

Revue de presse américaine

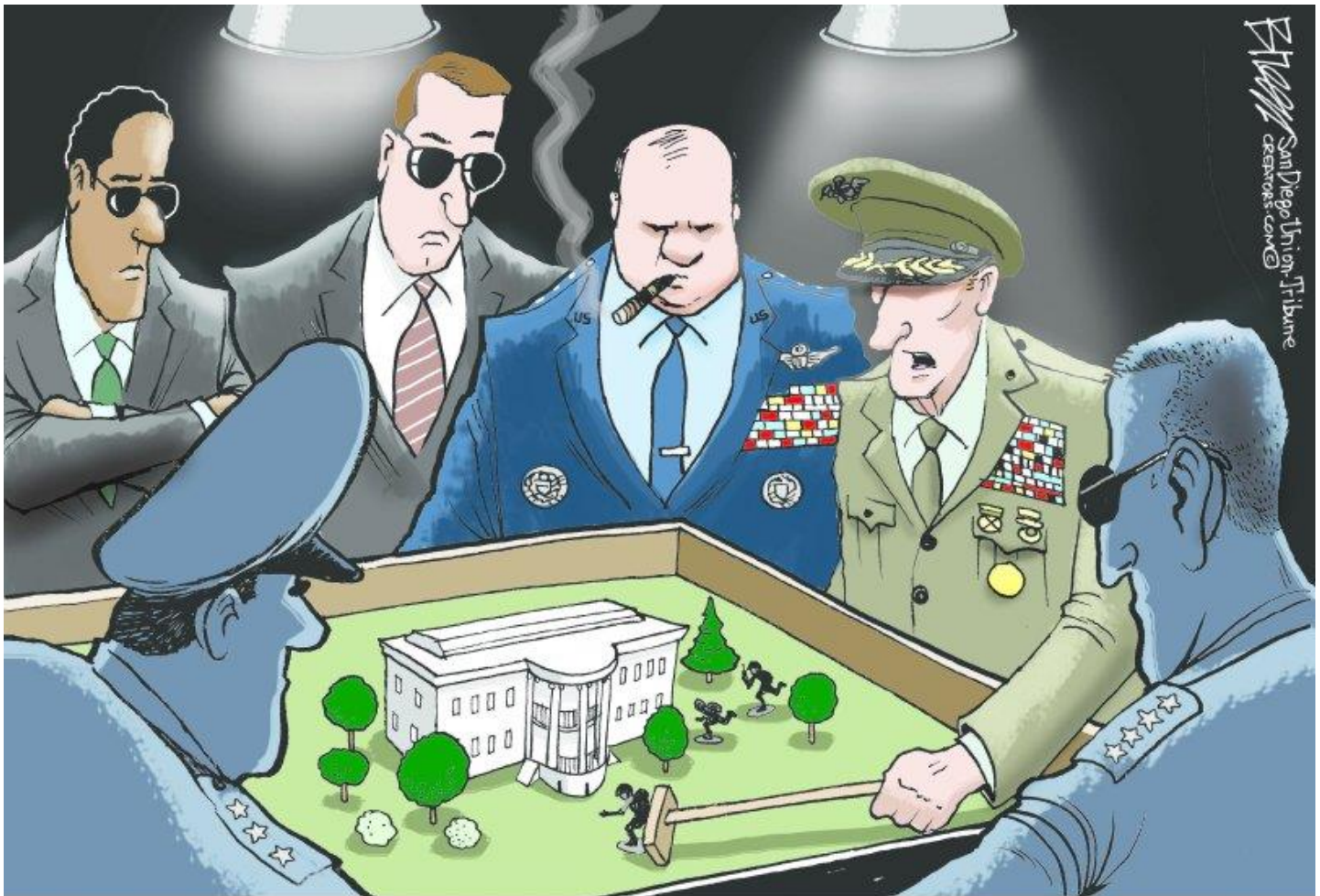
Ambassade de France aux États-Unis
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RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

Jeudi 8 juin, réalisation : Josselin Brémaud



"Secret Service agents will leave the bedroom window unlocked and at 0200, Special Ops will seize his smartphone from the nightstand..."

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FRANCE – EUROPE

THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL.

Emmanuel Macron Bets on Rookies to Win French Parliamentary Election (online)

William Horobin

6-7 minutes

June 8, 2017 5:30 a.m. ET

NICE, France—French President Emmanuel Macron's quest to win a parliamentary majority and pass contentious labor reforms hinges on candidates like Caroline Reverso-Meinietti.

A lawyer by training, the 31-year-old has never before run for public office. When voters head to the polls for the first round of legislative election on Sunday, Ms. Reverso-Meinietti will represent Mr. Macron's party on the ballot, competing with seasoned candidates who would have likely brushed neophytes like her aside in any other year.

Polls suggest 2017 will be a political year like none other in France's recent history. The wave of support that carried Mr. Macron, 39, to victory last month is likely to propel his fledgling political party, La République en Marche, into the driver's seat of the 577-seat National Assembly.

A nationally representative survey conducted by Ipsos Sopra-Steria between June 2 and June 4 showed his party garnering 29.5% of the first-round vote, followed by the center-right Les Républicains with 23%. Projections by the same pollster indicate the second-round vote on June 18 would hand Mr. Macron a clear majority, with between 385 and 415 seats.

A victory for Mr. Macron's party in constituencies like Nice would amount to a deathblow for France's political establishment. It would also strengthen the new president's hand

in pushing unpopular economic overhauls through parliament—something Mr. Macron and his European allies say is vital to fixing the European Union and its common currency.

By streamlining France's sclerotic labor code, Mr. Macron hopes to persuade Germany and other northern European countries to allow the strongest members of the eurozone to act as financial backstops for the weakest.

"Without this majority we will be blocked for another five years," Ms. Reverso-Meinietti said.

Mr. Macron's party flaunts the inexperience of its candidates as it makes a play for seats in conservative strongholds long considered impervious to challengers. Nice is the fiefdom of incumbent Eric Ciotti, a conservative stalwart and Républicains party chieftain whose tough-on-terror résumé has long made him unassailable for opponents from any party, including the far-right National Front of Marine Le Pen.

