who now find themselves under mounting pressure over the conduct of President Trump. The exchange shows that the Republican leadership in the House privately discussed Russia's involvement in the 2016 election and Trump's relationship to Putin, but wanted to keep their concerns secret. It is difficult to tell from the recording the extent to which the remarks were meant to be taken literally.

The House leadership has so far stood by the White House as it has lurched from one crisis to another, much of the turmoil fueled by contacts between Trump or his associates with Russia.

Team Trump's ties to Russian interests

House Republican leaders have so far resisted calls for the appointment of an independent commission or a special prosecutor to investigate Russian interference, though pressure has been mounting on them to do so after Trump's firing of FBI Director James B. Comey and the disclosure that the president shared intelligence with Russian diplomats.

Late Wednesday, Deputy Attorney General Rod J. Rosenstein announced he had appointed Robert S. Mueller III, a former prosecutor who served as the FBI director from 2001 to 2013, as special counsel to oversee the Russia probe.

*[Deputy attorney general appoints special counsel to oversee probe of Russian interference in election]*

Evan McMullin, who in his role as policy director to the House Republican Conference participated in the June 15 conversation, said: "It's true that Majority Leader McCarthy said that he thought candidate Trump was on the Kremlin's payroll. Speaker Ryan was concerned about that leaking."

McMullin ran for president last year as an independent and has been a vocal critic of Trump.

When initially asked to comment on the exchange, Brendan Buck, a spokesman for Ryan, said: "That never happened," and Matt Sparks, a spokesman for McCarthy, said: "The idea that McCarthy would assert this is absurd and false."

After being told that The Post would cite a recording of the exchange, Buck, speaking for the GOP House leadership, said: "This entire year-old exchange was clearly an attempt at humor. No one believed the majority leader was seriously asserting that Donald Trump or any

of our members were being paid by the Russians. What's more, the speaker and leadership team have repeatedly spoken out against Russia's interference in our election, and the House continues to investigate that activity."

"This was a failed attempt at humor," Sparks said.

Ken Grubbs, a spokesman for Rohrabacher, said the congressman has been a consistent advocate of "working closer with the Russians to combat radical Islamism. The congressman doesn't need to be paid to come to such a necessary conclusion."

When McCarthy voiced his assessment of whom Putin supports, suspicions were only beginning to swirl around Trump's alleged Russia ties.

At the time, U.S. intelligence agencies knew that the Russians had hacked the DNC and other institutions, but Moscow had yet to start publicly releasing damaging emails through WikiLeaks to undermine Trump's Democratic challenger, Hillary Clinton. An FBI counterintelligence investigation into Russian efforts to influence the presidential election would open the following month, in late July, Comey has said in testimony to Congress.

Trump has sought to play down contacts between his campaign and the Russians, dismissing as a "witch hunt" the FBI and congressional investigations into Russian efforts to aid Trump and any possible coordination between the Kremlin and his associates. Trump denies any coordination with Moscow took place.

Presidential candidate Trump's embrace of Putin and calls for closer cooperation with Moscow put him at odds with the House Republican caucus, whose members have long advocated a harder line on Russia, with the exception of Rohrabacher and a few others.

Among GOP leaders in the House, McCarthy stood out as a Putin critic who in 2015 called for the imposition of "more severe" sanctions for its actions in eastern Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea.

In May 2016, McCarthy signed up to serve as a Trump delegate at the Republican National Convention, breaking ranks with Ryan, who said he still was not ready to endorse the candidate. McCarthy's relationship with Trump became so close that the president would sometimes refer to him as "my Kevin."

Trump was by then the lone Republican remaining in the contest

for the nomination. Though Ryan continued to hold out, Trump picked up endorsements from the remaining GOP leaders in the House, including Rep. Steve Scalise, the majority whip from Louisiana, and Republican Conference Chairman Cathy McMorris Rodgers (Wash.) — both of whom took part in the June 15 conversation.

Ryan announced on June 2 that he would vote for Trump to help "unite the party so we can win in the fall" but continued to clash with the candidate, including over Putin. While Trump sought to cast Putin as a better leader than then-President Obama, Ryan dubbed him an "aggressor" who didn't share U.S. interests.

On the same day as Ryan's endorsement, Clinton stepped up her attacks on Trump over his public statements praising Putin. "If Donald gets his way, they'll be celebrating in the Kremlin," she said.

Ukrainian officials were unnerved by Trump's statements in support of Putin. Republicans, they had believed, were supposed to be tougher on Russia.

When Trump named Paul Manafort as his campaign manager in April 2016, alarm bells in Kiev started ringing even louder. Manafort was already well known in Ukraine because of his influential role as a political consultant to Viktor Yanukovich, the country's former Kremlin-friendly ruler until a popular uprising forced him to flee to Russia. Manafort had also consulted for a powerful Russian businessman with close ties to the Kremlin.

"Ukraine was, in a sense, a testing ground for Manafort," said Ukrainian political scientist Taras Berezovets, who became a grudging admirer of Manafort's skills in the "dark arts" of political stagecraft while Berezovets was working for one of Yanukovich's political rivals.

At the urging of Manafort, Yanukovich campaigned with populist slogans labeling NATO a "menace" and casting "elites" in the Ukrainian capital as out of touch, Berezovets said. Trump struck similar themes during the 2016 campaign.

The FBI is now investigating whether Manafort, who stepped down as Trump's campaign manager in August, received off-the-books payments from Yanukovich's party, U.S. officials said. As part of that investigation, FBI agents recently took possession of a newly discovered document that allegedly details payments

totaling \$750,000. Ukrainian lawmaker Sergii Leshchenko, who first disclosed the new document, declined to comment on his contacts with the FBI.

A spokesman for Manafort has said that Trump's former campaign manager has not been contacted by the FBI. Manafort has also disputed the authenticity of the newly discovered document.

Groysman, on an official visit to Washington, met separately with Ryan and McCarthy on June 15 at the Capitol.

He told them how the Russians meddled in European politics and called for "unity" in addressing the threat, according to U.S. and Ukrainian officials. Ryan issued a statement after the meeting saying, "the United States stands with Ukraine as it works to rebuild its economy and confront Russian aggression."

Later, Ryan spoke privately with McCarthy, Rodgers, Scalise and Rep. Patrick T. McHenry (R-N.C.), the deputy whip, among others.

Ryan mentioned his meeting with Groysman, prompting Rodgers to ask: "How are things going in Ukraine?" according to the recording.

The situation was difficult, Ryan said. Groysman, he said, had told him that Russian-backed forces were firing 30 to 40 artillery shells into Ukrainian territory every day. And the prime minister described Russian tactics that include "financing our populists, financing people in our governments to undo our governments."

Ryan said Russia's goal was to "turn Ukraine against itself." Groysman underlined Russia's intentions, saying, "They're just going to roll right through us and go to the Baltics and everyone else," according to Ryan's summary of the prime minister's remarks in the recording.

"Yes," Rodgers said in agreement, noting that the Russians were funding nongovernmental organizations across Europe as part of a wider "propaganda war."

"Maniacal," Ryan said. "And guess, guess who's the only one taking a strong stand up against it? We are."

Rodgers disagreed. "We're not ... we're not ... but, we're not," she said.

That's when McCarthy brought the conversation about Russian meddling around to the DNC hack, Trump and Rohrabacher.

"I'll guarantee you that's what it is. ... The Russians hacked the DNC



and got the opp [opposition] research that they had on Trump," McCarthy said with a laugh.

Ryan asked who the Russians "delivered" the opposition research to.

"There's ... there's two people I think Putin pays: Rohrabacher and

Trump," McCarthy said, drawing some laughter. "Swear to God," McCarthy added.

"This is an off the record," Ryan said.

Some lawmakers laughed at that.

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"No leaks, all right?," Ryan said, adding: "This is how we know we're a real family here."

"That's how you know that we're tight," Scalise said.

"What's said in the family stays in the family," Ryan added.

Andrew Roth in Moscow, Michael Birnbaum in Brussels and Robert Costa in Washington contributed to this report.

## The New York Times Trump Team Knew Flynn Was Under Investigation Before He Came to White House

Matthew Rosenberg and Mark Mazzetti

7-8 minutes

WASHINGTON — Michael T. Flynn told President Trump's transition team weeks before the inauguration that he was under federal investigation for secretly working as a paid lobbyist for Turkey during the campaign, according to two people familiar with the case.

Despite this warning, which came about a month after the Justice Department notified Mr. Flynn of the inquiry, Mr. Trump made Mr. Flynn his national security adviser. The job gave Mr. Flynn access to the president and nearly every secret held by American intelligence agencies.

Mr. Flynn's disclosure, on Jan. 4, was first made to the transition team's chief lawyer, Donald F. McGahn II, who is now the White House counsel. That conversation, and another one two days later between Mr. Flynn's lawyer and transition lawyers, shows that the Trump team knew about the investigation of Mr. Flynn far earlier than has been previously reported.

His legal issues have been a problem for the White House from the beginning and are at the center of a growing political crisis for Mr. Trump. Mr. Flynn, who was fired after 24 days in the job, was initially kept on even after the acting attorney general, Sally Q. Yates, warned the White House that he might be subject to blackmail by the Russians for misleading Vice President Mike Pence about the nature of conversations he had with the Russian ambassador to Washington.

After Mr. Flynn's dismissal, Mr. Trump tried to get James B. Comey, the F.B.I. director, to drop the investigation — an act that some legal experts say is grounds for an investigation of Mr. Trump for possible obstruction of justice. He fired Mr. Comey on May 9.

The White House declined to comment on whether officials there

had known about Mr. Flynn's legal troubles before the inauguration.

Mr. Flynn, a retired general, is one of a handful of Trump associates under scrutiny in intertwined federal investigations into their financial links to foreign governments and whether any of them helped Russia interfere in the presidential election.

In congressional testimony, the acting F.B.I. director, Andrew G. McCabe, has confirmed the existence of a "highly significant" investigation into possible collusion between Mr. Trump's associates and Russian operatives to sway the presidential election. The pace of the investigations has intensified in recent weeks, with a veteran espionage prosecutor, Brandon Van Grack, now leading a grand jury inquiry in Northern Virginia that is scrutinizing Mr. Flynn's foreign lobbying and has begun issuing subpoenas to businesses that worked with Mr. Flynn and his associates.

Sally Q. Yates testified to senators this month that she had warned President Trump that Mr. Flynn could be vulnerable to Russian blackmail. Stephen Crowley/The New York Times

The New York Times has reviewed one of the subpoenas. It demands all "records, research, contracts, bank records, communications" and other documents related to work with Mr. Flynn and the Flynn Intel Group, the business he set up after he was forced out as chief of the Defense Intelligence Agency in 2014.

The subpoena also asks for similar records about Ekim Alptekin, a Turkish businessman who is close to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey and is chairman of the Turkish-American Business Council. There is no indication that Mr. Alptekin is under investigation.

Signed by Dana J. Boente, the United States attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, the subpoena instructs the recipient to direct any questions about its contents to Mr. Van Grack.

Mr. Van Grack, a national security prosecutor based at the Justice Department headquarters in Washington, has experience conducting espionage investigations. He prosecuted a businessman for illegally exporting thousands of sensitive electronics components to Iran and a suspected hacker in the Syrian Electronic Army. In 2015, he prosecuted a Virginia man for acting as an unregistered agent of Syria's intelligence services.

According to people who have talked to Mr. Flynn about the case, he sees the Justice Department's investigation as part of an effort by the Obama administration and its holdovers in the government to keep him out of the White House. In his view, this effort began immediately after the election, when President Barack Obama, who had fired Mr. Flynn as the head of the Defense Intelligence Agency, told Mr. Trump that he would have profound concerns about Mr. Flynn's becoming a top national security aide.

The people close to Mr. Flynn said he believed that when that warning did not dissuade Mr. Trump from making him national security adviser, the Justice Department opened its investigation into his lobbying work. They spoke on the condition of anonymity to avoid angering Justice Department or White House officials.

The investigation stems from the work Mr. Flynn did for Inovo BV, a Dutch company owned by Mr. Alptekin, the Turkish businessman. On Aug. 9, Mr. Flynn and the Flynn Intel Group signed a contract with Inovo for \$600,000 over 90 days to run an influence campaign aimed at discrediting Fethullah Gulen, an reclusive cleric who lives in Pennsylvania and whom Mr. Erdogan has accused of orchestrating a failed coup in Turkey last summer.

When he was hired by Mr. Alptekin, Mr. Flynn did not register as a foreign agent, as required by law when an American represents the interests of a foreign government. Only in March did he file a

retroactive registration with the Justice Department because his lawyer, Robert K. Kelner, said that "the engagement could be construed to have principally benefited the Republic of Turkey."

Trump campaign officials first became aware of a problem with Mr. Flynn's business dealings in early November. On Nov. 8, the day of the election, Mr. Flynn wrote an op-ed in The Hill that advocated improved relations between Turkey and the United States and called Mr. Gulen "a shady Islamic mullah."

"If he were in reality a moderate, he would not be in exile, nor would he excite the animus of Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his government," the op-ed said.

Days later, after an article in The Daily Caller revealed that the Flynn Intel Group had a contract with Inovo, a Trump campaign lawyer held a conference call with members of the Flynn Intel Group, according to one person with knowledge of the call. The lawyer, William McGinley, was seeking more information about the nature of the group's foreign work and wanted to know whether Mr. Flynn had been paid for the op-ed.

Mr. McGinley now works in the White House as cabinet secretary and deputy assistant to the president.

The Justice Department also took notice. The op-ed in The Hill raised suspicions that Mr. Flynn was working as a foreign agent, and in a letter dated Nov. 30, the Justice Department notified Mr. Flynn that it was scrutinizing his lobbying work.

Mr. Flynn hired a lawyer a few weeks later. By Jan. 4, the day Mr. Flynn informed Mr. McGahn of the inquiry, the Justice Department was investigating the matter.

Mr. Kelner then followed up with another call to the Trump transition's legal team. He ended up leaving a message, identifying himself as Mr. Flynn's lawyer. According to a person familiar with the case, Mr. Kelner did not get a call back until two days later, on Jan. 6.

Around the time of Mr. Flynn's call with Mr. McGahn, the F.B.I. began investigating Mr. Flynn on a separate matter: phone conversations he had in late December with Sergey I. Kislyak, Russia's ambassador to the United States. Current and former

American officials said that, on the calls, Mr. Flynn discussed sanctions that the Obama administration had imposed on Russia for disrupting the November election.

After news of the calls became public, Mr. Flynn misled Mr. Pence about what he had discussed with

Mr. Kislyak, telling him that the two had only exchanged holiday pleasantries.

Days after the inauguration, Ms. Yates, the acting attorney general, spoke with Mr. McGahn at the White House, telling him Justice Department lawyers believed that

Mr. Flynn might be vulnerable to Russian blackmail. Since the Russians knew that Mr. Flynn had lied to the vice president, she said, they might have leverage over him.

**THE WALL  
STREET  
JOURNAL.**

and Reid J. Epstein

8-10 minutes

Updated May 17, 2017 10:52 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON—Congress is ratcheting up its investigative and oversight apparatus by seeking documents, memos and other evidence related to the controversies that have buffeted President Donald Trump in recent weeks.

The stepped up inquiries coincide with the Justice Department's announcement Wednesday that it is appointing Robert Mueller III, former director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, as a special counsel to oversee the FBI's investigation into Russia's alleged interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

The decision by Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein to move the probe into the hands of an independent office is aimed in part at reassuring the public that it will be politically insulated.

Mr. Rosenstein is scheduled to brief the full U.S. Senate on Thursday in a closed session, where he is expected to provide an update on the status of the Russia investigation. He is also expected to address the circumstances surrounding Mr. Trump's decision last week to fire James Comey as director of the FBI.

At least three congressional panels—the House Oversight Committee, the Senate Intelligence Committee and the Senate Judiciary Committee—all demanded memos that Mr. Comey kept about his conversations with the president. The Judiciary Committee also sought any tapes of the conversation that might exist, and two panels requested Mr. Comey's in-person testimony.

Congress's more proactive approach is being sanctioned by Republican leaders in both the House and Senate, as lawmakers seek Mr. Comey's version of a private meeting he had with Mr. Trump in February when the GOP president allegedly urged him to

## Congress Steps Up Probes Into Comey and Russia

drop his probe into former national security adviser Michael Flynn.

Mr. Comey, his close associates have said, wrote a memo detailing that conversation and other interactions with Mr. Trump. The White House denied that Mr. Trump asked Mr. Comey to back off investigating Mr. Flynn, who resigned in February after giving conflicting statements about his conversations with Russia's ambassador to the U.S.