Nice was the target in July of an Islamist terrorist's truck attack that killed 86 people among the thousands lining the coastal city's promenade to watch a Bastille Day fireworks display. Mr. Ciotti, who headed a 2015 parliamentary commission on jihadist networks, has held his district for a decade.

Mr. Macron has maneuvered to divide Mr. Ciotti's party by appointing senior lawmakers from Les Républicains as ministers in his new government. The president has also backed away from fielding his own candidates in about 50 constituencies—including some in the Nice area—where Les

Républicains candidates have indicated they would ally with the French leader if elected.

Mr. Ciotti said Mr. Macron was focusing on politicking "with the complicity of those who betrayed their beliefs to get a position."

On Saturday, the president dispatched top ministers—one from Les Républicains and the other a Socialist—to Nice to campaign alongside Ms. Reverso-Meinietti.

"There is a national reconfiguration taking place. We have to take part and leave our bitterness to one side," said Budget Minister Gérard Darmanin, an ally of former French President and Les Républicains leader Nicolas Sarkozy.

As Mr. Darmanin arrived, Mr. Ciotti's supporters fanned out around city hall and a nearby flower market to hand out leaflets and urge voters not to give Mr. Macron a blank check.

"We have a lawmaker who is doing the job. There's no reason to change," said Anthony Bressy, a 28-year-old campaigner for Mr. Ciotti.

Ms. Reverso-Meinietti's foray into politics began in January when she spent 10 minutes filling out an online application to become a parliamentary candidate for Mr. Macron's movement.

At the time, Mr. Macron was behind in the polls, and Ms. Reverso-Meinietti's friends mocked her as utopian, she recalled.

Nice is one of the most challenging districts for Mr. Macron. François Fillon, the presidential candidate for Les Républicains, garnered the largest share of the vote here in the first round of the presidential election. Mr. Macron finished third

behind Ms. Le Pen of the National Front, which is also fielding a candidate here for the legislative election.

To qualify for the runoff, Ms. Reverso-Meinietti needs to either finish in one of the top two spots Sunday or garner support from more than 12.5% of registered voters. Doing so would require siphoning votes from Mr. Ciotti as well as driving turnout of leftist voters.

Mr. Macron's commanding presidential victory has given Ms. Reverso-Meinietti's candidacy a shot in the arm.

"People in Nice want to be part of this dynamic," she said. "They don't want to be left at the back of the class."

On the campaign trail here Saturday, Ms. Reverso-Meinietti handed out leaflets at a popular downtown park that Mr. Ciotti inaugurated in 2013.

Sonia Adrien, a bathroom janitor at the park, said she welcomed a young candidate but that wasn't enough to change her vote.

"Mr. Ciotti has done so much for the town of Nice. It's really the important point here," Ms. Adrien said.

Handing out leaflets for Ms. Reverso-Meinietti at the same market, Nadine de Fondaumière, a recently retired high-school teacher, said divisions among conservatives could help Mr. Macron's candidate win. Still, she expects it will be difficult for Ms. Reverso-Meinietti.

"If she beats Eric Ciotti, it would be a real thunderbolt," Ms. de Fondaumière said.

employed," he said. "We have a parliament that's inbred."

Among the many beneficiaries of the system: Macron's prime minister, Edouard Philippe, several others in the cabinet and fully 55 percent of the parliament that just finished its five-year term. Macron himself, though he's never been in parliament, kept bureaucrat status through several government and private jobs until he resigned last year to start his political party.

The 55 percent of the departing parliament that's civil servants,

Bloomberg

A Reform Beyond Macron's Grip: The Revolving Door of Politics

@gviscusi More stories by

Gregory Viscusi

7-9 minutes

If France's president can overpower Donald Trump with a handshake, why can't he keep bureaucrats from running for office?

French President Emmanuel Macron has promised to change how politics is done in France, starting with the parliament to be elected beginning Sunday. Half of

the 500-plus candidates for his young party are women. Half have never held office. They all had to apply online.

But he isn't taking the biggest step: requiring that anyone running for parliament resign from his or her government job.

Unlike many other developed countries, France allows bureaucrats to hold political office—multiple offices, in fact—without having to quit the civil service. And they have a guaranteed right to return. Should the bureaucrat-

candidate lose an election, there's a job for life waiting back at the Agriculture Ministry or the Ministry for Overseas Territories. And a pension at retirement.

Having lawmakers remain part of the civil service creates conflicts of interest, said Dominique Reynie, head of Fondapol, a political research institute.

"You have lawmakers making funding decisions about institutions such as universities and hospitals where they are still officially

according to a study by the Diderot Institute, isn't quite the highest ever. But it's more than in the previous parliament and far higher than in the early decades of the 59-year-old Fifth Republic.

"France is one of the rare countries in Europe where a civil servant can serve an elected mandate without resigning, and with the certainty of going back to their job in case of failure," said Luc Rouban, a professor at Sciences Po in Lille who has compiled a database of all 2,857 French members of parliament back to 1958. "The absence of professional risk encourages employees from the public sector to run for office."

Macron, 39, was a high-level functionary in the Finance Ministry after attending the National School of Administration, a top university known as ENA whose graduates are automatically granted lifetime bureaucrat status. He took a leave from the civil service when he worked as an investment banker for Rothschild & Cie., returning to government as an adviser to then-President Francois Hollande and then as Economy Minister.

When he formed his political movement in April 2016, he had to pay 50,000 euros (\$56,180) to buy his way out of the 10 years of civil service that ENA requires in return for a free education.

Philippe, by contrast, hasn't resigned. He joined France's top administrative court after graduating from ENA in 1997. Since then, he's been an adviser at various ministries, worked at state-controlled nuclear group Areva, was elected mayor of the port town of Le Havre in 2010 and has been a member of parliament since 2007. Upon becoming prime minister after Macron's victory last month, the 46-year-old resigned as mayor, but stayed a bureaucrat. He could go back to the administrative court at any time.

True, legislatures in other countries aren't exact replicas of the population either. American members of Congress on average are nine times richer than their voters, according to the U.S. Center for Responsive Politics. In Britain, legislators are much better educated: one-quarter of the House of Commons graduated from Oxford or Cambridge universities.

Neither country allows bureaucrats to enter politics, however. In Britain, civil servants have had to resign before running since 1975. In the U.S., federal employees have been forbidden from engaging in political activity since the passage of the Hatch Act of 1939.

"In France the state created the nation, not the other way around"

If Macron can impress the world with his bone-crushing grip during a handshake with President Donald Trump, why can't he bring his country's bureaucrat-politicians into line?

Jean-Paul Delevoye, head of the selection committee for Macron's parliamentary campaign, said it's too soon.

"I would have liked to institute a rule that candidates have to step down from the civil service, and I think as a country we'll eventually get there," he said. But "I don't think we are ready yet."

Even though Macron's political movement hasn't forced candidates to quit the civil service, its other demands have limited the number of government workers in its ranks. Rouban said 33 percent of Republic on the Move's 529 candidates are from the public sector. Those from the private sector are generally from small companies, with many consultants. Members of parliament from the private sector in the past have tended to be independent professionals, particularly lawyers.

Rouban said he doesn't think the overrepresentation of civil servants subverts democracy. "We have a professional political class, but it grows out of local mandates, not from being civil servants," he said. "Civil servants don't tend to vote differently than others. They are

driven more by their local roots than by their status."

Those local links could weaken in the next parliament, which will be the first elected under new rules that limit the number of positions that lawmakers can hold at one time. In the last parliament, 80 percent of lawmakers also had another elected position, with 15 percent holding three or more.

A 2014 law now bars members of parliament from holding an executive local position, such as mayor or president of a region, though they can still be members of regional councils. Those new limits are one reason that only 60 percent of the outgoing parliament is running for re-election, down 80 percent in the last parliamentary elections five years ago.

Quitting the civil service would mean giving up a host of benefits. French fonctionnaires, as they are called, have a separate status from private sector workers, with different pay scales, work regulations and pension systems.

"Requiring them to resign before running for parliament would be a very simple decision to enact," said Reynie. "But they won't do it because it would touch the core of the state. In France the state created the nation, not the other way around."

Business Insider : France creates new counter-terrorism task force after Notre Dame attack

Reuters

3-4 minutes

French police and gendarmes stand at the scene of a shooting incident near the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris Thomson Reuters

PARIS (Reuters) - France created a new counter-terrorism task force on Wednesday comprised of all intelligence services that will coordinate responses to attacks, a day after a man carrying Algerian papers attacked police officers outside the Notre Dame cathedral.

Newly-elected President Emmanuel Macron, portrayed by rivals as weak on security during the presidential campaign, last month instructed the task force be created to bring together France's multiple security agencies inside the Elysee presidential palace.

The performance of France's intelligence services have come under close scrutiny since the November 2015 attacks on Paris, when militant gunmen and suicide bombers struck entertainment venues across the capital, killing 130 people.

In total, more than 230 people have been killed in a wave of attacks in France either claimed by or inspired by Islamic State over the past two-and-a-half years.

In Tuesday's attack, a 40-year-old Algerian student armed with a hammer and kitchen knives shouted "this is for Syria" as he wounded a policeman, before being shot by police officers.

A source close to the investigation said a video in which the attacker pledged allegiance to Islamic State had been found in his flat during a police raid on Tuesday evening.

Government spokesman Christophe Castaner said that the assailant had not previously "shown any signs of radicalization".

A surveillance video obtained by Reuters showed the assailant running up to three police officers in the square outside Notre Dame and attempting to land a blow with the hammer. One officer was hurt before the aggressor was shot in the chest.

Macron on Wednesday appointed Pierre de Bousquet de Florian to head the new intelligence task force known as the National Centre for Counter Terrorism. It will be under direct authority of the president.

Bousquet de Florian once headed France's DST regional intelligence service that was disbanded under former president Nicolas Sarkozy.

It will include some 20 people representing the various security services and be operational 24 hours seven days a week.

"This has been created to ensure that the intelligence services truly cooperate," said a French presidency official.

Macron also named career diplomat Bernard Emie, who served as ambassador to Britain, Turkey, Libya and Jordan, as head of the DGSE external intelligence service.

(Reporting by Emmanuel Jarry, Marine Pennetier and John Irish; Writing by Richard Lough)

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Facebook's Role in European Elections Under Scrutiny

Mark Scott

7-9 minutes

Lawrence Dodd lives in one of Britain's most fiercely fought voting

districts, and he has been peppered almost daily with ads from the

country's major political parties on Facebook. About a month ago, he tried to find out why.

Mr. Dodd, a maker of musical instruments in northern England, joined an experiment. He and around 10,000 others volunteered their data, allowing researchers to monitor in real time which political ads were showing up in their Facebook news feeds as Britain's election approached.

Their goal: to shed more light on how political campaigns are using Facebook and other digital services — technologies that are quickly reshaping the democratic process, but which often offer few details about their outside roles in elections worldwide.

"These political ads aren't regulated; nobody knows what is being said on Facebook," said Mr. Dodd, 26, who planned to vote for the Labour Party on Thursday elections, but who continued to be bombarded with online messages from the Conservatives. "Wherever politics is concerned, there needs to be more transparency."

Facebook provides little information on how political parties use ads to reach undecided voters on the site. And concern has been growing since the American presidential election about the company's role in campaigns, including about how politically charged fake news is spread online.

Now, as voters head to the polls across Europe, groups in Britain, Germany and elsewhere are fighting back, creating new ways to track and monitor digital political ads and misinformation on the social network and on other digital services like Twitter and Google.

The political ads shown to Mr. Dodd are being tallied by WhoTargetsMe?, a nonpolitical group that designed a digital tool to monitor Facebook's role ahead of the British election.