"I think we need to hear from him as soon as possible in public to respond to the issues that have been raised in recent days," said Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R., Ky.), referring to Mr. Comey, in an interview with a member of The Wall Street Journal's editorial board.

The president, speaking at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy commencement Wednesday, closed his address with his first comments about Mr. Comey's memo regarding the Flynn probe.

"Look at the way I've been treated lately, especially by the media," Mr. Trump said. "No politician in history has been treated worse or more unfairly. You can't let them get you down."

Beyond the Comey controversies, some lawmakers are seeking records concerning Mr. Trump's meeting last week with Russian officials, though no formal requests have been made.

That Oval Office meeting became an investigative target following news reports that Mr. Trump revealed highly sensitive counterterrorism information to Russian officials that Israel's intelligence agencies had shared with the U.S. The White House has said the president has the authority to declassify data, and the data he referenced was appropriate.

The requested documents could shed new light on the various controversies swirling around the White House.

"We have an obligation to carry out our oversight, regardless of which party is in the White House," said House Speaker Paul Ryan (R., Wis.), pointing to the recent news reports that he said required "close

examination" by Congress. "And that means, before rushing to judgment, we get all the pertinent information," Mr. Ryan said.

The stepped-up activity in Congress reflects the belief by some Republicans that the scandals won't pass easily and, for others, that Mr. Trump may have committed wrongdoing.

Rep. Justin Amash (R., Mich.), who has long been a critic of Mr. Trump's, raised the possibility on Wednesday that Mr. Trump could be impeached and removed from office if the allegations in Mr. Comey's memo are true.

Democrats said the renewed oversight attempts by Republican congressional leadership didn't go far enough and came only after months of controversy and bombshell revelations.

"Given the gravity of the events that have occurred over the past few weeks, our committees should already be conducting robust and transparent investigations and oversight," said Rep. Elijah Cummings of Maryland, the top Democrat on the House Oversight Committee. "It is unacceptable that we continue ignoring these scandals—and that's exactly what they are."

Russian officials have denied meddling in the U.S. election, and Mr. Trump and his aides have denied any collusion with Moscow.

The bipartisan leadership of the Senate Intelligence Committee, which is probing alleged Russian interference in the election, also renewed its invitation to Mr. Comey to testify.

Last week, the panel had invited Mr. Comey to appear behind closed doors. This time, the panel's chairman, Sen. Richard Burr (R., N.C.), joined with his Democratic colleague in asking for an open hearing for a public airing of Mr. Comey's version of events. Mr. Comey turned down the closed-door invitation, but reports indicate he is willing to testify publicly.

The House Oversight Committee also invited Mr. Comey to come testify on Capitol Hill next Wednesday, though the panel's

chairman said he hasn't been in touch with the former FBI director.

"This is a centipede and more shoes will drop," said Sen. John McCain (R, Ariz.) of the rapidly unfolding events. "We need to get it resolved and get it behind us."

While members of Congress are fretting about Mr. Trump's conduct in office, some supporters out in the country who backed his campaign remain sanguine about his performance.

Steve Lang, a Republican in Seminole, Fla., said the barrage of news in the past week would be troubling if it turns out to be true. But he said the media and critics of Mr. Trump seem so intent on undermining his presidency that he won't believe the allegations unless they are proved convincingly.

"So many people are out there that are against Trump," he said. "I don't know what to believe or not to believe. I'm desensitized."

Still, if the stories that have emerged this week turn out to be correct, "then it's a completely different story," Mr. Lang said. "Maybe two years from now, this could all be true and I could be eating crow."

But John Golomb, a 65-year-old retired steelworker in Monessen, Pa., who backed Mr. Trump in November, said Wednesday he now regrets that choice.

"He's turned the White House into a circus," Mr. Golomb, a Democrat, said. "What the heck is going on? Did I vote for a nut?"

Inside the White House, the atmosphere has turned bleak as officials are worried about getting fired, and their deputies are launching pre-emptive job searches.

"People are looking for the exits," said one well-connected Republican in Washington who has spoken with several White House staffers about the potential for new places of employment

One piece of good news for the press office came Wednesday morning, when the president didn't take to Twitter—as he has in recent days—to contradict recent statements by his aides. There is

near unanimity inside the West Wing that the president needs to pare back his social media posting, and some surrogates for the White House breathed a sigh of relief.

"The president's a fighter: He gets hit, he wants to hit back harder," said Chris Ruddy, a longtime friend

of Mr. Trump. "But as president, he's got to look the other way, as different as it might be to his normal approach."

—Janet Hook, Andrew Ackerman and Eli Stokols contributed to this article.

*the Atlantic*

## How Will the Trump Presidency End?

McKay Coppins

9-11 minutes

The rise and reign of Donald Trump has already earned its place as one of the most dramatic political stories in modern American history. The question now: How will it end?

After a dizzying 10 days of bombshell revelations in the press and multiplying scandals at the White House, the Justice Department announced Wednesday night that a special counsel had been appointed to investigate Russia's interference in the 2016 election, including its alleged ties to the Trump campaign. This latest development all but ensures that Washington will remain in the grips of crisis and controversy for the foreseeable future—but what happens next is an open question.

In a range of interviews with Capitol Hill Republicans, Trump allies, and veterans of past presidential scandals, there was broad consensus on only one point: The fate of the Trump presidency has never been more uncertain.

But past presidencies, and Trump's own record in public life, suggest four dramatically different alternatives that may play out in the months and years to come.

### Trump Is Impeached

Impeachment has been a Democratic fantasy since before Trump even took office, and most serious political observers have dismissed it as a daydream—at least as long as Congress is controlled by Republicans. There is good reason for skepticism. The last (and only) president to be impeached by lawmakers of his own party was Andrew Johnson, in 1867. A century and a half later, the Republican caucus has become generally quite adept at partisan water-carrying.

But while it remains unlikely that congressional Republicans would kick Trump out of the Oval Office, the notion isn't as far-fetched as it seemed just a couple of weeks ago. Trump's abrupt firing of FBI Director James Comey—and the rapidly escalating scandal that followed—has not only opened him up to

potential obstruction of justice charges, it has left the lawmakers in his party feeling besieged. After months of being forced to comment on the near-daily controversies brought on by the president, they are fatigued, exasperated, bitter.

"Can we have a crisis-free day?" Senator Susan Collins complained to reporters earlier this week. "That's all I'm asking."

"I think we could do with a little less drama from the White House on a lot of things so that we can focus on our agenda," Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell similarly grumbled.

If the current controversy surrounding Trump ends up derailing this year's legislative agenda (as many are now predicting it will), some Republicans may begin to wonder why exactly they're still putting up with this president—especially when they view virtually every other person in the line of succession as an improvement. One senior GOP congressional aide told me it's "still too early to tell" whether impeachment is a viable option in this Congress, saying that much of it would depend on what kind of dirt emerges from the Russia investigation. He added, though, that reelection fears could also shift the dynamic quickly. "If the GOP loses the Montana and Georgia special elections, then that would make people more open to [impeachment]."

Another Republican, meanwhile, floated the idea that if Democrats take back the House in 2018, GOP leadership could bring articles of impeachment during the lame-duck session—giving the proceedings an air of bipartisanship (and perhaps redeeming their own reputations along the way). Ultimately, though, the prospects of impeachment largely depend on Democrats successfully taking back the House next year.

### Trump Resigns

In an unusually candid interview with *Reuters* last month, Trump celebrated his first 100 days in office by indulging in a moment of wistfulness. "I loved my previous life," he said. "I had so many things going. This is more work than in my

**Corrections & Amplifications**  
Mitch McConnell is Senate majority leader. An earlier version of this article incorrectly stated he was House majority leader. (May 17, 2017)

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Appeared in the May 18, 2017, print edition as 'Congress Steps Up Inquiries Into Russ

previous life. I thought it would be easier."

The quote seemed to confirm what every other pathos-laden inside-the-White-House dispatch has suggested: Trump is having a miserable time as president.

His unhappiness would make sense. Trump is, in some ways, an accidental president. For decades he flirted with a presidential bid, but never intended to pull the trigger; then he did launch a campaign, but planned to drop out after a few months; then he ended up winning the Republican nomination, but expected to lose the general election; then the returns started coming in on election night, and before he knew it he was delivering a surprise victory speech in the New York Hilton ballroom. And it's been all downhill from there.

As president, he seethes over media coverage, gets bored during briefings, and flees the claustrophobic confines of the White House at every opportunity. Even his staunchest allies in the media have noticed. In a recent column, Fox News executive editor John Moody wrote, "President Trump's eccentric behavior, especially in the past week, raises a serious question: Does he want to be president?"

Given all this, it might stand to reason that Trump would seek an early exit on his own terms—resigning rather than face impeachment proceedings, or even just a messy, years-long investigation. But people close to him say resignation is probably a nonstarter, especially if he thinks it will look like he's being chased out of office.

John Dean, the former White House counsel for Richard Nixon, observed to me that Trump seems to share Nixon's sense of victimization and "desire for revenge," but not his rationality—a combination of traits that could make him resistant to any kind of surrender, even if it's in his own self-interest. Trump may hate his job, but he hates his haters more.

### Trump Rebounds

No, he is probably not going to make that long-awaited "pivot" that

certain pundits have been predicting for the past two years. At 70 years old, his personality is most likely cemented in place. But that doesn't necessarily mean his presidency is unsalvageable.

Serving as leader of the free world comes with a pretty steep learning curve. And as David Graham wrote back in March, Bill Clinton offers an example of someone who regrouped and rallied after a disastrous start to his presidency (though his early mistakes did come back to haunt him later). He empowered his aides to give more structure to his schedule, and more discipline to his White House. His chief-of-staff prevailed upon him to stop obsessing over leaks to the press, and instead focus on proactively building cohesion and unity on his staff. With his house in order, he was able to achieve a series of policy victories. Could Trump do this, too? Maybe! Those of us who have been wrong about Trump before know the perils of underestimating him.

In reality, though, Trump may have already done too much damage for him to fully recover. The FBI director has been fired. The memos have begun to leak. A special prosecutor has been appointed. The president could serve out the rest of his term with the rectitude of a monk, and still be undone by his past sins.

### Trump Trudges On

For all the recent invocations of Watergate, there's a reasonable chance that the scandals surrounding Trump will end up playing out in a more pedestrian way than Nixon's explosive, era-defining resignation. As *The Washington Post's* Dave Weigel recently noted, a more apt comparison for Trump might be the Iran-Contra affair—a long-running, low-grade drama that involves years of probes and a few plea deals for the president's associates, but that does not ultimately sink his presidency.

In this scenario, Trump's agenda would likely stall out and his approval rating might sink a bit, but his base would stick by him. He would muddle through the rest of his term, ranting on Twitter about "FAKE NEWS!" and griping about

the “unfair” leaks from the intelligence community. Maybe he would run for reelection; more likely, he would bow out.

What makes this outcome seem plausible is that, judging by how things are shaping up, it will be the newly appointed special prosecutor—and not Congress—that’s the driving force behind the Russia investigation. As my colleague David Frum recently wrote, special prosecutors tend to

“move with all the familiar slowness of the law. Their investigations typically take years, not months. Their notes are consigned to the archives. Worst of all, the risk is real that a special prosecutor will chase off in exactly the opposite direction from that most urgently required by the public interest.”

“The criminal path is long and complicated and unpredictable,” said John Q. Barrett, a St. Johns University law professor who

worked for the independent counsel’s office during Iran-Contra. “If you’re a kind of ‘end Trump as soon as possible’ person, I think the primary tool is impeachment, and that’s a congressional tool.”

Of course, it’s possible that congressional Republicans will get serious about their oversight role, and transform themselves into Rottweilerian watchdogs. But it seems more likely that they will simply use the presence of a

special prosecutor to avoid policing the president too aggressively themselves. If that’s the case, survival seems within reach for Trump—but perhaps not much more than that.

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Trump takes great pride in the world-stunning story of his political rise. But whether it ends with a bang or a whimper now depends largely on forces beyond his control.

## The New York Times

6-8 minutes

# Washington Is Abuzz With Surround Sound of Scandal

Peter Baker

ways to fend off the attacks and investigations while reinvigorating a presidency that has lost control of its narrative.

That became inordinately more difficult at 6 p.m. on Wednesday with the announcement by Rod J. Rosenstein, the deputy attorney general, that he was appointing Robert S. Mueller III, a former F.B.I. director, as special counsel, another term for special prosecutor.

It would be hard to imagine a choice less helpful to the White House, given that Mr. Mueller was an ally in the past of James B. Comey, his successor as F.B.I. director, who was fired by Mr. Trump last week. The last straw for Mr. Rosenstein may have been a New York Times article reporting that Mr. Trump tried to persuade Mr. Comey to drop an investigation into Michael T. Flynn, the former national security adviser, according to a memo Mr. Comey wrote.

The presidential helicopter leaving the South Lawn of the White House on Wednesday for the Coast Guard Academy. Al Drago/The New York Times

Julian Epstein, who was the chief counsel for the Democrats on the House Judiciary Committee during the impeachment proceedings against President Bill Clinton, said Mr. Trump essentially brought this on himself with his “clumsy and self-defeating” attempts to rid himself of Mr. Comey in the midst of an active F.B.I. investigation into any ties between his campaign associates and Russia.

“With the appointment of Mueller, they have now totally lost control of this train and have very limited ability to manage the widening crisis around it,” Mr. Epstein said. “This will go down as one of the most inept and counterproductive efforts of damage control that we’ve ever seen in public life.”

The president and the White House tried to get through the day by going through the motions of regular governing, much as Richard M. Nixon, Ronald Reagan and Mr.

Clinton did when facing investigations. Mr. Trump flew on Air Force One to Connecticut for the Coast Guard Academy commencement and returned to the White House to interview candidates to replace Mr. Comey. Vice President Mike Pence hosted a reception for Asian-American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month. Ivanka Trump convened a meeting to talk about human trafficking.

But there was nothing regular about the day and there may not be anything regular about many of the days to come. Even before the latest developments, Mr. Trump’s legislative agenda was going nowhere. So many journalists swarmed the Capitol on Wednesday trying to buttonhole lawmakers about Mr. Trump’s interactions with Mr. Comey that the Senate press gallery sent out a warning about “Senate hallway congestion.”

“For President Trump, the drip, drip, drip of scandal has sidetracked, for example, health care and tax reform,” said James Robenalt, author of “January 1973: Watergate, Roe v. Wade, Vietnam and the Month That Changed America Forever.”

“If this continues, the paralysis, as with Nixon, will cause a loss of confidence overseas, our enemies will be emboldened, and at home the Republican agenda will stall.”

While Representative Al Green, Democrat of Texas, became the first lawmaker to call for impeachment and Representative Justin Amash of Michigan became the first Republican to say the allegations in Mr. Comey’s memo, if true, could be grounds for impeachment, the prospect of such a process remained distant. Both Nixon and Mr. Clinton faced a House that was in the hands of the opposition party when impeachment proceedings began. Mr. Trump is relying on his fellow Republicans as a firewall.

But that did not stop talk, especially on the left. The pace of political life has only accelerated and intensified

since Nixon resigned to avoid impeachment in 1974 and Mr. Clinton was impeached in 1998 and acquitted in a Senate trial the next year. Google Trends reported more than 20,000 searches on the phrase “Trump impeachment” on Tuesday as news of Mr. Comey’s memo emerged.

Republicans, while not ready to abandon Mr. Trump, showed signs of nervousness. Representative Liz Cheney, Republican of Wyoming, deleted a Twitter post she had written last week praising Mr. Trump’s letter dismissing Mr. Comey.

Meanwhile, President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia seemed to be enjoying the disruption he had helped sow in the United States, trolling American politicians by offering to provide his own transcript of last week’s meeting between Mr. Trump and the Russian foreign minister where the president shared sensitive information.

At the White House, nerves were on edge as well. When a White House spokesman makes a point of attributing everything to the president rather than making assertions in his own voice, it suggests a trepidation about vouching for accounts that may eventually be contradicted by the president himself.

So when Sean Spicer, the White House press secretary, briefed reporters on Air Force One on Wednesday, he carefully quoted Mr. Trump, answering many questions with phrases like: “The president is confident...” “The president has been very clear...” and “The president does not believe...”

After Mr. Mueller’s appointment was announced, the White House issued a statement in the president’s name, not that of any of his representatives. And whether he knew it or not, Mr. Trump echoed Mr. Clinton’s approach, that he was focused on his day job. “I will never stop fighting for the people and the issues that matter most to the future of our country,” Mr. Trump said.



If this White House is anything like those in the past, it will remain caught up in the crisis for weeks and months to come. John A. Farrell, who just

published a new biography, "Richard Nixon: The Life," said this was what the White House could look forward to: "Anger. Distraction. Fear. Friends are now viewed with

suspicion, as potential accusers. Rumors fly that so-and-so has lawyered up, or is talking to the prosecutors."

In the end, he said, "all are caught up in the vortex."



## Editorial : A special counsel is essential. But Congress isn't off the hook.

<https://www.facebook.com/washingtonpostopinions>

4-5 minutes

The Post's View

Opinion

**Opinion** A column or article in the Opinions section (in print, this is known as the Editorial Pages).

By Editorial Board

The Post's View

Opinion

**Opinion** A column or article in the Opinions section (in print, this is known as the Editorial Pages).

May 17 at 7:31 PM

WASHINGTON AND the country received a much-needed shot of good news Wednesday evening with the revelation that the Justice Department will appoint a special counsel. Deputy Attorney General Rod J. Rosenstein named Robert S. Mueller III, a former FBI chief.

This was an essential and reassuring step



## Editorial : The Special Counsel America Needs

The Editorial Board

3-4 minutes

Robert Mueller in 2013. Brendan Smialowski/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

If President Trump thought that by sacking the F.B.I. director, James Comey, he could kill off the investigation into his associates' ties to the Russian government and its attempt to deliver him the White House, he was wrong.

The investigation will go on, now under the leadership of a former F.B.I. director — and this one the president can't fire on his own. Robert Mueller III, who was named special counsel on Wednesday to oversee the Trump-Russia investigation, is

after a series of alarming developments. The first question for Mr. Mueller will be whether the Russian government meddled in the 2016 presidential election. The second question will be whether anyone in the Trump campaign colluded in the meddling. And the third question will be whether anyone in the administration, up to and including President Trump, illegally tried to interfere with investigations into the alleged meddling and collusion.

An independent inquiry is needed because of statements and actions by Mr. Trump that raised serious concern about executive interference. These include his reported request in January that then-FBI Director James B. Comey swear his loyalty to the president; his reported attempt a month later to persuade Mr. Comey to drop an investigation of Mr. Trump's first national security adviser, who had to quit after he lied about the nature of his contacts with Russian officials; and his decision last week to fire Mr. Comey. Mr. Trump initially put forward false explanations for that firing but eventually admitted that he was motivated by his displeasure with

the FBI's investigation of alleged Russian interference.

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A few notes of caution are in order. A special counsel is essential in this case, and Mr. Mueller must be prepared to follow the evidence wherever it leads. But there's always a worry when a prosecutor has only one mission that he will pursue it with excessive zeal. That's less likely with a special counsel under current law than it was under the old independent-counsel statute, and it's a trap that Mr. Mueller seems unlikely to fall into. But it's worth keeping in mind.

More salient is the fact that the special counsel's job is only to look for criminal behavior and, if he finds any, to prosecute the wrongdoers. His job is not to inform the public or to pass judgment on actions that may have been unwise, inappropriate or unethical — but did not violate the law. That is why this appointment does not let Congress off the hook. The American public needs a full accounting of Russian interference in the 2016 election; of

American cooperation in that meddling, if any; and of administration efforts to impede investigations into the meddling and collusion, if they took place. The House and Senate intelligence committees are working on aspects of all that, and those must continue. But a full accounting is likely to emerge only if Congress appoints a special commission like the one that investigated the 9/11 attacks. With the Trump administration having led the way, Congress too should act.

The Justice Department appointed special counsel to investigate Trump and Russia on May 17. The Washington Post's Devlin Barrett explains the Justice Department's decision to appoint Robert Mueller as special counsel to investigate possible connections between the Trump campaign and Russian officials. (Peter Stevenson, Jason Aldag, Whitney Leaming/The Washington Post)

(Peter Stevenson, Jason Aldag, Whitney Leaming/The Washington Post)

without Justice Department approval.

Mr. Rosenstein, who was upset when the White House initially tried to make him the fall guy for Mr. Comey's dismissal, showed similar independence on Wednesday. He stood up to a president who has repeatedly signaled he wants no investigation whatsoever. In fact, he refrained from even notifying the White House of Mr. Mueller's appointment until after he had signed the order.

This appointment does not lift the burden on Congress to conduct its own, bipartisan inquiry, nor does it end the need for an independent commission. But under Justice Department regulations, Mr. Mueller will have significant latitude, including to pursue criminal prosecutions, if necessary — although Mr. Rosenstein has the

power to overrule him. (Attorney General Jeff Sessions, who would normally have this authority, properly recused himself in March from the investigation because of his own ties to Russia.)

Even before the stunning events of the past week, Mr. Mueller would have had plenty to work with. But after the president's abrupt firing of Mr. Comey on May 9 — followed by his apparent admission that he did so with the Russia investigation in mind, followed by reports that he previously pressed Mr. Comey to pledge his loyalty and asked him to drop a related inquiry into Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn, Mr. Trump's former national security adviser — it became clear that the investigation needed to be kept alive at all costs, and as far from Mr. Trump as possible.



## Editorial : Release the Comey Tapes

May 17, 2017

7:27 p.m. ET 302 COMMENTS

5-6 minutes

The leak Tuesday of James Comey's notes of a February conversation with Donald Trump is a classic of the former FBI director's operating method that puts the Trump Presidency in peril and raises serious ethical questions about Mr. Comey's behavior. Let's step back from the immediate furor and examine the legal and political merits.

According to Mr. Comey's memo to himself, Mr. Trump asked Mr. Comey in a one-on-one Oval Office meeting to "let this go," referring to any investigation of former National Security Adviser Michael Flynn. "I hope you can see your way clear to letting this go, to letting Flynn go," says the memo, parts of which were read to the New York Times by a Comey associate. "He is a good guy."

The White House issued a statement denying Mr. Comey's account of the meeting, adding that "the president has never asked Mr. Comey or anyone else to end any investigation, including any investigation involving General Flynn." Mr. Trump's many enemies are nonetheless calling this obstruction of justice, and perhaps grounds for impeachment.

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The first question is how this squares with Acting FBI Director Andrew McCabe's testimony last week that there has been no attempt to

interfere with the FBI's Russia probe. The Times reports that Mr. Comey spread word among his colleagues of his Trump conversation, and Mr. McCabe is a Comey loyalist. Perhaps a Flynn criminal probe is separate from the Russia-Trump investigation, but it isn't clear what Mr. Trump knew in February.

The more important issue is why Mr. Comey failed to inform senior Justice officials and resign immediately after the conversation. If he really thought Mr. Trump was attempting to obstruct justice, the director knows he had a legal obligation to report it immediately. He certainly had a moral duty to resign and go public with his reasons.

Yet the Times reports that Mr. Comey merely wrote the notes to himself and informed a few others. One explanation is that perhaps Mr. Comey didn't view Mr. Trump's comments as amounting to obstruction.

Intent is crucial to proving obstruction, and without listening to the conversation it's impossible to know the context and tenor of Mr. Trump's "let it go" comment. Mr. Trump might be guilty of obstruction if he thought Mr. Flynn knew something damaging about Mr. Trump, but not if he was making a general remark to give the guy a break.

Another possibility is that Mr. Comey viewed the notes as a form of political insurance that could be useful in a future controversy. By not resigning but quietly spreading word among colleagues, Mr. Comey was laying down evidence that he could use to protect his job or retaliate if Mr. Trump did fire him.

The leak of Mr. Comey's notes suggests that he or his allies are now calling on that insurance. Such behavior fits Mr. Comey's habit over the years of putting his personal political standing above other priorities. And it echoes uncomfortably of the way J. Edgar Hoover used information he collected to protect himself against presidential accountability.

All of this will now be investigated by Congress, and Mr. Comey has been invited to testify. Jason Chaffetz, chairman of the House Oversight Committee, rightly wants to examine all of Mr. Comey's notes about his February conversation, and any subpoena should be comprehensive. Leaks can often be selective but questions that touch on presidential obstruction need the full record.

The White House should also be forthcoming with any records of the meeting, including audio tapes. Mr. Trump hinted that recordings might exist when he tweeted Friday that "James Comey better hope that there are no 'tapes' of our conversations before he starts leaking to the press!"

The White House has since refused to say if Mr. Trump has taped visitors to the Oval Office, but that evasion won't wash. If tapes exist, the White House should release them immediately. The President has nothing to fear if the White House denial is accurate. If the tapes don't exist, Mr. Trump's trolling will look even dumber than usual.

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Mr. Trump was foolish even to discuss the Russia probe with Mr. Comey. Perhaps this was due to Mr. Trump's naivete rather than an attempt to block an investigation, but even a rookie should know to seek legal guidance before blundering into matters so fraught with political risk. After Mr. Comey's performance in 2016, Mr. Trump should also have known he needed to name a new FBI director in January, as some of us advised. History might have been different.

The tragedy is that all of this has put the larger Trump reform agenda in jeopardy. Stocks took a beating Wednesday as investors assessed the possibility that Mr. Trump has sabotaged his own challenge to the Washington status quo. If Mr. Comey is out for revenge for his belated dismissal, Mr. Trump's best defense is to get the facts out as quickly as possible.

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

### Editorial : The Special Counsel Mistake

May 17, 2017  
7:28 p.m. ET 346

the next four years.

"My decision is not a finding that crimes have been committed or that any prosecution is warranted," said Mr. Rosenstein, which is nice but irrelevant. With Attorney General Jeff Sessions recused from the Russia probe, Mr. Rosenstein appointed former FBI director Robert Mueller III, who will now have unlimited time and resources to investigate more or less anything and anyone he wants.

While the decision will provide some short-term political relief, not least for Mr. Rosenstein, it also opens up years of political risk to the Trump Administration with no guarantee that the public will end up with any

better understanding of what really happened.

The problem with special counsels, as we've learned time and again, is that they are by definition all but politically unaccountable. While technically Mr. Rosenstein could fire Mr. Mueller if he goes too far, the manner of his appointment and the subject he's investigating make him de facto untouchable even if he becomes an abusive Javert like Patrick Fitzgerald during the George W. Bush Administration.

What the country really needs is a full accounting of how the Russians tried to influence the election and whether any Americans assisted them. That is fundamentally a

counterintelligence investigation, but Mr. Mueller will be under pressure to bring criminal indictments of some kind to justify his existence. He'll also no doubt bring on young attorneys who will savor the opportunity to make their reputation on such a high-profile investigation.

Mr. Mueller has experience in counterintelligence and at 72 years old has nothing to prove. But he is also a long-time Washington player close to the FBI whose director was recently fired, and he is highly attuned to the political winds. As they say in Washington, lawyer up.

## Los Angeles Times

### Editorial : Better late than never in appointing Mueller to investigate Trump. Now it's Congress' turn to step up

The Times The Times Editorial Board

In announcing Wednesday that he would appoint a special counsel to supervise the Justice Department's investigation of Russian

interference in the 2016 presidential election and "related matters" — including possible collusion by members of President Trump's campaign — Deputy Atty. Gen. Rod Rosenstein emphasized the need

"for the American people to have full confidence in the outcome."

Talk about stating the obvious. Rosenstein's action is welcome, his reasoning is sound and the lawyer

COMMENTS

3 minutes

Democrats and their media allies finally got their man. After weeks of political pressure, Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein blinked late Wednesday and announced that he has named a special counsel to investigate Russian attempts to influence the 2016 presidential election. These expeditions rarely end well for anyone, and Democrats are hoping this one will bedevil the Trump Administration for

Editorial Board

3-4 minutes

he has asked to assume responsibility for the investigation, former FBI Director Robert S. Mueller III, is a reassuring choice.

But Rosenstein had no alternative, if he wanted to salvage his reputation. The belated decision to appoint a special counsel is almost certainly the result of the clumsy firing last week of FBI Director James B. Comey and the administration's cynical, deceptive use of Rosenstein to justify it.

The White House originally portrayed Comey's dismissal as its response to a memo by Rosenstein criticizing the way Comey handled the investigation of Hillary Clinton's use of a private email server. That explanation collapsed when Trump himself admitted

that he would have fired Comey regardless of Rosenstein's advice and that, moreover, when he decided to fire Comey he was thinking about the "made-up story" of allegations of collusion between Russia and the Trump campaign.

The administration's use of Rosenstein to justify Comey's dismissal made it imperative that the deputy attorney general withdraw from the Trump-Russia investigation. (Atty. Gen. Jeff Sessions, who as a senator from Alabama was an enthusiastic supporter of Trump's candidacy, had already recused himself from the matter in March.)

Why did Rosenstein wait until Wednesday to hand over the Russia investigation to someone

else? Perhaps he was jolted into action by shocking news reports suggesting that Trump had asked Comey to shut down an investigation of former National Security Advisor Michael Flynn. Better late than never, Rosenstein decided that the public needed to be assured that an investigation of Trump connections with Russia would be free of political influence.

Mueller will now be responsible for supervising investigations of "any links and/or coordination between the Russian government and individuals associated with the campaign of President Donald Trump." — including, presumably, any questionable activities by Flynn.

Mueller won't have total independence; under Justice

Department regulations, Rosenstein could still countermand some of his decisions if he deemed them "inappropriate or unwarranted under established departmental practices." But Mueller will enjoy considerable autonomy bolstered by his own high standing in the department and in Congress.

A thorough investigation by the FBI and the Justice Department, important as it is, will proceed mostly in secret and can't answer all of the questions the public has about Russian meddling in last year's election. That's why it's vital that Congress do its duty to investigate these events — in public to the greatest extent possible.



6-8 minutes

By Michael V. Hayden May 16

*Michael V. Hayden, a principal at the Chertoff Group and visiting professor at George Mason University's Schar School of Policy and Government, was director of the National Security Agency from 1999 to 2005 and the Central Intelligence Agency from 2006 to 2009.*

In November, a few days before the election, I tried to parse Donald Trump's strange affection for Vladimir Putin and the various contacts that members of his campaign had had with folks in Russia.

The best explanation I could come up with was something the Russians call *polezni durak*, the "useful fool." That's a term from the Soviet era describing the naive individual whom the Kremlin usually held in contempt but who could be induced to do things on its behalf.

Six months later, it is disappointing to report, the term "useful fool" still seems a pretty apt description.

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President Trump revealed highly classified intel in Oval Office meeting with Russians During a May 10 meeting with Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Ambassador to the U.S. Sergey Kislyak, Trump began describing details about an Islamic State terror threat, according to current and former U.S. officials. (Photo:

## Former CIA director: Trump proves he's Russia's 'useful fool'

By Michael V. Hayden

Russian Foreign Ministry/The Washington Post)

(The Washington Post)

President Trump continues to resist the conclusion that Russia meddled in the American electoral process. As recently as last week, the best he could muster was a conditional "if Russia" interfered.

Understandably, that attitude led to a strained relationship with the intelligence community, a state of affairs not helped by the president's unfounded, yet continuing, accusations that the community spied on his campaign.

Now the Russians are front and center in another controversy, this one fully of the president's making. Last week, according to The Post, the president disclosed highly sensitive intelligence on the Islamic State to Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak and Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov during an Oval Office meeting.

The information reportedly derived from another country's intelligence service, so its revelation would have violated the near-sacred third-party rule of intelligence: Information from one country cannot be shared with another without the agreement of the originator. Break that rule often enough and your intelligence begins to dry up.

The administration contends that neither sources nor methods were discussed. That may be true enough, but I have had many arguments with journalists trying to explain that revealing the "fact of" something often points the way to the "fact how" — to the very sources and methods they claim they are not threatening.

Of course, the president has absolute declassification authority

and, in practice, should have great leeway in what he wants to share with other nations. The issue here is not the power of a president but the performance of this president.

Governing is new turf for Trump. He is one of the least experienced presidents in the nation's history. There is no evidence of scholarship or even deep interest in the processes of U.S. government. He has little international knowledge beyond real estate and business.

But even with such a thin portfolio, he seems incapable of humility in the face of such inexperience. By all accounts, the president is impatient with process and study, preternaturally confident in his own knowledge and instincts, and indifferent to, and perhaps contemptuous of, the institutions of government designed to help him succeed.

We saw this coming in the transition when a self-confident president-elect contacted foreign leaders without benefit of briefings from, or even the knowledge of, the State Department.

So, little wonder that an impulsive president appears to have gone off script to warn his Russian visitors in dramatic fashion. Or was it to impress them with the prowess of his intelligence services?

Once again, the White House circled the wagons. National security adviser H.R. McMaster and deputy adviser Dina Powell, both of whom I know and regard highly, stated that the president had not specifically revealed sources and methods and asserted that the Post article was "false."