Costing less than \$1,000 to build, the technology, which works as a plug-in on desktop web browsers and anonymizes users' personal information, was created because the social network does not share information on political ads shown to its more than 36 million users in Britain, roughly half the country's population.

That lack of information has raised hackles about the activities of both Facebook and politicians in a country where campaigns are highly regulated and political financing is tightly capped.

Questions over the social network's role in politics are particularly raw in Britain, where outside groups were accused of spending lavishly on Facebook during a heated campaign before a referendum on the country's membership the European Union. In response, Britain's privacy watchdog has started an investigation into whether such targeted political advertising breached its strict data protection rules.

"Political advertising is fundamentally different; there's a lot of concern about what's being seen on Facebook," said Sam Jeffers, the group's co-founder and a former digital media strategist. "The people deserve some sense of what's going on."

As the volunteer group is not completely representative of the British population, the data is by no means perfect, highlighting the difficulty of tracking political activity on Facebook.

In the buildup to the election, for instance, the data showed that the Liberal Democrats — who are likely to remain a minority presence in Parliament — posted the largest number of political ads on Facebook. The Conservative Party was second, despite the political party's pledge to spend 1 million pounds, or \$1.3 million, on social media messaging. The Labour Party, which planned to spend a similar amount, was in third place.

Initially, all the British parties spent money on broad-brush messages that blanketed the social network without targeting specific voters. But as Election Day approached, that strategy began to change.

An analysis of the data by The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, a nonprofit media organization, showed the country's major parties were increasingly targeting specific voting districts and wavering voter groups with direct Facebook ads. The number of ads seen by WhoTargetsMe? volunteers has also roughly doubled in the last month, though political messages still represented 2 percent of overall

ads displayed in Facebook feeds, according to the group's analysis.

The ads have included Conservative Party messages about potential nuclear energy jobs in three areas in northern England with ties to the industry, and that are some of the country's most contested districts. By contrast, the Labour Party targeted older women nationwide with directed ads about potential threats to their pensions.

"It's a fundamental conversation to have about how we regulate this," said Nick Anstead, a media and communications expert at the London School of Economics. "Facebook has a responsibility to tell its users who is buying advertising that is targeting their votes."

In response, the company says its roughly two billion users worldwide have complete control over which ads they are shown on the network, and that it is the responsibility of individual political parties to comply with their countries' electoral laws. Facebook adds that its commercial agreements and protection of individuals' privacy restrict it from sharing more data on how information is distributed on the platform.

"Facebook's goal is to make it easier for people to get the information they need to vote," Andy Stone, a company spokesman, said in a statement. "We encourage any and all candidates, groups and voters to use our platform to engage in the elections."

Facebook and other technology companies have tried to improve what is shared and circulated online, creating partnerships with news outlets to debunk digital falsehoods and cracking down on how fake news websites make money through advertising on social media. The social networking giant also sponsored get-out-the-vote campaigns, and encouraged political groups to create Facebook pages to promote their messages.

Yet during the recent French presidential election, which pitted the centrist candidate Emmanuel Macron against the far-right hopeful Marine Le Pen, several media organizations including Le Monde said they had found it difficult — and overly cumbersome — to report potential fake news items about the candidates to Facebook.

Academics and others scrutinizing the vote also said the company's failure to provide data on what Facebook users in France shared among themselves made it virtually impossible to determine if false reports spread on the network affected the overall result.

"Facebook's lack of transparency is a big concern," said Tommaso Venturini, a researcher at the médialab of Sciences Po, a prestigious university in Paris, who tracked fake news across social media during the French election.

For Ben Scott, such issues bring back mixed memories of the American presidential election, when he was a digital consultant for Hillary Clinton's campaign.

He has now turned his attention to a project at the New Responsibility Foundation, a Berlin-based research organization that is monitoring the spread and impact of fake news ahead of Germany's election in September.

He and his team are categorizing potential online misinformation in a digital database, tracking how these false reports spread across social media and the wider web and conducting focus groups to gauge the impact on voters' decisions.

The role of companies like Facebook in spreading online falsehoods is limited in Germany, Mr. Scott said, because social media does not play as significant a role in everyday politics as it does in the United States.

Still, the social media giant — which has roughly 36 million users in Germany — is a force to reckon with in the coming election.

Despite Mr. Scott's discussions with Facebook about potential collaborations, the company has so far declined to give his research project any data on how local users share potential misinformation among themselves on the social network.

"If we see something getting significant media attention and there's a sudden spike," Mr. Scott said, "then we can guess there's something going on inside Facebook."



London Bridge Attack Death Toll Rises to Eight After Police Recover Body From River Thames

Michael Amon, Jon Sindreu and Georgi Kantchev

Updated June 7, 2017 2:57 p.m. ET

4 minutes

LONDON—Authorities on Wednesday raised the death toll in the weekend car-and-knife rampage

to eight after recovering a body from the Thames.

Police didn't identify the body, but said they informed the next of kin of

Xavier Thomas, a 45-year-old French national who disappeared after the attack, of the discovery.

In the Saturday night attack, three men mowed down pedestrians in a van on London Bridge before slashing their way through a nearby area of bars and restaurants in an eight-minute rampage. The assailants were shot and killed by police.

Mr. Thomas's family and police had called for information after he went missing the night of the attack. Witness statements suggested Mr. Thomas may have been struck down by the attackers' van and thrown into the river, police have said.

The body was found Tuesday night at 7:45 p.m. in London near Limehouse, a riverside section of London downstream from the bridge attack.

The discovery came as more information emerged about those who died in Saturday's attack.

Police said Wednesday the victims included Sara Zelenak, a 21-year-old Australian living and working in London.

Family members confirmed the death of Ignacio Echeverría, a 39-year-old Spanish national who has been hailed as a hero for trying to fight off the attackers with his skateboard.

"My brother Ignacio tried to stop some terrorists and lost his life trying to save others," said his sister, Isabel Echeverría, in a Facebook post. "Igna, we love you and we'll never forget you."

French President Emmanuel Macron said that three French nationals have died. "France has paid heavily in these attacks," he said.