Debates over what exactly the president said or did not say were made moot, though, when the

president tweeted that he could damn well do what he pleased in these circumstances.

McMaster and Powell could not have been comfortable being thrust into this position. One hopes that they are not put there very often.

Indeed, there is a creeping corruption near the president as his spokespeople are frequently forced to defend that which should not be defended. The national security team can't allow itself to be touched by that.

Then there is the question of the leak itself. Who told The Post — and, very quickly, other news organizations — about the meeting? The president's defenders are already pointing to dark elements of the deep state or to holdovers from the Obama administration.

Maybe, but there are alternative explanations. There may have been more here than just malice or obstructionism.

Reportedly, National Security Council staffers were concerned enough about the revelations that they felt compelled to warn the CIA and the National Security Agency. Clearly, someone in government was concerned about potential damage. Once that word was out, it's not hard to imagine the alarm among government professionals increasingly uneasy about managing the consequences of what they see as presidential missteps.

The administration will probably try to hunt down some of those folks, at least those who talked to The Post. Leaks are leaks, after all. But one hopes they also turn considerable attention to making our president more knowledgeable and prepared — and more open to the processes



and protocols that have governed the behavior of others who have held that high office.



## Callan : It's still too early to talk about Trump's impeachment

By Paul Callan

Updated 1:10 PM ET, Wed May 17, 2017

Sources: Trump asked to end Flynn inquiry 03:30

Paul Callan is a CNN legal analyst, a former New York homicide prosecutor and currently is of counsel at the New York law firm of Edelman & Edelman PC, focusing on wrongful conviction and civil rights cases. Follow him on Twitter @paulcallan. The opinions expressed in this commentary are his own.

(CNN)A nation already weary of crisis news relating to President Trump was treated Tuesday to yet another bombshell.

The news wires hummed with a New York Times report that recently fired FBI Director James Comey has shown unnamed associates a memo implying that the President sought the termination of an investigation concerning his former national security adviser, Michael Flynn.

Comey reportedly authored a note shortly after meeting with the President to memorialize what he perceived as an odd conversation with the nation's Chief Executive.

According to the Times, Comey took these notes following his conversation with Trump:

Allegedly, Trump said: "I hope you can see your way clear to letting this go, to letting Flynn go ... He is a good guy. I hope you can let this go." The President also reportedly stated that Flynn had done nothing wrong. Comey notes that his only reply to the President was: "I agree he is a good guy."

Once hoped for as a reset, Trump's foreign trip now bogged in White House crises

The report follows a barrage of largely negative press after the President's controversial decision to fire Comey and then, the very next day, allegedly reveal classified information to the Russian ambassador and foreign minister on their visit to the Oval Office.

The strange behavior regarding Comey, Flynn and the Russians is causing a substantial spike in impeachment speculation that had begun as a murmur after the President's controversial sacking of Comey.

The real question now being asked by lawyers, Congressmen and the electorate is whether the words and actions of the President regarding the Flynn investigation add up to the crime of "Obstruction of Justice," a rather vague concept under US law.

If it does, Trump could be charged by the Republican-controlled House of Representatives with an impeachable "high crime or misdemeanor," warranting a trial before the Senate, and if convicted, removal from office. The President is immune from criminal prosecution while in office but could face criminal charges once he resigns or is forced from office via impeachment proceedings.

While Trump's opponents will stridently demand impeachment, that road, though possible, is strewn with substantial impediments. The first and most significant is the need for a majority vote in favor of impeachment in a Republican-majority Congress.

In 1974, a Republican congressional committee did vote to impeach Republican President Richard Nixon, forcing him to resign in disgrace, but the charges against Nixon were far more substantial than the single potential count of "Obstruction of Justice" being discussed at the moment.

In Nixon's case, the House Judiciary Committee voted in favor of Articles of Impeachment alleging Obstruction of Justice, Abuse of Power and Contempt of Congress.

GOP lawmaker: Time to do whatever is necessary 00:55

The charges asserted that among other nefarious acts, Nixon had made false statements, withheld evidence, suborned perjury, authorized through subordinates the Watergate burglary, obstructed lawful investigations by the FBI and Department of Justice, bribed witnesses with campaign funds, misused and interfered with the CIA, illegally punished his enemies by using the IRS, the Secret Service and other governmental agencies, and engaged in a general cover-up scheme.

This is only a partial list from the Nixon charges, and the worst of it was corroborated by Nixon's own words, which he taped himself. Even with substantial evidence supporting all the charges, the Judiciary Committee was far from unanimous in referring the articles of impeachment. Rather than face a full vote in the House of Representatives, Nixon resigned.

By comparison, President Trump appears to be a veritable Boy Scout. His aides are already denying that Comey has accurately recounted his conversation with the President. They emphatically state that the President never ordered or directed the termination of any criminal investigation. If the matter ever proceeded to a real fight, Trump lawyers would claim that a vague discussion urging mercy for a "good man" was merely a suggestion and not an order.

Even Comey agreed that Flynn was a "good guy." It appears that Comey never even suggested to the President that there was anything

improper about his request. Unlike the Watergate burglars who really were investigated and arrested, no criminal charges have ever been lodged against Flynn, so what "judicial proceeding" is being obstructed?

Comey and the art of the well-timed leak

The big problem at this stage is that in the absence of tapes, it will be the word of the President against his disgruntled former FBI director. And even if Comey's words are accepted as true, it still may not add up to a legal case of "Obstruction of Justice." Trump lawyers and advocates will urge the public to ask: Why didn't Comey complain to Congress or the Department of Justice if he felt the President had urged the commission of a criminal act? Why didn't Comey resign and blow the whistle on the President?

Instead, Trump supporters will say Comey is really seeking revenge in anger over the loss of his prestigious job. They will rally, asserting that this is yet another conspiracy by the coastal media elites against their fearless leader who is merely trying to "drain the swamp," as he promised.

In the end, "Teflon Don" will survive this attack. The wagons of opposition, however, are circling. The President is demonstrating a pattern of incompetence, dishonesty and arrogant irresponsibility in his handling of classified material and foreign affairs that may well lead to impeachment in the future.

The evidence supporting impeachment must be powerful and compelling to attract the votes of the President's own party. Many in the party may not like Trump, but they will never impeach on evidence this thin and flimsy.

NATIONAL  
REVIEW  
ONLINE

7-8 minutes

## McCarthy : Robert Mueller - Special Counsel for Donald Trump & Russia Investigation.

Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein's appointment of Robert S. Mueller III as "special counsel" for purposes of the so-called Russia investigation underscores a point I have made through the years, whenever the subject of special prosecutors or independent counsels rears its head. Because

there is no such thing as an independent counsel (i.e., a lawyer who wields prosecutorial power independent of the executive branch), the structure of a "special counsel" arrangement will never give anyone confidence. A special counsel is appointed by the attorney general (here, it's the deputy attorney general because AG Jeff Sessions has recused himself). A special counsel also reports

ultimately to the president — meaning that, like any other executive-branch official (other than the vice president), a special counsel serves at the pleasure of the president and may be dismissed at any time.

Therefore, the public perception that the special-counsel arrangement has integrity hinges exclusively on the lawyer who is appointed. It is the lawyer's reputation for probity

and professionalism, and that alone, that can convince people a real investigation, governed by law and evidence not politics, is being conducted.

In this instance, Rosenstein has chosen well.

Bob Mueller is a widely respected former prosecutor, U.S. attorney, high-ranking Justice Department official, and FBI director. He is



highly regarded by both parties. This is perhaps best exhibited by the fact that when his ten-year term as the FBI director appointed by President George W. Bush expired in 2011, President Obama asked him to stay on for an additional two years, and Congress quickly agreed to extend his term. He is a straight shooter, by the book, and studiously devoid of flash.

He is also fondly remembered by Democrats as having joined then-deputy attorney general James Comey in the famous showdown, at then-attorney general John Ashcroft's hospital bed, over President Bush's warrantless surveillance program. It was at the insistence of Comey and Mueller that Bush made modifications to the program to bring it into the Justice Department's revised understanding of lawfulness.

Mueller notwithstanding, there remain peculiar aspects of this special-counsel appointment. Foremost of these (as we've also repeatedly noted) is that the so-called Russia investigation is a counterintelligence investigation, not a criminal investigation. In the Justice Department, counterintelligence investigations are not assigned a prosecutor as criminal cases are because the point is to collect information about a foreign power (an investigative and analytical intelligence function), not to build a prosecutable case against a suspect for a violation of penal law.

Lawyers in the Justice Department's National Security Division (NSD) oversee the government's domestic national-security operations and assist the FBI in obtaining warrants from the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court — court orders that authorize the agents to collect information and monitor suspected foreign agents. Presumably, Mueller will supplant the NSD for purposes of the Russia investigation, which is described in Rosenstein's order as an investigation of "any links and/or coordination between the Russian government and individuals associated with the campaign of President Donald Trump." That is to say, when it comes time to announce the conclusions of this counterintelligence probe, it will be Mueller making the findings.

In addition, the special counsel will have broad authority to investigate any additional matters that have already arisen or that may arise directly from the investigation. That entails two things. First, to the extent the counterintelligence investigation has incidentally uncovered any suspected criminal misconduct, the special counsel has jurisdiction to investigate and prosecute. This would presumably include the reported investigation of retired General Michael Flynn, the former national-security adviser — the investigation that is the subject of the controversial Comey memo, which is said to recount a conversation between President Trump and the former FBI director.

When it comes time to announce the conclusions of this counterintelligence probe, it will be Mueller making the findings.

Second, to the extent that crimes arise *because* of the investigation — e.g., if witnesses are caught lying to investigators or the grand jury — Mueller will have jurisdiction to investigate and charge such offenses.

These two components make it impossible to answer the pressing question of how long Mueller's investigation will last. The FBI (and other intelligence agencies) have been investigating the Russia counterintelligence matter for nearly a year, and a great deal of work has already been done on it. I imagine there is a chance it could be wrapped up within a few months — Mueller is a quick study and a hard worker, it won't take him long to get up to speed.

What can really slow these investigations down is the prosecution of ancillary criminal cases. If there are none, things can be wrapped up in short order. But if people are indicted, it could go on for years. Mueller is not a Lawrence Walsh type. He will not want to make a career out of this. At the same time, if serious criminal wrongdoing is uncovered, he won't turn a blind eye.

Why is it called a "special counsel"? Originally, the concept was known

as "special prosecutor," Archibald Cox being the most famous. In 1978, the Democrat-controlled Congress enacted the Ethics in Government Act, which created the "independent counsel" — a constitutional anomaly that purported to transfer executive authority to the judicial branch (the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals) for purposes of, among other things, appointing a lawyer to investigate government misconduct. The institution was skewered by Justice Antonin Scalia in his famous *Morrison v. Olson* (1988) dissent. Democrats lost their appetite for independent counsels when Bill Clinton was investigated by one. The office was thus allowed to sunset in 1999.

It was replaced by the current "special counsel" — which is not called "independent" because, as noted above, it isn't. But formal independence is less important than the perception of integrity (flowing from the reality of integrity). Bob Mueller has that. I remain a skeptic of special prosecutors or special counsels. Democrats are so Trump-deranged that I suspect, despite Mueller's solid reputation, they will claim the fix is in if impeachment does not appear to be on the horizon in short order. But most people will give Mueller a chance. And he deserves that.



## Lane : Trump may have broken one D.C. Commandment too many

By Charles Lane

6-7 minutes

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Today's lesson in How Washington Really Works begins with the 11th Commandment: "Thou shalt retain documentation of all communications with the boss."

If anyone understands that, it's James B. Comey, a highly credentialed lawyer who had a couple of decades' worth of top-level federal experience under his belt before taking over the FBI in 2013. Whatever mistakes this bureaucrat par excellence committed amid the political turbulence of the past year and a half, failure to follow the 11th Commandment was not one of them — it never would have been.

By contrast, and in hindsight, President Trump's attempted manipulations of the G-man-in-chief seem not only utterly inappropriate but also amateurish — laughably so.

"James Comey better hope that there are no 'tapes' of our conversations before he starts leaking to the press!" the president taunted on Twitter — whereupon, as any Washington veteran could have foreseen, Comey's memo was duly leaked. Indeed, his firing was undoubtedly one of the contingencies for which it was drafted. If the president really has anything on Comey, now would be a good time to produce it, but so far — crickets.

To be sure, Trump would not be the first outsider to come into the White House overruling his ability to contend with the insiders.

Notes by former FBI director James B. Comey show President Trump wanted the probe into former national security adviser Michael Flynn dropped. Notes by former FBI director James B. Comey show President Trump wanted the probe

into former national security adviser Michael Flynn dropped. (Photo: Matt McClain/The Washington Post)

(The Washington Post)

Yet even Jimmy Carter had enough savvy, born of military and government experience, not to attempt a too-clever-by-half routine like Trump's apparent effort to make Comey his stooge.

All Trump brought to town was a very mixed record in business and entertainment. That, plus a towering ego and an abiding contempt for, well, pretty much anyone. Admittedly, he used those attributes as weapons — brilliantly — to defeat and humiliate a series of more politically seasoned Republican rivals, and Democrat Hillary Clinton, in the 2016 election.

Those who speculated that the burdens of office would modulate Trump guessed wrong. To the contrary, victory seems to have reinforced Trump's belief in his own brilliance, and everyone else's

stupidity, clouding his perceptions of elementary political reality.

"Thou shalt never mistakenly size up a situation" is Washington's 12th Commandment, and survivors here follow it even more religiously than they observe No. 11. Trump, because of his self-absorbed nature, finds it difficult.

Former Republican senator Bob Dole has lasted a good long while in the D.C. snake pit. He's had high moments — winning the 1996 GOP presidential nomination — and lower ones, such as offering his elder statesman's apologia for Trump at a key point in the 2016 GOP primary. But overall, Dole handled himself better than most.

From an early age, he was well served by awareness of his own limitations. As a new second lieutenant late in World War II, Dole took over a bloody Army platoon fighting desperate Germans along a hilly front in Italy.

On Day One, the 21-year-old prudently approached the unit's

veteran sergeant, who was exercising interim command pending Dole's arrival. "All right soldier, there won't be any changes," Dole told him, according to "What It Takes," Richard Ben Cramer's 1993 book about recent presidential contenders. "We'll run it like you've been running it until we get the knack."

Of course, Dole was later permanently injured in combat, proving there's no sure protection against misfortune. But within the platoon, his humility and willingness to listen actually helped establish

his leadership during the brief time he exercised it.

It is far too late in life for Trump to learn this lesson, no matter how many times he's taught it by fiascos such as his still-developing clash with Comey.

In taking over the Republican Party, Trump mocked, ridiculed and discarded many of the sergeants who might have helped him govern.

What remains in the Trump administration are opportunists, ideologues, sycophants, family — plus a few genuine professionals,

who lent their talents and reputations to Trump for what they saw as the good of the country. Some of the latter are now being compromised by Trump's antics.

Elsewhere along the trench line, the GOP's congressional majority is growing demoralized under Lt. Trump's mercurial command but, contrary to much wishful thinking from the president's multiplying critics, still dares not stage an intervention, much less a mutiny — the only thing, probably, that could bring Trump down before 2020.

It's unclear what Republican politicians fear more: the Democratic enemy or their own rank-and-file voters, more than 82 percent of whom support the president, according to the latest Quinnipiac poll, conducted from May 4 to 9. A backlash from the dreaded GOP "base" may await those who turn on the boss.

As White House dysfunction deepens, the political process hemorrhages legitimacy, which is definitely not how Washington is supposed to work.



## E. J. Dionne Jr. : Trump has caused a catastrophe. Let's end it quickly.

<http://www.facebook.com/ejdionne>

5-7 minutes

There is really only one issue in American politics at this moment: Will we accelerate our way to the end of the Trump story, or will our government remain mired in scandal, misdirection and paralysis for many more months — or even years?

There is a large irony in the politics behind this question. The Democrats' narrow interest lies in having President Trump hang around as close to the 2018 midterm elections as possible. Yet they are urging steps that could get this resolved sooner rather than later. Republicans would likely be better off if Trump were pushed off the stage. Yet up to now, they have been dragging their feet.

The reports that Trump asked then-FBI Director James B. Comey to drop his investigation of former national security adviser Michael Flynn may finally be concentrating Republican minds.

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They certainly focused the decision-making of Deputy Attorney General Rod J. Rosenstein, who announced Wednesday afternoon that he was naming former FBI director Robert S. Mueller as a special counsel to investigate possible coordination between Trump's 2016 campaign and Russian interference in the election.

House Speaker Paul D. Ryan signaled the changed mood earlier in the day not by what he said but by what he didn't.

The Justice Department appointed special counsel to investigate Trump and Russia on May 17. The Washington Post's Devlin Barrett explains the Justice Department's decision to appoint Robert Mueller as special counsel to investigate possible connections between the Trump campaign and Russian officials. (Peter Stevenson, Jason Aldag, Whitney Leaming/The Washington Post)

(Peter Stevenson, Jason Aldag, Whitney Leaming/The Washington Post)

Ryan has been embarrassingly eager to defend Trump, but he did not rush to his support this time. Instead, the Wisconsin Republican called for a "sober" and "dispassionate" response, warned against "rushing to judgment" and insisted that "our job is to get the facts." When word got out (probably from Comey or his sympathizers) of what Trump had said to the FBI director about Flynn, Republicans (such as Rosenstein) were left with no choice but to pursue the matter further.

The speaker expressed faith in Trump only when prompted by a shouted question at the end of his news conference. After some thought, he replied with a soft "I do" when asked if he had "full confidence" in the president.

Nothing could be worse than slow-walking the Trump inquiries. The evidence is already overwhelming that he is temperamentally and intellectually incapable of doing the

job he holds. He is indifferent to acquiring the knowledge the presidency demands and apparently of the belief that he can improvise hour to hour. He will violate norms whenever it suits him and cross ethical lines whenever he feels like it.

He also lies a lot, and has been perfectly happy to burn the credibility of anyone who works for him. White House statements are about as believable as those issued regularly by the Kremlin.

And Trump's friend Vladimir Putin could not resist interfering yet again in our politics. Putin offered to provide Congress with a record of our president's meeting with top Russian diplomats to shed light on exactly what highly classified intelligence information Trump shared with them. Adding to the insult, the Russian leader spoke of a "political schizophrenia" taking hold in the United States that was "eliciting concern" in his country.

Perhaps Putin's taunt will elicit increasing concern among Republicans that our nation cannot endure much more of this.

The surest sign that the bottom is falling out from under Trump was a Wall Street Journal editorial that declared flatly: "Presidencies can withstand only so much turbulence before they come apart." The Journal warned that Trump was on the verge of betraying his supporters, "as his Presidency sinks before his eyes."

Any GOP leader losing the support of the semi-official organ of Republican conservatism should know that his partisans are headed to the exits.

But how can we speed our nation's escape from the catastrophe Trump has created? The Senate Intelligence Committee took an important step by announcing a bipartisan invitation to Comey to testify. The sooner he tells his story, the better.

Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer of New York proposed that both parties demand that Congress get any memos, tapes and transcripts shedding light on Trump's meetings with the Russian diplomats and with Comey.

The naming of an independent counsel cannot become an excuse to pull back on congressional fact-finding. The country needs to know if there was collusion between Trump's campaign and Russia whether or not a crime was committed. And Democrats should ask Republicans to join them in pledging opposition to any appointee to head the FBI who is not universally seen as immune to Trump's influence.

It shows how far along we are that fears are already being voiced of a political backlash from his supporters if Trump is railroaded out of office. But delaying the process of getting to the truth will harm our country far more. And Republicans who throw up roadblocks will be hurt most of all.

*Read more from E.J. Dionne's archive, follow him on Twitter or subscribe to his updates on Facebook.*



## Robbins : Donald Trump targeted by intelligence leaks

James S.

Robbins, Opinion columnist

5-6 minutes

Published 10:03 a.m. ET May 17, 2017 | Updated 19 hours ago

Protesters at the White House on May 10, 2017. (Photo: Jim Watson, AFP/Getty Images)

President Trump's national security advisor H.R. McMaster said Tuesday that "our national security has been put at risk by those violating confidentiality and those

releasing information to the press," which puts Americans at risk. He has a point.

Lieutenant General McMaster was responding to an imbroglio that began with Trump's meeting last week with Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Ambassador to the U.S. Sergey Kislyak. This in itself — a publicly announced meeting between the chief executive and high ranking Russian officials — seems to qualify as a controversy in some quarters, since the self-styled resistance is in the midst of the biggest anti-Russian hysteria since the McCarthy era. During the meeting, Trump discussed an Islamic State plot to use weaponized laptop computers to bring down commercial aircraft traveling from the Mideast and Europe. Days later *The Washington Post* printed a breathless article about President Trump's supposedly "reckless" intelligence disclosures.

Note that the article said that it was "unlikely that his disclosures broke the law." As well, it is the stated policy of the United States to work with Russia against common threats like ISIS. This was also the policy of the Obama

administration, which *The Washington Post* reported in 2016. The laptop-bomb plot has been widely known for some time. In March, the U.S. and the United Kingdom banned passengers departing from ten Middle Eastern airports from carrying laptops and other larger electronic devices. Last week, the Department of Homeland Security confirmed that the ban might be extended to countries in Europe as well. As *The New York Times* reported, "The ban was put in place after intelligence showed that the Islamic State was developing a bomb that could be hidden in portable electronic devices."

So why the ruckus? The key bit of information that one *Post* source — "a former senior U.S. counterterrorism official who also worked closely with members of the Trump national security team" — found most offensive was revealing the city where the bomb-making is taking place. "The idea of sharing it at this level of granularity with the Russians is troubling," the source said. The *Post* did not reveal the name of the location, but presumably ISIS already knows where it is. So, if anyone was placing sources and methods in

danger it was the anonymous intelligence official who put a neon sign on the key bit of information that ISIS should be paying attention to. Good job.

On Tuesday, *The New York Times* added to the mess by reporting that Israel was the source of the information about the laptop plot. There is no way to know if this is true because the *Times* article, like the *Post* article, quotes anonymous sources and offers no other form of evidence. The most compelling reason to believe the story is that the president is about to travel to Israel, so whoever was behind the article can be assumed to be stirring up trouble prior to the official visit. As the *Times* noted, "the revelation adds a potential diplomatic complication to the episode." However, Trump has nothing to do with leaking this bit of sensitive national security information; it is totally on the head of the anonymous sources, who committed a felony in the process.

#### **POLICING THE USA: A look at race, justice, media**

Whether you blame these leaks on the denizens of the deep state or the shallow reporters who work with

them, it is clear that some people are in the wrong line of work. Those who feel that it is their duty to criminally reveal secret information in the interests of hobbling the president should reexamine their priorities and their commitment to public service. The country would be better off without them. As for reporters, a poll by Emerson College in February showed that more people trust the president than the press. And Gallup says that regard for the media is at an new low. Rather than doubling-down on their bitter anti-Trump narrative, reporters might ask themselves if they are more committed to reporting news, or creating needless and dangerous controversy.

*James S. Robbins, a member of USA TODAY's Board of Contributors, has taught at the National Defense University and the Marine Corps University and served as a special assistant in the office of the secretary of defense in the George W. Bush administration. He is author of This Time We Win: Revisiting the Tet Offensive.*

## **The New York Times**

4-5 minutes

The aides most at risk may be Paul Manafort and Mike Flynn, and NBC is reporting that multiple subpoenas have been issued for records involving them.

In addition, The Washington Post reported Wednesday on a remarkable recording in which House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy declared last June that he believed that Putin finances Trump. Talking with House Speaker Paul Ryan and other leaders, McCarthy said, "I think Putin pays" Trump. When people laughed, McCarthy quickly added, "Swear to God!"

Ryan swore those present to secrecy. "No leaks," Ryan said. "This is how we know we're a real family here."

When The Post asked Ryan and McCarthy about the statements, their offices flatly denied them. Informed that The Post had a recording, they backtracked and

## **Kristof : Dangerous Times for Trump and the Nation**

Nicholas Kristof

suggested it was a joke.

If it's not humor, this is extraordinary: The Republican House leadership suggested that Putin was keeping Trump on his payroll and that this must be kept secret — even as they thundered about Hillary Clinton's emails!

(An aside: Thank God for the battle unfolding between The Washington Post and The New York Times. This is the best kind of newspaper war, keeping America straight. I've been very critical of media coverage of the presidential campaign, but the rigorous coverage of Trump since he took office has made me proud to be a journalist. And thanks to all those citizens who have subscribed to news outlets in recent months, recognizing that subscriptions are the price for a democracy.)

Yet there are dangers ahead. One is that America will be incapacitated and paralyzed by Mueller's investigation and the suspicions — this partly explains the stock market's big fall on Wednesday — and foreign powers may take advantage of this to undertake their own mischief. I would worry about

Russia in both Ukraine and the Baltic countries, and we must make clear that we will work with allies to respond in kind.

Another danger is the risk of an erratic, embattled, paranoid leader at home who feels that he may be going down the tubes anyway. In domestic policy, presidents are constrained by Congress and the courts about what damage they can cause, but in foreign policy a president has a largely free hand — and the ability to launch nuclear strikes that would pretty much destroy the world.

In 1974, as Richard Nixon's presidency was collapsing, he was drinking heavily and aides worried that he was becoming unstable. Fearing what might go wrong, Nixon's defense secretary, James Schlesinger, secretly instructed the military not to carry out any White House order to use nuclear weapons unless confirmed by him or Henry Kissinger.

This was unconstitutional. And wise.

Schlesinger also prepared secret plans to deploy troops in Washington in the event of

problems with the presidential succession.

We don't know how Trump will respond in the coming months, and let's all hope for smooth sailing. But as with Schlesinger's steps, it's wise to be prepared.

There have been calls for Trump aides to resign rather than ruin their reputations, but I hope the grown-ups — H. R. McMaster, Jim Mattis, Dina Powell, John Kelly, Rex Tillerson — grit their teeth and stick it out. The White House has never needed more adult supervision.

The cabinet has the constitutional power to remove a president by majority vote under the 25th Amendment (if the president protests, this must be confirmed by two-thirds of each chamber of Congress). Such a vote is unlikely, but in the event of a crisis like the one Schlesinger envisioned, it would be essential.

I hope that cabinet members are keeping one another's cellphone numbers handy in case an emergency meeting becomes necessary for our nation.



n More stories by Noah Feldman

## **Feldman : Special Counsel Can Examine Trump From All Angles**

@NoahRFeldman

6-7 minutes

Law

History shows that Robert Mueller's investigation might not end up where it starts.



by

17 mai 2017 à 22:40 UTC-4

Former FBI Director Robert Mueller's appointment by the Department of Justice as special counsel on Wednesday puts him in charge of investigating ties between Russia and the Donald Trump campaign. But if history is any guide, that won't be the most important part of his inquiry. The letter appointing Mueller also authorizes him to examine and prosecute "any matters that arose or may arise directly from the investigation."

The key words are "any" and "arise" -- remember them. Together they confer exceedingly broad authority, more than enough to let Mueller follow his investigation wherever it leads. Don't forget Ken Starr's investigation of President Bill Clinton, which began with the dud lead of the Whitewater scandal and ended with Monica Lewinsky and impeachment.

The lesson of modern inquiries into presidential wrongdoing is that the underlying suspicions that trigger the investigation aren't usually what brings the president to the brink of impeachment or beyond.

The document naming Archibald Cox special prosecutor wasn't limited to the Watergate break-in. It gave him authority to investigate "all offenses arising out of the 1972 election, and all allegations involving the president, the White House staff or presidential appointments." Cox had negotiated it with Attorney General-designate Elliot Richardson.

Ultimately, it wasn't the break-in or other illegalities

in the 1972 election campaign that doomed Nixon. It was the coverup, which itself was substantiated by the White House tapes that the counsel subpoenaed and the U.S. Supreme Court ordered Nixon to hand over.

Ken Starr's Whitewater investigation had even broader range. Under the independent counsel law that was passed after Watergate and Nixon's firing of Cox, a specially constituted body of three federal judges had the authority to name the counsel and specify his or her jurisdiction. The original investigation focused on Clinton's financial dealings.

In 1998, Starr's office learned that Lewinsky was trying to influence testimony in the otherwise unconnected Paula Jones lawsuit against Clinton. Starr went to Attorney General Janet Reno, who in turn sent him to the three judges.

They authorized Starr "to investigate to the maximum extent authorized [by the independent counsel law] whether Monica Lewinsky or others suborned perjury, obstructed justice, intimidated witnesses, or otherwise violated federal law ... in dealing with witnesses, potential witnesses, attorneys, or others concerning the civil case Jones v. Clinton."

Thus, the Lewinsky investigation grew out of the fact that Starr was investigating Clinton. That it was nothing to do with Whitewater didn't matter.

Arguably, Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein's letter to Mueller attempts to limit the scope of the investigation by saying that further matters to be investigated must arise "directly" from the original

order. It's plausible to say that the Lewinsky matter didn't arise "directly" from the Whitewater investigation, although it certainly arose from it.

In practice, however, how "directly" one part of an investigation grows from another is in the eye of the beholder. And the beholder here will be Mueller.

Rosenstein could in theory order Mueller to hold off on a line of inquiry that was too indirect. But that would most likely lead Mueller to resign, which would in turn trigger Saturday Night Massacre comparisons.

As for Mueller himself, he's a long-time prosecutor, former head of the criminal division of the Department of Justice and former director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. That means he thinks like a prosecutor. And all prosecutors know that an investigation needs to be pursued broadly in order to maximize the chances of getting leverage and proving guilt.

In the most extreme cases, prosecutors are usually comfortable with convicting a target for a more minor crime if that is all that can be proved. The archetypal instance is Al Capone, convicted of tax fraud instead of the gangland murders that couldn't be proved beyond a reasonable doubt.

Mueller, with his reputation for fairness, won't go on any fishing expeditions. But he will certainly have to look into the firing of FBI Director James Comey and the president's reported request to Comey to drop the investigation of former National Security Adviser Michael Flynn. After all, the Flynn

investigation is connected to Russia, which is the core of Mueller's charge.

And Mueller should also be able to look into Flynn's paid work on behalf of Turkey -- because it's connected to the Trump request from Comey.

Mueller will, of course, look into Trump's campaign staff and associates and their connections to Russia. That will extend to current White House staff who interacted with Russia during the campaign, the transition and the Trump presidency so far.

The point is that an investigation inevitably takes on a life of its own. Mueller isn't out to get Trump. And he has the object lesson of Starr's overreach in view. But he will follow this investigation where it leads -- which might not be back to Russia.

Ultimately, then, even if Mueller finds that the Trump campaign didn't knowingly collude or coordinate with the Russian attempt to influence the presidential election, that may not be the end of the matter for Trump and his team. There can be coverup wrongdoing without an underlying crime. And if there is, Mueller will find it.

This column does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the editorial board or Bloomberg LP and its owners.

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## Bernstein : Trump-Russia Scandal Demands a Senate Select Committee, Too

@jbview More stories by Jonathan Bernstein

7-8 minutes

Congress

The special counsel is focused on crimes, but only Congress can lay out the full story to the American people.

by

17 mai 2017 à 22:42 UTC-4

Part of a package.

Photographer: Win McNamee/Getty Images

The obvious thing about the new special counsel named to investigate the Trump-Russia

scandal is that President Trump entirely brought this upon himself -- first, by firing FBI Director James Comey, then by claiming it was all the Justice Department's idea, and then by going on TV and linking it to the scandal.

Of course, if press reports are correct and Trump had previously interfered with the investigation, then it's even more a case of a self-inflicted wound. At the very least, Comey's memo wouldn't have become public as soon as it did.

That is, if there was a cover-up going on here, it's Trump himself who undermined it. By today, there was really just no other choice for Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, who was confirmed less than a month ago by

Republicans and most Democrats as a paragon of law enforcement professionalism. After all, the way Trump initially used him as an excuse for the Comey action made it look as if Rosenstein was in on a cover-up, and appointing an independent investigation was the only way to get himself out of harm's way.

That said: As was the case back in 1973, the price for appointing a special counsel is time. The new office will have to be set up and brought up to speed, and so even if the FBI agents who have been working the case are detailed to Special Counsel Robert Mueller's new team, some delay will be a necessary consequence. Indeed, the history of special counsels is that they take their time. The Iran-

Contra independent counsel still had important officials under indictment from the 1986 scandal when George H.W. Bush issued pardons in 1992; the most recent special counsel, who investigated the Plame affair, took about four years to get a conviction of Scooter Libby.

And the biggest limitation of special counsels is that they are set up to, well, prosecute people for specific crimes. 1 That's important in this case for two reasons. First, because some of the accusations against Trump are not necessarily criminal violations, even though they would be (if true) violations abuses of power or otherwise impeachable offenses. And second, because this scandal has important public policy components -- about Russian



interference in U.S. elections -- which need a thorough examination even if there is no wrongdoing by any Americans at all.