Mr. Macron didn't name the victims. A French police official has said the they include a 27-year-old man from Normandy named Alexandre. Friends and family say two other French victims are missing: Mr. Thomas and Sebastien Belanger, 36, a chef at London restaurant Coq d'Argent.

Investigators are working to piece together a picture of the lead-up to the attack. Authorities had been warned about at least two of the attackers but weren't actively monitoring them, raising questions about the country's security gaps.

Authorities haven't said publicly how they believe the three attackers knew each other. But two of them, Khuram Butt and Rachid Redouane, attended a male-only swimming session at a local community center in east London, according to an organizer of the sessions.

Akhtar Uzzaman said Butt had attended the sessions since

January, sometimes bringing his young son. Redouane joined in early May.

Butt seemed quite rude sometimes, jumping and splashing in the shallow pool, while Redouane was the quiet one, Mr. Uzzaman said.

Police early Wednesday said they had arrested a 30-year-old man as they searched a property in east London as part of their investigation into the attack, a day after arresting a 27-year-old man. Twelve other people have been arrested and released since the attack.

—Jenny Gross and Lara O'Reilly contributed to this article.

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Appeared in the June 8, 2017, print edition as 'Death Toll Increases From London Attack.'

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

U.K. Election: Testing Times for Pollsters Who Got It So Wrong Last Time

Jason Douglas in London and Jo Craven McGinty in New York

5-6 minutes

Updated June 7, 2017 5:27 p.m. ET

Britons go to the polls on Thursday to cast their vote in an uncertain election, with pollsters agreeing only on one thing: that the commanding lead enjoyed by the Conservative Party of Prime Minister Theresa May has shrunk dramatically during the six-week campaign.

Just as this election has tested Mrs. May's leadership, so it is testing Britain's polling firms.

Opinion polls published by a dozen or so firms in the final days before voting have shown a wide variation in the size of the Conservative lead, from as little as 1 percentage point over the main opposition Labour Party to a 12-point gap.

Quirks of Britain's Parliamentary system mean that such discrepancies present an unusual range of possible outcomes at Thursday's election.

Mrs. May could return with the big majority in Parliament she says will strengthen her hand in coming Brexit talks with Brussels. She could limp back into government much diminished. Or the Conservatives could lose enough seats to give other parties the chance to club together and govern instead.

The reason for the variation in the polls: Faulty predictions ahead of the previous election in 2015 prodded the polling industry in the U.K. to overhaul the arcane methods they employ to divine public opinion. A similar postmortem happened in the U.S. after nationwide polls pointed to victory for Hillary Clinton in 2016's presidential election.

In the U.K., it is these adjustments that are generating the mixed signals clouding the election result, pollsters say.

"This is an experimental election in many ways for pollsters," said Jon Cohen, chief research officer for SurveyMonkey, which conducts online polls in the U.S. and U.K.

Mrs. May called a snap election April 18 at a time when opinion polls gave her center-right Conservatives an advantage of around 20 percentage points on average over the main opposition Labour Party, led by veteran left winger Jeremy Corbyn.

Her lead has narrowed sharply since the race began, with the average Conservative lead shrinking to around 8 points on Tuesday, according to a Wall Street Journal analysis, an advantage that could lift Mrs. May's working majority in Parliament to around 30 seats or more, from 17 currently. A lead in excess of 20 points could have added 100 to 150 seats to her tally.

Pollsters say the slip reflects a lackluster Conservative campaign

and a better-than-expected reception for Labour, which has been more successful than the government at picking up wavering voters.

Terror attacks in Manchester and London shocked the country and colored the parties' campaigns, though they don't appear to have significantly altered voting intentions.

No poll has yet given Labour an outright lead.

That polling average conceals a wide variation among different pollsters' estimates of Mrs. May's advantage.

Even small differences in party vote shares in the U.K. can have hard-to-predict effects when it comes to forming a new Parliament, thanks to an electoral system that tends to reward big parties at the expense of smaller ones and those with concentrated geographical support at the expense of those with more diffuse backing.

Driving the discrepancy, pollsters say, are differences in how firms predict voter turnout, a response in part to an earlier error exposed by the 2015 election.

Pollsters had been quizzing too many younger political nerds, many of who lean toward Labour, and too few older and less-engaged voters, who tend to favor the Conservatives, said Patrick Sturgis, a statistics expert at the University of Southampton who led the industry-

sponsored review into the 2015 polling fiasco.

The result was that polls in 2015 understated Conservative support. To fix the problem, firms broadly have taken two approaches.

Some made an extra effort to make their panels more representative of the wider population, while others have worked harder to weight their findings to reflect voting patterns among different groups of people.

Polling firm YouGov has tended to show Labour closing the gap on the Conservatives, with a poll June 2 giving a 3-point lead to the government. Since 2015, it has focused primarily on broadening the sample of voters it questions, said Anthony Wells, YouGov director of political and social research. "We have thrown everything at trying to recruit people who are less interested in politics," he said.

Martin Boon, director at ICM, has focused more on gauging turnout, and said he believes rival firms' polls are overstating the likelihood that younger and poorer voters, who lean toward Labour, will turn up to vote. His polls have tended to show a larger Conservative lead, with the latest putting the Conservatives 11 points ahead of Labour.

"We will see on Friday morning if we are right," Mr. Boon said.

Write to Jason Douglas at jason.douglas@wsj.com and Jo Craven McGinty at Jo.McGinty@wsj.com

Theresa May Stumbles Awkwardly to Election Day (UNE)

Katrin Bennhold
11-14 minutes

A supporter of the Labour Party tried to rip a sign belonging to a Conservative Party supporter in Norwich, England, on Wednesday. The British election is Thursday. Chris J Ratcliffe/Getty Images

BATH, England — The British prime minister's blue battle bus had just arrived for a campaign stop at a factory when the booing started.

A motley crew of protesters, among them anti-fox-hunting activists and beret-wearing pro-Europeans, greeted Theresa May by playing "Liar, Liar," the anti-May tune that has become one of the top 100 songs on the U.K. iTunes store, on repeat. Inside Cross Manufacturing, an aerospace supplier, the blue-collar workers broke into applause only after a questioner asked whether her refusal to debate other candidates on television was a sign of fear and weakness.

"Every vote for me is a vote for the strong and stable leadership which I believe this country needs," the prime minister responded, going into repeat mode herself. "Who do you trust to have the strong and stable leadership to get on with that job of getting the best deal for Britain for Brexit, because Brexit really matters?"

Britain is having its first national election since the so-called Brexit referendum last June, when the country voted to leave the European Union, a race unfolding in the unsettling glare of two terrorist attacks that killed 29 people in the last three weeks. It has not quite turned out as Mrs. May had hoped; having tried to make the campaign about the shortcomings of the Labour leader, Jeremy Corbyn, the race is now as much about her own.

When she called the snap vote seven weeks ago — after insisting for months she had no intention of doing so — Mrs. May seemed unassailable. Twenty points ahead of her nearest contender in opinion polls, and with most of Britain's attack-dog tabloids cooing at her every move, the 60-year-old vicar's daughter appeared a perfect fit for the post-Brexit mood.

A hard-liner on immigration and more skeptical of free markets than any conservative leader in four decades, she vowed to defend her country in Brexit negotiations abroad and to protect the working class

from untrammelled capitalism at home. Gray-haired, unflamboyant, provincial, the very definition of keep-calm-and-carry-on, Mrs. May seemed to be exactly what England wanted.

She even turned an insult by a male conservative colleague — he described her as a "bloody difficult woman" — into a testament to her strong character and promised to live up to it in Brexit negotiations.

But then the campaign started and the polls tightened. Mrs. May, who had hoped to win a landslide and a mandate going into Brexit negotiations, has proved to be an uninspired retail politician: wooden in manner, ill at ease with voters, flip-flopping on flagship policy proposals and robotically repeating the same rehearsed lines.

Her mantra of "strong and stable" leadership (mentioned four times in her 25-minute appearance in Bath) has been lampooned as "wrong and feeble," "weak and wobbly" and worse. An interview she gave to a local paper last week went viral for saying absolutely nothing. A giant chicken follows her on the campaign trail to remind voters of her refusal to participate in televised debates.

Prime Minister Theresa May of Britain at 10 Downing Street in London in April, before calling for an early general election. Daniel Leal-Olivas/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

Even her own officials have referred to her as "Theresa May — or Maybe Not."

Mrs. May is still expected to win, but with her authority diminished. Even the recent series of terrorist attacks, events that normally rally people around the incumbent, have become a problem for her: As home secretary, Mrs. May was in charge of counterterrorism policy for six years, and this at a time when the Conservatives' austerity budgets were squeezing funds for policing. Scrambling, she has taken a tough line in recent days, vowing to keep the country safe, even if it meant changing human rights laws "if they get in the way."

But as they go to the polls on Thursday, British voters are still trying to figure out who their prime minister is.

Is she the awkward, scripted, hollow candidate who buckles under pressure and is "just not that good," as one disappointed machine operator in Bath put it?

Or is she, as some would have it, the defining political leader of the Brexit age, a kind of Margaret Thatcher for the 21st century, who will oversee a radical reform of the economic consensus for Britain and beyond?

"We will only find out who Theresa May really is after the election," said Ceri Thomas, a former editor of the BBC's flagship "Today" program.

After a referendum on Scottish independence in 2014, a general election in 2015 and last year's Brexit ballot, this will be the fourth major vote in four years.

"The country is exhausted," said Rachel Johnson, a writer (and sister of the foreign secretary, Boris Johnson) who recently defected from the Conservatives to join the pro-European Liberal Democrats. "This has been just a depressing exercise in democracy."

And yet Thursday's vote is very likely to reshape British politics for years to come. Whoever wins, Mrs. May or Mr. Corbyn, both are opposed to neoliberalism — the philosophy of rolling back the state and embracing globalization — which has dominated successive governments on left and right for the last 40 years.

Her fans already speak of "Mayism," an agenda that embraces an anti-immigration stance with a broad rejection of the free market ideology of Thatcherism. "It's time to remember the good that governments can do," Mrs. May said when she introduced her election manifesto.

Protesters turned out to greet Mrs. May at a campaign event in Bath, England, last week. Pool photo by Facundo Arrizabalaga

Just two years ago, when David Cameron was prime minister, the Conservative Party described a cap on energy prices, the flagship policy of the opposition Labour party at the time, as "Marxist." Now price controls are Tory policy.

When the Labour Party floated the idea of an 8-pound hourly minimum wage (\$10.33), it was derided as a job killer. Mrs. May now wants it to be 9 pounds an hour (\$11.62).

Mrs. May wants to make it harder for foreign companies to buy British businesses. She wants worker representation on company boards and has put off the date for reaching a budget surplus. Her plans, economists say, could see the tax burden rise to a 35-year high.

"She is far more radical than Labour recognizes," said Maurice Glasman, a Labour lawmaker in the House of Lords, Britain's upper chamber. "She wants to renew economic democracy. She is moving into that space. That is where the country is."

Mrs. May grew up as the single child of an Anglican clergyman in Oxfordshire, and makes a virtue of not spending frivolously. She mostly does her own makeup and hair. Her biggest extravagance is her shoe collection, which receives endless commentary.

On weekends, rather than enjoying the pool and tennis court at Chequers, the official prime minister's retreat, Mrs. May often returns home to Sonning, in her middle-class Maidenhead constituency, a 45-minute drive from London. There she goes to church on Sundays with her husband, Philip, (they have no children) and holds an office hour for her constituents on Fridays.

Mrs. May's conservatism predates Thatcherism: She volunteered for the Conservative Party when she was 12, at a time when the party still believed in a postwar Keynesian consensus of government intervention and a notion of "one-nation Toryism," a strand of paternalistic conservatism that dates to the 19th century.

In 2002, she gave a speech at the Conservative Party conference, warning fellow Tories: "You know what some people call us: the nasty party."