In other words: Congress still needs to be involved. And a Senate select committee is still the best option. Right now, multiple House and Senate committees are calling witnesses and holding hearings on different aspects of the case. That's okay, but it's unlikely to get to the bottom of things. Only a fully-staffed select committee dedicated to the questions raised by this scandal can do that. Here's what it could look like, as I wrote in March:

It should be small, like the seven-member Watergate Senate Select Committee, and given sufficient budget, staff, and scope to fully explore both the general topic of Russian interference in the 2016 election and the actions of the

Trump campaign and associates of Trump. A 4-3 split would be acceptable, as long as the Republicans have a reputation for independence; an example might be Ben Sasse of Nebraska as Chair, with Tennessee's Lamar Alexander, Maine's Susan Collins, and South Carolina's Lindsey Graham as members.

Such a committee could call witnesses in a rational order in order to lay out the full story, and could organize the testimony so that the story is as coherent as possible.

Why Senate and not House? Because there are several sufficiently independent Republican Senators that a committee could be credible, and because frankly the odds of the House acting are very small anyway. Not a joint committee, as was used during

Iran-Contra, because as Watergate demonstrated smaller committees are better -- we don't need two days of opening statements by dozens of politicians looking to break through and make their name this way. And not a commission, for the reasons Susan Hennessey and Benjamin Wittes explain here, not the least of which is that a commission requires legislation which the president could veto while a select committee only requires one chamber to pass a resolution.

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I should add: We still don't know what if anything really happened that rises to deserve criminal charges, resignations, or other such consequences. On the other hand, it's also possible that

there's an ongoing cover-up of things only the wildest theories so far have speculated about. All we really can say is that the Trump Administration can't be trusted to investigate itself. Not after the news of this last week.

So the next big question is whether independent Republicans will continue to put pressure on Congress, and especially the Senate, to act. Only with both the special counsel and a congressional investigation in place will Congress demonstrate its commitment to the rule of law, whatever the investigators may find.

This column does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the editorial board or Bloomberg LP and its owners.

**The  
New York  
Times**

## Yoo : Forget Watergate. Think Iran-Contra.

John Yoo

6-7 minutes

Both Republicans and Democrats have declared a desire to get to the bottom of the conversation. Representative Jason Chaffetz, Republican of Utah, promised to subpoena the Comey memos, and the Democratic minority leader, Nancy Pelosi of California, said that such a "brazen attempt to shut down the F.B.I.'s investigation of Michael Flynn is an assault on the rule of law that is fundamental to our democracy." Senator John McCain, Republican of Arizona, commented, "I think it's reaching the point where it's of Watergate size and scale."

Members of President Trump's staff leaving Air Force One on Wednesday. Doug Mills/The New York Times

But standing alone, Mr. Trump's comments do not unambiguously show an intent to obstruct justice. While he set out his favorable opinion of Mr. Flynn, he stopped short of ordering Mr. Comey to drop the investigation. Mr. Trump's words carried an implicit recognition that Mr. Comey would make the final call.

Unlike in the Watergate case, there is no evidence that the president ordered witnesses to lie, destroyed evidence or tried to block F.B.I. agents from doing their job. At least, no evidence yet. Career F.B.I. and Department of Justice officials will not only continue to pursue their investigation into Mr. Flynn but are

also likely to redouble their efforts, as Mr. Mueller's appointment suggests.

But pursuing the president for obstruction of justice is likely to fail, not just for lack of facts, but on constitutional grounds as well.

Article II of the Constitution gives the president the duty to "take care that the laws be faithfully executed." With this clause, the framers vested in the president the authority to oversee all federal law enforcement. As Alexander Hamilton observed in Federalist 70, "good government" requires "energy in the executive," and a vigorous president must ensure "the steady administration of the laws." According to this original constitutional design, President Trump may order the end of any investigation, even one into his own White House.

Until 1999, the modern solution to the problem of policing the White House was to create an independent counsel. But the cure was worse than the disease, diverting executive power outside constitutional controls and sapped the presidency of energy. Frequently, Justice Antonin Scalia wrote, an effort to undermine the Constitution's separation of powers "will come before the court clad, so to speak, in sheep's clothing." But in the case of the independent prosecutor, he wrote, "this wolf comes as a wolf." After presidents from both parties had suffered at the hands of independent counsels in the 1980s and '90s, Congress allowed the statute to expire.

The type of special prosecutor just appointed by the acting attorney

general, Rod Rosenstein, differs from the independent counsels created under the expired act and is significantly weaker. Mr. Mueller's role will be governed by Justice Department rules, which can always be overridden by the president.

The larger defect of independent counsels, of either type, is that they had the convenient effect of relieving Congress of its constitutional duty to constrain an abusive president. If Mr. Trump has truly impeded a valid investigation, Congress's initial action should be refusal to enact his legislative agenda or fund White House priorities. If these measures fail, Congress can turn to impeachment, which allows for the removal of a president for "high crimes and misdemeanors."

Contrary to common wisdom, impeachment does not require the president to commit a crime but instead refers to significant political mistakes or even incompetence. This was the framers' intent — as Hamilton explained in Federalist 65, impeachment was to tackle "the misconduct of public men" or "the abuse or violation of some public trust." Such offenses, he wrote, "are of a nature which may with peculiar propriety be denominated political, as they relate chiefly to injuries done immediately to the society itself." After the Civil War, for instance, the Senate came within one vote of removing President Andrew Johnson for undermining Reconstruction.

The first step would be for Congress to form a special committee to investigate the Russia controversy

and the Trump-Comey affair. To forestall this, Mr. Trump should look to the example of his predecessor Ronald Reagan. The Iran-contra scandal nearly destroyed Reagan's presidency and could have led to his impeachment. After the revelations that his national security staff had traded arms for hostages held by Iran and transferred funds to the Nicaraguan contras, Reagan cleaned house and agreed to reforms of government oversight of covert action. After that, his presidency not only survived but also thrived.

President Trump should emulate Reagan. He should fire his chief of staff, Reince Priebus, and his chief strategist, Stephen Bannon, and all the others who brought the chaos of the presidential campaign into the White House. He can replace them with more experienced government hands, much as he replaced Mr. Flynn with H. R. McMaster. He can appoint an independent presidential commission to get to the bottom of the Russia affair, copying the Bush inquiry into Iraq's W.M.D. program.

Most important, Mr. Trump should begin deferring to Congress on domestic policy and instead focus on national security and foreign affairs, where the framers wanted the presidency's structural advantages of unity, speed and energy to shine. The alternative is to spend his term in office floundering from one self-inflicted controversy to the next, exhausting himself amid a rising flood of investigations.

## Collins : Trump's Version of Keeping Us Safe

Gail Collins

4-5 minutes

But no, nobody has been persecuted as much as Donald Trump, despite all he's done for us.

The president also took time out from extolling the Coast Guard's service to run through the "tremendous amount" his administration has already accomplished. "We've saved the Second Amendment," he bragged. This was presumably his successful fight to make sure that people who are so mentally disturbed they can't handle their own Social Security benefits still are guaranteed the right to purchase lethal weapons.

But the topic of the day at the Coast Guard Academy was protecting America. And since nobody — particularly Trump — can talk about anything except Trump, let's look at what the president has done recently to assure our security.

Right now we have no head of the F.B.I. Most of the U.S. attorney

offices — the nerve center of America's war on terrorism and corruption — are without leaders. In March Trump demanded the Obama-era federal prosecutors leave immediately, and he has not nominated a single replacement.

Senator Dianne Feinstein, the top Democrat on the Judiciary Committee, says she was assured by White House officials that "the transition would be done in an orderly fashion to preserve continuity."

"Clearly, this is not the case," Feinstein understated.

Meanwhile National Security Adviser Mike Flynn turned out to be a mess on many fronts, and was fired for lying. His successor, H. R. McMaster, came into the job with a stellar military background and then quickly became an embarrassment. He's just another spokesman trying to cover up the president's messes with carefully worded statements, only to be contradicted by a Trumpian tweet.

Americans keep asking themselves why there isn't anyone in the administration trying to guide the president away from his endless verbal errors, but as Glenn Thrush and Maggie Haberman reported in The Times, McMaster has indeed tried. The president, in gratitude, refers to him as "a pain."

Anyway, Trump misses getting national security advice from Mike Flynn. Who was secretly taking large payments for representing the interests of Turkey while he was a part of Trump's campaign, and also had a very questionable and profitable relationship with Russia.

"He is a good guy. I hope you can let this go," Trump told now-departed F.B.I. director James Comey. Have you ever seen a greater judge of character? People, do not take a job in the Trump administration, even if he offers you secretary of vacations. The very fact that he likes you will make everybody else distrust you.

Also on the top of the Trump food chain when it comes to protecting our security: Attorney General Jeff

Sessions, a right-wing former senator whose greatest achievement so far has been to return the federal criminal justice system to a brain-dead policy of imposing long mandatory sentences on people convicted of nonviolent drug crimes.

Since Sessions recused himself from any investigations relating to Russia and the Trump campaign — a topic that currently covers virtually everything — a lot of the burden was falling on his deputy, Rod Rosenstein, who has been on the job for three weeks. Rosenstein, the ultimate example of that Trump employment rule, was quickly telling people he didn't really care about his personal reputation.

On the plus side, Rosenstein has appointed a special counsel to look into ... the stuff. That's Robert Mueller, a very serious choice, who was in fact the last F.B.I. director not to be fired by Donald Trump.

And today we've got a new crew of Coast Guard ensigns, ready to serve. If only we had a president half as useful.

## Henninger : Let Trump Be Trump

Daniel Henninger

5-6 minutes

May 17, 2017 6:50 p.m. ET

After the past two weeks, one must ask: How many parallel universes can the U.S. political system endure?

Let us enumerate the celestial bodies traveling along independent orbits just now: Donald Trump, Sean Spicer, the Beltway press chorus, the White House's Borgias, 2018's at-risk congressional Republicans, the Schumer Democrats, the mosquito clouds of social media, and the various people working in what little exists so far of the Trump government.

One more parallel universe deserves mention: the Trump vote, which decided the 2016 election. Oh, *them*.

The Trump vote sits out in the country watching the Washington spectacle of all things Comey, all things Russian, rumors of White House firings, and the president's tweetstorms.

Polls suggest most Trump voters aren't much moved by these events. After surviving the 2016 election, the Trump voter remains fixed on achieving the Trump agenda—the

economy, health care, taxes, education, America's global standing, financial reform, immigration, infrastructure, trade. They are willing to put up with a lot, because they know that President Donald J. Trump is the only vessel they've got.

Trump voters, however, should not underestimate the dangers of the current Washington circus. It isn't a sideshow. It could pull down him and them.

If Republicans running in 23 House districts carried by Hillary Clinton, or districts barely carried by Mr. Trump, distance themselves from the White-House mayhem, vote margins for the Trump legislative agenda will be at risk. Wednesday's down stock market was a canary in that mineshaft.

If Democrats win back the House in 2018, they will commence impeachment proceedings against Mr. Trump and his presidency will lose its ability to function for half its term.

Something's gotta give in Washington. It's not going to be Donald Trump.

The rumors of a White House shake-up include the suggestion that Mr. Trump may fire Sean Spicer, Reince Priebus, communications director Mike

Dubke, counsel Don McGahn and consigliere Steve Bannon. What difference would that make?

No conceivable chief of staff would sign on now without a commitment from the president of full control over White House operations and messaging. Donald Trump won't cede that. He believes what he is doing is fine, as he's said in multiple interviews. So let's consider something completely different.

There is a reality at the center of this matter that has to be faced: Donald Trump doesn't like intermediaries. He abhors anything that gets between him and the public. The problem is not Sean Spicer's performance as press secretary. The problem is positioning anything between Donald Trump's mind and the outside world.

When Mr. Trump says he is moving too fast and doing too much for any of his staff to keep up, we should take him at his word. He wants direct access. So, create a system that gives him exactly that.

The answer is to cut out the middlemen. Let Trump be Trump.

Donald Trump should serve as his own press secretary and maybe his own chief of staff. I would even propose that the Trump presidency go live to the world, with a camera

crew recording the president and his moment-to-moment thoughts in real time every day. President Trump as messenger in chief.

A month ago, this proposal would have been read as satire. But it is now close to the manifest reality of the Trump White House.

If Mr. Trump says or tweets something that causes a stir, such as pulling out of Nafta, let him talk to reporters on his terms to explain what he meant. If he changes his mind in minutes, hours or days, he can turn to the real-time camera and do it. But he takes responsibility for the Trump message.

Mr. Trump managing the message flow himself won't eliminate all the static, but it would remove the press spending days pounding intermediaries like Sean Spicer to produce answers the president hasn't shared with his people or isn't ready to share. If the Trump presidency is going to produce static on a scale of 1 to 100, why not live with his 50 rather than the current 90?

Think of the Trump presidency as a Wikipedia entry, a project of constant updating, correction and revision. Once people get used to Donald Trump as a wiki, with him as the main editor, things might calm down. For Congress and the

legislative agenda, midcourse corrections would become the daily routine, rather than media melodramas. The goal is *relative* stability.

There are all sorts of objections to a real-time Trump.

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

### Rove : The Trump Tumult Is Too Much

Karl Rove

5-6 minutes

May 17, 2017 6:50 p.m. ET

Firing FBI Director James Comey was fully within President Trump's rights. The question is whether that decision was wise or will end up crippling his presidency.

First, the firing itself. As Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein detailed in a May 9 memo, Mr. Comey overstepped his authority last July when he announced that Hillary Clinton should not be prosecuted over her private email server. That decision belonged to the attorney general. Then Mr. Comey proceeded to trash Mrs. Clinton, which Mr. Rosenstein called "a textbook example of what federal prosecutors and agents are taught not to do."

That's not all. Last October, when Mr. Comey announced the FBI had reopened the Clinton investigation, he violated "longstanding policy" to "refrain from publicizing non-public information." Yet Mr. Comey showed no remorse. The week before his firing he told Congress that even in hindsight he "wouldn't have done it any differently."

All that said, the execution of his firing could not have been worse. For one thing, the president looked petty. Instead of bringing Mr. Comey to the Oval Office to dismiss him, Mr. Trump dispatched his longtime

bodyguard to White House headquarters with a terse letter. Apparently, no one at the White House knew Mr. Comey was on a trip to the West Coast.

Discontinuity defines the Trump personality, and this won't change.

bodyguard to FBI headquarters with a terse letter. Apparently, no one at the White House knew Mr. Comey was on a trip to the West Coast.

Keeping White House communications staffers in the dark until shortly before Mr. Comey's firing made the action look ill-prepared and hasty. After the president was pummeled for hours in the evening's news coverage, three aides were finally dispatched to face a ravenous pack of journalists.

At least they had a rationale for the firing, drawn from Mr. Rosenstein's memo. But then Mr. Trump added to his credibility problems by saying he already had decided to fire the FBI director before receiving the memo.

The president's timing was terrible: He axed the man atop the agency investigating Russian meddling in America's election a day before Russia's foreign minister arrived in Washington to meet with the president. Then Mr. Trump reportedly shared highly classified material in that meeting, further discombobulating Americans concerned about Moscow's hostility to the U.S.

The White House's problems were soon made worse by another revelation. In January, Mr. Comey reportedly wrote a memo saying that Mr. Trump had urged him to drop the FBI investigation of former White House adviser Mike Flynn. Mr. Trump's adversaries

But if it's all passing through him in real time, then corrections of facts, policy or intent can come earlier and reduce the current period of radioactive fallout.

Let Trump be Trump, for as long as it lasts.

immediately charged obstruction of justice.

Baloney. Because the president is in charge of the executive branch, he does not obstruct justice by questioning if a subordinate should, or shouldn't, pursue a given case. But Mr. Trump still has given Democrats a weapon to bludgeon him, which they'll do with glee.

Now there are reports Mr. Trump is considering removing many top West Wing aides in a "huge reboot." But a shake-up would pile disaster upon disaster without solving the real problem. The mistakes of recent weeks were Mr. Trump's responsibility, not his staff's.

Mr. Comey's firing was the president's decision, executed his way. It was Mr. Trump's words and actions that raised doubts and diminished public confidence. Now isn't the time to fire advisers and communicators willy-nilly. If Mr. Trump is a true leader, he will instead own up to his mistakes, buck up his staff, summon their abilities, and move forward with new discipline on an agenda worthy of America.

At minimum, the president should name an extraordinarily good pick to replace Mr. Comey as FBI director. And he should either confirm his hints of a taping system in the Oval Office or else admit he was trolling us.