More recently, her vision — and that of a very small circle of longstanding and influential advisers — represents a tilt from international-minded London toward Brexit-voting Middle England. "If you are a citizen of the world," she said last fall, "you are a citizen of nowhere."

Mrs. May, second from left, speaking with a farmer and his family during an election campaign in Overton, Wales. Pool photo by Ben Stansall

Mrs. May has embraced the anti-immigrant stance of the right-wing U.K. Independence Party, which has collapsed after achieving its long-term goal of leaving Europe.

By borrowing so liberally from the left and the right, some say Mrs. May is a populist herself. Not, say, a Marine Le Pen of the National Front in France, but "a lukewarm Anglican version of a populist," said Timothy

Garton Ash, a professor of European history at Oxford.

But in her bid to win over the working class she has at times irked her core electorate, the elderly and the home-owning middle classes. Her most left-wing campaign proposal put a floor of £100,000 on what people of means had to pay for elder care but no cap. Nicknamed the “dementia tax,” the policy prompted such an outcry that it was discarded within four days.

The flip-flops on this and another prominent proposal — a tax increase on the self-employed, symbolized in the tabloids as the

“white van man” — have led some to doubt that the “Red Theresa” image was anything more than an election ploy.

“None of this convinces me that this is a major political figure,” Mr. Garton Ash said. “I don’t buy it.”

Amid declining poll ratings, Mrs. May has sought to exploit the perceived flaws of her opponent, Mr. Corbyn, a leftist who has advocated nationalizing the rails and some other industries and whom opponents accuse of being soft on terrorism and nuclear deterrence.

When she visited the factory in Bath last week, before the London terror attack, some workers said they were underwhelmed. “She looked a bit shaky and kept saying the same things,” said Tim Moxey, 36, a machine operator. Others were more forgiving: “She has been given a hard time and I think she has handled it well,” said Howard Butchers, who said he had never voted Conservative but would this time.

David Goodhart, the author of “The Road to Somewhere,” an influential book about Britain’s values divide, said he still believed Mrs. May could

dominate Britain’s political landscape for a generation — not despite her clumsy campaign, but because of it.

“She is unflashy, verging on the inarticulate,” Mr. Goodhart said. “There is something that is rather appealing to the slightly more middling times. We’ve done enough admiring of the cognitive elites and their marvelous articulacy.”

“We want something more dowdy,” he said, “because we’re a country in a dowdier mood.”

**The
New York
Times**

Luce : Britain’s Voyage to Inglorious Isolation

Edward Luce

5-7 minutes

What ever happened to internationalist Britain?

An unexpected surge of populist-nationalist rage at globalist elites is often blamed for the Brexit vote. But it is the elites, not the people, who have led Britain’s retreat from Europe and the world.

Britain’s withdrawal from the European Union is part of a more prolonged disengagement that started years before Brexit. The political leaders of the 1970s, like Edward Heath, Denis Healey, Roy Jenkins and Harold Wilson, who took Britain into Europe had either fought in World War II or lived through it. Even Margaret Thatcher was, initially, an enthusiast for membership in Europe. They understood the prewar perils of a disunited Europe.

Their heirs, who were elected to Parliament in the late 1990s and the first decade of this century, have had less experience of the world beyond Britain’s shores than any political generation in decades, perhaps even centuries. They have become the leaders of a post-internationalist Britain, a new insularity that Churchill would have found unfathomable.

I happened to attend university with almost this entire echelon of today’s political class. David Cameron, the former prime minister, was two

years my senior at Oxford. George Osborne, the former chancellor of the Exchequer, was three years below me. In this same cohort were Boris Johnson, Britain’s foreign secretary; Ed Miliband, the former Labour leader; and Ed Balls, a former senior Labour leader. Mrs. May, who also went to Oxford, is several years older than this group, but her politics epitomize Britain’s retreat into a provincial mind-set. (Jeremy Corbyn, the Labour Party leader, escapes this narrow demographic. He attended North London Polytechnic.)

With brief exceptions, such as Mr. Johnson’s spell as a journalist in Brussels, in which he spun unflattering and mostly mendacious tales about the “Eurocrats,” few of this group evinced much interest in world affairs. Most, like Mr. Cameron, started their careers as student political hacks, and the ties they forged nourished their political careers for the next three decades. What they lacked in global experience they substituted with London networking.

Among Mr. Cameron’s social circle, known as the “chumocracy,” vacationing in Tuscany did not compensate for a lack of experience or curiosity in global affairs. In Mrs. Thatcher’s day, an invitation to the prime minister’s weekend retreat meant a rigorous schedule of seminars. In Mr. Cameron’s time, the agenda consisted rather of tennis, croquet and Pimm’s cocktails.

It is up to Mrs. May, or possibly Mr. Corbyn, to pick up the pieces. The initial polling predictions of a landslide win for Mrs. May have evaporated amid a lackluster campaign. The likeliest outcome of Thursday’s election is that Mrs. May’s Conservatives will win re-election but without a strong mandate.

As Election Day approaches, Britain’s voters seem disenchanted with the choices offered. The recent terrorist attacks, first in Manchester, now in London, have only reinforced the public’s skeptical mood about their political leaders — all of which raises the chances of a hobbled British government even less able to handle the Brexit negotiations than before.

Brussels could cope with a nasty divorce. Britain could not. It would thus pay for Britain to be nice. Yet Mrs. May seems to be going out of her way to rub the Europeans the wrong way. Early in the campaign, she warned European leaders darkly against interfering in Britain’s election. She referred to unspecified “threats” from the Continent in the way most Western democracies talk about Russia.

Europe rarely achieves a speedy consensus on anything, but thanks to Mrs. May, the 27 member states (minus Britain) are now of one mind. If this qualifies as tactical smarts, how much worse could Mr. Corbyn do?

It is not only in Brussels that the self-described “bloody difficult

woman” may be in for a bloody difficult time. A crisis of legitimacy could soon emerge. Mrs. May inherited a Conservative majority in the House of Commons of just 17 seats, which she clearly felt was too narrow for comfort. If she fails to lift that margin much beyond 30, people will ask why she bothered to call an election in the first place. Leadership rivals will start circling.