Maybe the 70-year-old president is too old to change, and Americans must simply accept his chaotic,

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unpredictable, impulsive nature. But if Mr. Trump can't recognize he's the cause of the turmoil, he risks creating a hard cap on his approval ratings in the low 40s or high 30s. This will drain his power, make it difficult to achieve his agenda, and turn him into a lame duck well before normal. If Mr. Trump can't change his ways, he will fail the people who entrusted him with their hopes.

This presidency has reached a critical moment. For months, true-blue Trump supporters grimaced at tweets and winced at needless controversies, but stood firm. Now many are questioning whether their man is up to the job. Mr. Trump will not restore their confidence with the behavior he's shown so far.

Americans want a president who is steadier, humbler, better disciplined, more honest and fully engaged on creating jobs, paychecks and prosperity—the issues that got Mr. Trump to the White House. The clock is running. Either he changes or he fails.

*Mr. Rove helped organize the political-action committee American Crossroads and is the author of "The Triumph of William McKinley" (Simon & Schuster, 2015).*

Appeared in the May. 18, 2017, print edition as 'The Trump Tumult Is Too Much.'

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

### Donald Trump Meets With Four Candidates to Lead FBI

Rebecca Ballhaus, Del Quentin Wilber

and Aruna Viswanatha

7-8 minutes

Updated May 17, 2017 9:21 p.m. ET

President Donald Trump met with four candidates to lead the Federal Bureau of Investigation, including Acting Director Andrew McCabe and former Sen. Joe Lieberman, the White House said.

Speaking to reporters aboard Air Force One on the trip back to Washington after Mr. Trump's

remarks at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy in Connecticut, press secretary Sean Spicer said the other two candidates Mr. Trump was meeting with were former FBI official Richard McFeely and former Oklahoma Republican Gov. Frank Keating.

Mr. Trump's meetings, which took place at the White House Wednesday afternoon, came as his administration is pressing to quickly pick the next FBI director before the president leaves on a nine-day foreign trip on Friday. Justice Department officials over the weekend held what they described as substantive

discussions with at least eight candidates to lead the bureau.

Sarah Isgur Flores, a Justice Department spokeswoman, said Attorney General Jeff Sessions "has talked to all of" the remaining candidates about the position.

On Tuesday, Sen. John Cornyn (R., Texas), a leading candidate to fill the post, withdrew from consideration. A day earlier, Rep. Trey Gowdy (R., S.C.) also said he didn't want to be considered.

Mr. Trump's firing last week of FBI Director James Comey, as well as the freshly made allegation that Mr. Trump asked Mr. Comey in February to shut down a federal

investigation into his former national security adviser, has raised questions about whether the president was seeking to intervene in the FBI's investigation of his associates' alleged ties to Russia.

Mr. Spicer on Wednesday pushed back on reports about Mr. Trump's February discussion with Mr. Comey, saying: "The president has been very clear that the account that was published is not an accurate description of how the event occurred. I'm not going to give any other comment on that."

Mr. Spicer also declined to answer a question about whether he would support Mr. Comey testifying before



Congress, as he has been invited to do.

"The president is confident in the events that he has maintained and he wants the truth in these investigations to get to the bottom of the situation," Mr. Spicer said. "There are two investigations going on in the House and Senate, and he wants to get to the bottom of this."

Selecting Mr. Lieberman—who served in the Senate as a Democrat and then as an independent, and endorsed Democrat Hillary Clinton in the 2016 election—would allow the White House to characterize the choice as a bipartisan one. Mr. Lieberman, 75 years old, served as attorney general in Connecticut before his election to the Senate in 1988, but has no federal law-enforcement experience, unlike past FBI directors.

Mr. Lieberman works at a law firm whose founder the Trump Organization has referred to as its go-to lawyer. Mark Kasowitz, who founded the firm where Mr. Lieberman worked in 1993 and now serves as a managing partner, has said he would continue to represent the president and his businesses after the inauguration.

A Senate Democratic leadership aide cautioned that the party would push back on tapping a lawmaker to head the FBI,

even a Democrat. "There couldn't be a worse time to take the unprecedented step of handing the FBI over to a politician. That includes Sen. Lieberman," the aide said.

He was the Democratic vice-presidential nominee in 2000 and served four terms in the Senate, where he leaned to the right on defense and fiscal matters. He joined a private law firm after leaving Congress.

Mr. McCabe, 49, served as Mr. Comey's No. 2 and ran the FBI's day-to-day operations. He joined the bureau in 1996 and began his career as an agent in New York City, where he specialized in organized crime.

In 2009, he helped begin a program to research effective interrogation practices after then-President Barack Obama banned waterboarding and other harsh tactics. He led the bureau's Washington field office, one of its most prestigious posts, and was the deputy director from January 2016 until Mr. Comey's departure.

In recent testimony before Congress, he rejected the White House criticism that rank-and-file FBI agents had lost faith in Mr. Comey. "That is not accurate," Mr. McCabe testified, adding that Mr. Comey "enjoyed broad support

within the FBI and still does to this day."

Mr. Keating, 73, served as Oklahoma governor from 1995 through January 2003, and oversaw the state's response to the Oklahoma City federal-building bombing in 1995. He had previously served as U.S. attorney in the Northern District of Oklahoma and was a top Justice Department official under Ronald Reagan.

Mr. McFeely, a former longtime official at the FBI, is now director of investigative services at Ernst & Young, according to his LinkedIn profile. He last served as the senior official in charge of the FBI's criminal and cyber branch.

He started with the bureau in 1990 as a special agent in the Buffalo, N.Y., division, and served as the lead investigator on the Oklahoma City bombing, according to an FBI press release announcing his 2012 appointment. He later supervised the counterterrorism squad in Washington and ran a section within the criminal investigative division at headquarters.

The furor over Mr. Comey's dismissal escalated this week after it was disclosed that the former FBI director had written a memo, after a meeting with Mr. Trump, saying the president asked him to back off an investigation of former National

Security Adviser Michael Flynn. The White House has denied the account.

Mr. Comey has a history of documenting sensitive meetings throughout his career, according to former colleagues, including a 2004 showdown with the White House over a surveillance program.

Minutes after a meeting with then-President George W. Bush, for example, Mr. Comey sent a note to Justice Department colleagues memorializing their one-on-one conversation, according to the book "Angler" by Barton Gellman about former Vice President Dick Cheney.

"The president just took me into his private office for a 15 minute one on one talk. Told him he was being misled and poorly served," Mr. Comey wrote to six colleagues, according to the book. "We had a very full and frank exchange."

Former colleagues said this was a routine practice of Mr. Comey.

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## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Rob Barry, Christopher S. Stewart and Brett Forrest

7-9 minutes

Updated May 17, 2017 11:59 a.m. ET

VEB, a Russian state-run bank under scrutiny by U.S. investigators, financed a deal involving Donald Trump's onetime partner in a Toronto hotel tower at a key moment for the project, according to people familiar with the transaction.

Alexander Shnaider, a Russian-Canadian developer who built the 65-story Trump International Hotel and Tower, put money into the project after receiving hundreds of millions of dollars from a separate asset sale that involved the Russian bank, whose full name is Vnesheconombank.

Mr. Shnaider sold his company's share in a Ukrainian steelmaker for about \$850 million in 2010, according to S&P Global Market Intelligence. According to two people with knowledge of the deal, the buyer, which hasn't been

identified publicly, was an entity acting for the Russian government. VEB initiated the purchase and provided the money, these people say.

U.S. investigators are looking into any ties between Russian financial institutions, Mr. Trump and anyone in his orbit, according to a person familiar with the probe. As part of the investigation, they're examining interactions between Mr. Trump, his associates and VEB, which is now subject to U.S. sanctions, said another person familiar with the matter. The Toronto deal adds a new element to the list of known connections between Mr. Trump's associates and Russia.

After Mr. Shnaider and his partner sold their stake in the steelmaker, Mr. Shnaider injected more money into the Trump Toronto project, which was financially troubled. Mr. Shnaider's lawyer, Symon Zucker, said in an April interview that about \$15 million from the asset sale went into the Trump Toronto project. A day later, he wrote in an email: "I am not able to confirm that any funds" from the deal "went into the Toronto project."

A spokesman for the Trump Organization, the family's real-estate firm, said Mr. Trump had no involvement in any financial dealings with VEB and that the Trump company "merely licensed its brand and manages the hotel and residences." VEB didn't respond to requests for comment.

Mr. Trump has said he has no dealings with Russia. "To the best of my knowledge, no person that I deal with does," he said in February. On Friday, Mr. Trump's lawyers released a two-month-old letter stating that 10 years of his tax returns show little income, investments or debt from Russian sources beyond items already known to the public.

VEB has long been viewed by Russian analysts as a vehicle for the Russian government to fund politically important projects, including the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi. A VEB executive in New York was sentenced to prison last year after pleading guilty to conspiring to act in the U.S. as a Russian agent without notifying U.S. authorities.

In the wake of U.S. intelligence agency findings that Russian government-directed hackers interfered in the 2016 election, several agencies, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation, are conducting a counterintelligence probe into whether Mr. Trump's campaign staff had any contact with Russian officials. Committees in the House of Representatives and the Senate also are investigating the matter. Russian authorities have denied any interference.

At the time of Mr. Shnaider's steelmaker deal, Russian President Vladimir Putin was chairman of VEB's supervisory board, and major deals would have been approved by him, according to a former Russian government official and several Russian government and economic experts. The bank later was placed on the U.S. sanctions list after Russia's intrusion into Ukraine and its annexation of Crimea in 2014. American entities are barred from financial involvement with the bank.

VEB made headlines when it emerged that its chairman met with Mr. Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner in December. A bank



spokesperson has said VEB's leaders met Mr. Kushner and numerous global financial executives as it developed a new strategy for the bank. White House press secretary Sean Spicer has said Mr. Kushner's meeting was part of his role during the Trump transition as the "primary point of contact with foreign government officials."

The Toronto project was billed in 2007 as a joint venture between Mr. Trump and Mr. Shnaider and was projected to cost about 500 million Canadian dollars. Mr. Trump said at the time he would manage the hotel's operations and Mr. Shnaider planned to develop the tower, which also would include condominiums, through his company, Talon International Development Inc.

The project has been dogged by financial problems. In November, it entered insolvency proceedings, and a judge in March approved its sale.

Alan Garten, the Trump Organization's general counsel, said the company "was not the

owner, developer or seller" of the project. While The Wall Street Journal and others reported in 2011 and 2012 that Mr. Trump had a minor ownership stake in it, Mr. Garten now says Mr. Trump "did not hold" equity and had no involvement with the financing.

The Trump Toronto Hotel Management Corp. has received at least \$611,000 in fees from the project since 2015, federal financial-disclosure forms filed last May show. The forms don't disclose the company's total income from the deal.

Shortly after the project broke ground in 2007, about 85% of the units were presold. During the financial crisis, some buyers pulled out and others were unable to get financing, receivership documents show. Midland Resources Holding Ltd., then owned by Mr. Shnaider and a partner, was on the hook for cost overruns, the documents show.

Midland Resources had acquired its stake in the Ukrainian steelmaker, called Zaporizhstal, for about \$70 million after the collapse of the

Soviet Union. The 2010 transaction to sell it was opaque. Midland transferred ownership of its portion of the steelmaker to the unnamed buyer through five offshore companies, according to Mr. Shnaider's lawyer and court documents.

The idea for the deal was brought to a top VEB executive by a former Ukrainian government official, according to an investment banker familiar with what happened. Although the buyer wasn't named, a steel trader with knowledge of the deal said VEB itself ended up with control of Midland's share of the steelmaker. At the time, Russian entities saw gaining control of large industrial assets in Ukraine as having strategic value to Russian political interests in the future, said another investment banker with knowledge of the deal.

Mr. Zucker, Mr. Shnaider's lawyer, said Midland Resources "has never had any relationship with VEB" and "does not dictate where their purchasers borrow funds." He declined to identify the buyer, citing confidentiality provisions, other than

to say it was a "Ukrainian industrial group."

Mr. Shnaider's companies continued to pump money into the Toronto tower as it struggled to stay afloat, according to his lawyer and later court documents. Later, Mr. Shnaider became embroiled in a legal battle with Mr. Trump's companies over management issues. The Trump Organization declined to comment.

In November, a Canadian judge placed the tower into receivership. Mr. Trump's company was owed C\$116,165.72, and Mr. Shnaider's company as much as C\$105 million, court documents show.

Recently, a judge approved the sale of the building to a California-based investment firm for about \$220 million.

Appeared in the May. 18, 2017, print edition as 'Moscow Bank Aided Trump Partner's Deal.'

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

3-4 minutes

Updated May 17, 2017 11:27 a.m. ET

Chelsea Manning, the former Army intelligence analyst convicted of leaking government secrets, walked free from a Kansas military prison Wednesday after serving seven years of a 35-year sentence.

President Barack Obama commuted the remainder of Ms. Manning's sentence in his waning days in office, causing outcry from some Republicans and others who said it lessened the severity of the broad leaks.

The American Civil Liberties Union, which represents Ms. Manning, confirmed Wednesday that she had safely left the prison, as did an

## Chelsea Manning Released From Military Prison

Sara Randazzo

Army spokeswoman.

In 2010, Ms. Manning—then known as Pfc. Bradley Manning—released a trove of information to the website Wikileaks and elsewhere that included video footage of a U.S. Army helicopter in Iraq firing on a group of people who turned out to include Reuters journalists, incident reports from Afghanistan and Iraq, and thousands of secret State Department cables.

Three years later, Ms. Manning was found guilty at a court-martial of leaking hundreds of thousands of documents, one of the biggest classified leaks in U.S. history. In August 2013, soon after being sentenced to 35 years in prison, she said she wanted to begin hormone therapy and be known by the name Chelsea. The Army agreed in 2016 to allow her to receive medical treatment for gender dysphoria.

"Whatever is ahead of me is far more important than the past," Ms.

Manning said Wednesday in a statement released by the ACLU. "I'm figuring things out right now—which is exciting, awkward, fun, and all new for me."

In her first posts on social media after leaving prison, Ms. Manning displayed a photo of her feet with the comment "First steps of freedom!!"

Mr. Obama shortened Ms. Manning's sentence in January along with those of hundreds of other inmates, including many nonviolent drug offenders serving lengthy prison terms. The decision prompted criticism from Republicans including House Speaker Paul Ryan (R., Wis.), who said Mr. Obama created "a dangerous precedent that those who compromise our national security won't be held accountable for their crimes."

Senior administration officials said at the time that Mr. Obama

considered Ms. Manning's crimes to be serious, but weighed that she had faced justice and took responsibility for what she had done. Ms. Manning twice tried to commit suicide while in prison.

Chase Strangio, a staff attorney with the ACLU who represents Ms. Manning, said Wednesday that "through extended periods of solitary confinement and up against the government's insistence on denying her medical care and existence as a woman, Chelsea has emerged with grace, resilience, and an inspiring amount of love for others."

Army spokeswoman Lt. Col. Jennifer Johnson said Wednesday that Ms. Manning is in an unpaid, active-duty status that gives her access to some medical benefits and other privileges.

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## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

5-6 minutes

Updated May 18, 2017 12:30 a.m. ET

WASHINGTON—During the opening months of the Trump administration, immigration agents significantly increased the pace of

## Immigration Arrests Rose Sharply in Trump's First 100 Days

Laura Meckler

arrests of people suspected of being in the U.S. illegally, while the share of those arrested who had no criminal record rose markedly, immigration officials said on Wednesday.

Overall, the number of arrests jumped by more than a third and the portion involving people without criminal records increased to 26% during the first 100 days of the

administration, compared with 14% in the same period a year earlier, according to Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

The figures quantify the stepped-up enforcement promised by President Donald Trump and his aides, who say they are enforcing the law as Congress intended.

To immigration advocates, the new data confirm accounts they have publicized about otherwise law-abiding undocumented immigrants being arrested and processed for deportation, and view the effort as a way to both frighten people and tear apart families.

The statistics represent a marked change from the final two years of the Obama administration. But the

number of arrests remains well below figures from earlier in that administration, before a 2014 presidential directive instructed immigration agents to focus on recent border-crossers and people with serious criminal records.

During the last two years of the Obama administration, most people in the U.S. illegally but without criminal records were all-but safe from removal. Prior to that, deportations had increased so significantly that immigration activists dubbed President Barack Obama the "deporter-in-chief."

While Mr. Obama winced at that title, the Trump administration was eager to advertise the increase in deportations since Inauguration Day. ICE created a website to announce the new data with a large headline touting the increase in arrests. The headline was laid over video showing an arrest under way.

"ICE will no longer exempt any class of individuals from removal proceedings if

they are found to be in the country illegally," the agency said on the new webpage.

Thomas Homan, acting director of ICE, said his agency still prioritizes arresting people with criminal records, but officers will arrest others in the U.S. without authorization if they encounter them during their work.

The new ICE figures show that its officers arrested nearly 42,000 people during the first 100 days of the Trump administration, including nearly 11,000 without criminal records. That is up from just over 31,000 in the same time span during 2016.

Separately, ICE data show that the number of people actually deported during this period dropped from 2016. There is a delay between arrest and deportation while cases are processed.

Immigration advocates said the numbers confirm what they have seen on the ground, and said the administration appears to be trying

to frighten illegal immigrants, perhaps hoping that they will leave the U.S. voluntarily.

"ICE's newly released data confirms the heartbreaking stories we are reading everywhere are not isolated instances," said Brian Root, quantitative analyst at Human Rights Watch.

Kamal Essaheb, policy director for the National Immigration Law Center, said he suspects the numbers will rise in coming months, and in particular if Mr. Trump succeeds in tripling the number of ICE agents, as he has pledged. "What we're seeing is the tip of the iceberg," he said.

Supporters of tougher immigration rules welcomed the rising numbers. "Considering the collapse in enforcement during the last few years of the Obama administration, I'd say this turnaround is long-overdue good news," said Mark Krikorian of the Center for Immigration Studies.

On Thursday, the House Judiciary Committee plans to consider legislation that would increase enforcement by withholding federal grant money from local jurisdictions that don't detain people whom ICE wants to arrest, and by increasing the number of ICE agents by 12,500—even more than Mr. Trump requested, among other things.

Mr. Homan said more officers are needed, saying the number of deportations each year is a fraction of the estimated 11 million people living in the U.S. illegally. "We certainly could use resources to...more actively work all these cases," he said.

**Write to** Laura Meckler at [laura.meckler@wsj.com](mailto:laura.meckler@wsj.com)

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gtonpostopinions

4-5 minutes

The Post's View

Opinion

**Opinion** A column or article in the Opinions section (in print, this is known as the Editorial Pages).

By Editorial Board

The Post's View

Opinion

**Opinion** A column or article in the Opinions section (in print, this is known as the Editorial Pages).

May 17 at 8:08 PM

PRESIDENT TRUMP has empaneled a commission to investigate voter fraud. The real fraud is the commission itself.

The Presidential Advisory Commission on Election Integrity is to be led by Vice President Pence and Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach. Mr. Kobach, a

## Editorial : Trump's commission on voter fraud is, well, fraudulent

<https://www.facebook.com/washingtonpostopinions>

Republican, is a longtime champion of voter suppression laws who seconded as "absolutely correct" the president's fabricated assertion that Hillary Clinton's victory in the popular vote, which she won by nearly 3 million ballots, was a result of "millions of people who voted illegally."

Mr. Kobach is notorious for erecting impediments to the ballot box — specifically, ones that would disproportionately discourage and deter minority and other Democratic-leaning voters. His presence as the commission's vice chair — Mr. Pence's other responsibilities make it likely that Mr. Kobach will be the panel's driving force — makes a farce of the idea that the commission's work will be dispassionate, fair and clear-eyed.

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More likely, given Mr. Kobach's record, is that it will endeavor to create further pretexts for GOP-dominated state legislatures determined to throw up barriers to minority turnout with laws such as

North Carolina's, which was struck down by a federal appeals court as an unconstitutional effort to "target African Americans with almost surgical precision." The Supreme Court, citing a dispute over who represents the state, on Monday declined to review that decision, but its conservative majority may not block future such legislation.

The fix was in from the moment Mr. Trump promised, in January, that he would establish a commission on fraudulent voting, a nonissue that has been almost entirely conjured from thin air by Republicans seeking to enhance their electoral chances. Multiple studies have shown, and the overwhelming consensus of both Republican and Democratic voting officials at the state and local levels has been, that fraudulent voting, particularly of the in-person variety, is all but nonexistent in the United States. A thorough survey three years ago came up with 31 credible instances of voter impersonation that could have been prevented by ID laws, out of more than 1 billion votes cast in elections from 2000 to 2014.

Republicans are quick to conflate their baseless allegations of

widespread fraud with real — and inconsequential — instances of duplicative voter-registration rolls owing mainly to individuals who have moved from one state to another. That hardly ever translates into multiple or illegal votes cast. Among those whose names have appeared on more than one state's rolls are Stephen K. Bannon, the White House chief strategist; Sean Spicer, its press secretary; Jared Kushner, Mr. Trump's son-in-law and senior adviser; and Tiffany Trump, the president's younger daughter. None of them is believed to have voted illegally.

Mr. Kobach said the 12-member commission, which will include a few Democrats, "does not begin with foregone conclusions." However, his record in Kansas and elsewhere offers ample proof to groups, including the American Civil Liberties Union, that regard him as the king of voter suppression.

Faced with the hostility of minority and other voting blocs, Republicans would rather suppress votes than compete for them. By establishing this commission, Mr. Trump is giving them a hand.



## Erdogan's guards clash with protesters outside Turkish ambassador's D.C. residence

By Peter Hermann and Perry Stein

7-9 minutes

Police fought to separate two groups that violently clashed outside the Turkish ambassador's residence on May 16 in

Washington, D.C. Police fought to separate two groups that violently clashed outside the Turkish ambassador's residence on May 16

in Washington, D.C. (VOA Turkish/Twitter)

(VOA Turkish/Twitter)

Tuesday's clash involving protesters and security guards for visiting Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan prompted outrage by local and U.S. officials who accused the guards of using violence to quell what had been a peaceful demonstration in Northwest Washington.

D.C. police arrested two men, one from Virginia and one from New York, and said they are pursuing charges against additional suspects since the melee outside the Turkish ambassador's residence at Sheridan Circle. Eleven people were injured, among them a police officer. Some were kicked and stomped, their heads bloodied.

Included in the police search are members of Erdogan's armed protective detail, according to two people with direct knowledge of the case. Police are working with the U.S. State Department and the U.S. Secret Service to identify people seen on videos and obtain arrest warrants, even as they anticipated thorny issues involving diplomatic immunity or the special status afforded to those who guard visiting heads of state.

House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Edward R. Royce (R-Calif.) said "agents of foreign governments should never be immune from prosecution for felonious behavior." In a letter to Attorney General Jeff Sessions, he urged a quick inquiry and the filing of "appropriate criminal charges" before the security officers leave the country.

In a statement, the State Department said "violence is never an appropriate response to free speech." It added that the United States is "communicating our concern with the Turkish government in the strongest possible terms."

Nearly a dozen people were injured on May 17 in a brief but violent confrontation

between two groups outside the Turkish ambassador's residence. Nearly a dozen people were injured on May 17 in a brief but violent confrontation between two groups outside the Turkish ambassador's residence in Washington, D.C. (ANCA)

(ANCA)

D.C. Police Chief Peter Newsham, whose department is leading the investigation, decried the violence. Mayor Muriel E. Bowser (D) said "police are working very hard with our partners to see if we can get to the bottom of this," adding that "it was a pretty savage beating." And Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) added: "This is the United States of America. We do not do this here. There is no excuse for this kind of thuggish behavior."

A Turkish state news agency acknowledged that guards for Erdogan, who had earlier met with President Trump at the White House, had targeted demonstrators. Many of the aggressors seen on video were wearing dark suits and ties, and several had guns. At least two of the guns were seen on video being dropped and then picked up during skirmishes.

In a statement released Wednesday evening, the Turkish Embassy called the demonstration "unpermitted" and "provocative." Officials alleged in the statement that the protesters were affiliated with the separatist Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, which is designated a terrorist organization by Turkey and the United States. A protest leader denied that any of the participants were involved with the PKK or sympathized with the group.

"The demonstrators began aggressively provoking Turkish-American citizens" who had gathered to greet Erdogan, the statement said. "The Turkish-Americans responded in self defense and one of them was seriously injured."

The Anadolu news agency also blamed the incident on an "inadequate" response by police, implying anger over authorities not stopping the protest. Demonstrators recounted being kicked, beaten and bloodied while cowering on the ground, and they complained that police did not move quickly to stop the violence.

Tuesday's melee highlighted the political divisions and conflicts that in some cases have roiled Turkey for decades and have become far more acrimonious and violent of late. After Erdogan's government survived a coup attempt last summer, authorities have pursued a wide-ranging crackdown on enemies and dissidents. Nearly 200,000 people have been arrested, dismissed or suspended from their jobs.

The government has faced a resurgent threat from militant groups, including the Islamic State and the PKK. In turn, militant attacks and the state's iron-fisted response, have fed a deepening sense of political polarization in Turkey.

Tuesday's group was made up of roughly two dozen demonstrators including those angry at Erdogan's crackdown on dissent and his consolidation of power. Others were Kurdish activists, including supporters of a pro-Kurdish political party in Turkey whose leaders have been prosecuted by the Turkish government.

Seyid Riza Dersimi, a 61-year-old Virginia resident who owns a flooring company, said he started organizing Tuesday's protest soon after he learned of Erdogan's visit to the United States. They started outside the White House, where he said Turkish guards taunted them as they chanted, "Erdogan is a dictator!" "Erdogan is ISIS!" and "Mr. Trump, please stop him!"

Later, at the circle on Massachusetts Avenue, Dersimi

said he was pushed to the ground and repeatedly kicked in the face. He received five stitches in his nose, his lips were busted and he lost a tooth. "This is what happens in Turkey — this is not what happens in the U.S.," he said. "The American police let them attack us."

Court documents describe the demonstration as peaceful until a group of "radicalized protesters began taunting the peaceful protesters." The document says four men in dark clothing then emerged from the crowd and "began attacking several of the peaceful protesters."

#### Local Crime & Safety Alerts

Breaking news about public safety in and around D.C.

The two men arrested by D.C. police were identified as Ayten Necmi, 49, of Woodside, N.Y., charged with aggravated assault for allegedly punching someone in the face, and Jalal Kheirabaoi, 42, charged with assault on a police officer. Both were released from detention Wednesday.

Necmi said after the hearing that he heard about the protest over social media. He said fights had begun by the time he arrived. His attorney, Gunay Evinch, blamed D.C. police and the Secret Service for "being surprised" by the large turnout and overreacting. "They were caught off-guard by the size of the group," Evinch said.

Necmi said he and group of other Turkish individuals came to Washington solely to "welcome the Turkish president."

Kareem Fahim in Istanbul and Aaron C. Davis, Keith L. Alexander, Carol Morello and Victoria St. Martin in Washington contributed to this report.



## Editorial : A note to Erdogan and his thugs: You can't beat up protestors here

<https://www.facebook.com/washingtonpostopinions>

4-5 minutes

**Opinion** A column or article in the Opinions section (in print, this is known as the Editorial Pages).

May 17 at 8:08 PM

PRESIDENT TRUMP laid out the welcome mat this week for Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan,

and the strongman apparently felt so much at home he thought it okay for his thugs to beat up peaceful demonstrators. That Mr. Erdogan has unfortunately been successful in stifling dissent in Turkey doesn't give him license to come to this country and attack one of its most basic, and cherished, freedoms. It must be made clear that this behavior is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

A violent confrontation Tuesday evening outside the Turkish

ambassador's residence in Northwest Washington resulted in 11 people being injured. Two people were arrested and charged with misdemeanor assault, and D.C. police said Wednesday the investigation is continuing, with the possibility of other people being charged. Particular scrutiny needs to be paid to the actions of Mr. Erdogan's security guards, who, a state-owned Turkish news service confirmed, were involved in the fighting because — can you believe the gall? — they didn't think police

were doing enough to quiet the protest.

Video and photographs of the incident show men in dark suits and ties, some holding Turkish flags, kicking and hitting protesters. Uniformed D.C. police officers at various points can be heard telling the men to back off and move across the street. According to D.C. Police Chief Peter Newsham, the situation was especially "dicey" because some of the Turkish guards were armed. "What we saw

yesterday — a violent attack on a peaceful demonstration — is an affront to D.C. values and our rights as Americans,” said D.C. Mayor Muriel E. Bowser (D).

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The best conversations on The Washington Post

**The  
New York  
Times**

5-7 minutes

People protesting outside the Capitol in May. Nicholas Kamm/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

In defending their efforts to repeal the Affordable Care Act, Republican leaders in Congress argue that the insurance marketplaces created by the law are failing. They aren't completely wrong.

Trouble began with faulty websites during the rollout in 2013. Since then, enrollment continues to be below expectations. Obamacare plans often have higher premiums and out-of-pocket expenses than expected. Some markets, mainly in rural areas, may not attract a single insurer in 2018. And insurers that stay are likely to impose double-digit premium increases.

The Republican plan to replace Obamacare would do little to stabilize the exchanges. But there is a better way to provide insurance to the 11 million beneficiaries of Obamacare plans: Allow them to buy into the Medicaid system. For President Trump, “Medicaid for more” would be both good policy and good politics.

Let's start with a political puzzle. Why has Medicaid become the nation's largest health insurance program, with over 70 million

This is not the first time Mr. Erdogan has come to the United States and ended up bullying those who dare to disagree with his cruel regime. His appearance at the Brookings Institution during the 2016 Nuclear Security Summit was marred when his security detail roughed up demonstrators and tried to eject “undesired” journalists.

There need to be consequences. The State Department issued a relatively strong statement Wednesday saying that it was “concerned by the violent incidents” involving Turkish security personnel and that the United States is “communicating our concern with the Turkish government in the strongest possible terms.” That's a

good first step, but it is not enough. Turkish personnel instigating this violence must be identified and, if possible, prosecuted or, if shielded by diplomatic immunity, made persons not welcome in this country.

## Sparer : The Best Replacement for Obamacare Is Medicaid

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enrollees, even though both conservatives and liberals criticize it? First, it has surprisingly strong support from hospitals and nursing homes, insurers and states, which receive federal funds to help finance care. Second, since Medicaid is administered in different ways by different states, it cannot be labeled a monolithic national program. Third, its cost is shared among federal, state and local governments. Finally, Medicaid works: It provides access to good-quality care for low-wage Americans and more secure funding for the medical safety net.

So why does Medicaid have a bad reputation in both parties? The answer is that both conservatives and liberals buy into a series of Medicaid myths.

Many conservatives mistakenly believe Medicaid is an out-of-control entitlement and want to cap federal Medicaid spending. But Medicaid provides low-cost care to millions of the nation's oldest, sickest and most vulnerable populations. In 2013, a report by the Urban Institute demonstrated that if an average adult on Medicaid had traditional private insurance instead, the cost of care would be over 25 percent higher.

Another myth is that states need more freedom to develop innovative Medicaid policies. But states already have flexibility to shape their programs, and the Trump administration could give them even more without changing the law.

Indeed, nearly every state is experimenting with novel approaches to the delivery of care, benefits packages and provider payments. This means New York can pay immigrant-aid organizations to provide health screenings, while Indiana experiments with high-deductible plans and health savings accounts.

The notion that Medicaid is a “big government” program is yet another myth. More than 60 percent of Medicaid beneficiaries are enrolled in private managed-care plans now. Medicaid is actually a successful public-private partnership.

Some liberals have proposed using Medicare, the federal health care program for the elderly and disabled, as the basis for providing universal health insurance. But Medicaid is the better fit. It has a more generous benefits package, is less costly and is developing more innovative care-management strategies. Moreover, the integration of the Obamacare exchanges into Medicaid would be relatively seamless: Many health plans are already in both markets.

Of course Medicaid is not perfect. Doctors and hospitals complain about low reimbursements, beneficiaries often have trouble finding high-quality care, and the stigma of the program as being a form of welfare persists. In reality, however, the program is much more than that, providing care to children, seniors, the working poor and welfare recipients.

President Trump has consistently argued that he will ensure decent coverage for all. He even praised the Australian system of universal coverage on the same day the House voted to replace the Affordable Care Act with a program that would cut Medicaid by \$880 billion over a decade and end the law's extension of Medicaid coverage to more people.

Moderates in both parties recognize that the chance of success for an insurance marketplace that serves only the self-employed, part-time workers and small businesses, as Obamacare does now, is small. So why not eliminate the insurance exchanges — enabling Mr. Trump to claim he “repealed” Obamacare — while allowing exchange beneficiaries to buy into Medicaid, using tax credits to pay the premiums. Recent surveys showing that Medicaid beneficiaries are generally satisfied with their coverage, more so than their exchange counterparts, makes the case even more persuasive.

The conservative House Freedom Caucus would surely object if President Trump endorsed “Medicaid for more,” but moderates on both sides of the aisle might join him. The result would be better health coverage for more Americans and a clear path toward an American version of affordable coverage for all.