With the prospects of a disadvantageous Brexit deal rising, Scotland would be tempted to push for another referendum on independence. Northern Ireland, too, where a majority of people voted to Remain, may become restive if its open border with the Republic of Ireland, a mainstay member of the European Union, is placed in doubt. Amid all this disunion, Britain would turn further in on itself. So much for plucky buccaneering.

This is the pass that our provincial-minded elite has brought us to. Unserious about the country’s tradition of global engagement, this generation has squandered the prestige of Britain’s place in the postwar international order, all for petty party advantage and pandering.

After his Brexit debacle, Mr. Cameron left power much as he had wielded it, humming absent-mindedly as he bade farewell from Downing Street. But he, a son of privilege, has landed on his feet. The same is by no means certain for Britain.

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL.**

Zeke Turner

4-5 minutes

June 7, 2017 7:51 a.m. ET

Germany to Move Troops Fighting Islamic State From Turkey to Jordan Amid Escalating Tensions

BERLIN—Germany said on Wednesday its air force contingent engaged in the campaign against Islamic State would leave Turkey after Ankara refused to allow German lawmakers access to the troops in the latest escalation of

tension between the two North Atlantic Treaty Organization allies.

German Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen said Chancellor Angela Merkel’s cabinet had approved her proposal to relocate

the more than 250 troops to an air base in Jordan from Incirlik Air Base in southern Turkey, a launchpad used since last year by German forces to fly reconnaissance and refueling missions in support of the

U.S.-led coalition fighting Islamic State in Syria and Iraq.

The “great patience” Germany showed while Turkey denied access to the base had run out, Ms. von der Leyen said in an interview with German radio Wednesday morning. “We have a parliament-led army and it goes without saying lawmakers need to visit the servicemen and women,” she said.

While the move means Germany will stop flying reconnaissance and refueling missions during the relocation, defense experts said they think the country’s modest contribution to the anti-Islamic State coalition means the dispute is unlikely to undermine the campaign.

But it marks an admission of failure by Berlin, which has gone out of its way to appease Ankara in talks between Ms. Merkel and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Brussels last month and between the president and German Foreign

Minister Sigmar Gabriel in Turkey this week.

Despite mounting domestic pressure to toughen her line against a Turkish regime seen here as increasingly autocratic, Ms. Merkel has been reluctant to damage ties with Ankara, which is working with the EU on keeping a flow of refugees from the Middle East to Europe in check.

But a succession of diplomatic spats centered on Mr. Erdogan’s crackdown on domestic opponents have sent the relationship to a historic low. After Turkey’s decision to block German lawmakers from visiting German troops in Incirlik in recent weeks, Ms. Merkel finally yielded to demands from parliament that the troops be withdrawn.

Germany will now have to transfer Tornado jets, a refueling aircraft, and thousands of tons of equipment from Incirlik to Jordan’s Muwaffaq Salti Air Base, according to Ms. von der Leyen. She said coalition partners would be asked to help

cover Germany’s operational responsibilities during the move. The entire relocation is expected to extend for up to three months.

Until they can construct their own infrastructure, German troops will be able to use existing barracks belonging to the U.S., Belgium and the Netherlands at the new base, where Berlin already had an invitation to relocate from the king of Jordan, Ms. von der Leyen said.

The move won’t affect Germany’s troops at the NATO base in Konya, Turkey, which the Turkish government has allowed lawmakers to visit.

Turkey’s ban on visits to Incirlik began last summer after German lawmakers voted to label Ottoman Turks’ killing of more than a million Armenians about 100 years ago as genocide,

Last September, Turkey briefly lifted the ban, but the tension has flared up again this year.

This spring Mr. Erdogan’s constitutional referendum spilled over onto German soil, host to the largest Turkish diaspora in the world, with Germany trying to block Turkish politicians from campaigning here and Turkey comparing modern Germany’s government to the Nazi regime.

Since this winter, Turkey has been holding a correspondent for the German newspaper Die Welt in prison on terrorism-related charges that Germany says are trumped up.

Following the last summer’s coup attempt in Turkey, Germany began hosting asylum seekers affiliated with the Turkish opposition, which the country’s government has targeted in a sweeping crackdown.

Germany’s parliament, or Bundestag, won’t need to approve the cabinet’s decision, Ms. von der Leyen said, since it won’t affect the substance of the parliamentary mandate that governs the operation.

Write to Zeke Turner at Zeke.Turner@wsj.com

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

5-6 minutes

Furman: Buying More Chevys Won’t Fix Germany’s Imbalance

Jason Furman

June 7, 2017 7:35 p.m. ET

President Trump is right: Germany’s trade balance is out of whack, and this ought to be called out. Although it’s a fool’s errand to condemn bilateral imbalances in specific industries—such as auto manufacturing—the important truth remains that Germany overall has the world’s largest current-account surplus.

Unfortunately, a fix will not be found in the sort of bilateral trade negotiations Mr. Trump’s comments seem intended to provoke. The solution is the sort of global cooperation Mr. Trump disdains: multilateral engagement on the macroeconomic drivers of the German surplus by European countries, the Group of Seven, the Group of 20 and—yes—even the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

First, the facts. Last year Germany’s current-account surplus was \$300 billion, or 8% of its gross domestic product. This largely reflected its trade surplus, but also some net investment income. Germany’s surplus was 50% higher even than China’s, though the German economy is only one-third as big. It wasn’t always this way. In 2000 Germany ran a slight current-account deficit.

The German surplus does not come at American expense in a simplistic, zero-sum sense. The U.S. currently has an unemployment rate of 4.3%. The Federal Reserve appears not to want that figure to go much lower because it views this as close to full employment. So if the U.S. got a boost from increased exports to Germany, the Fed would offset it by raising interest rates faster and lowering domestic demand.

Other European countries could make a more legitimate zero-sum complaint about Germany, even if they rarely do these days. Trade partners inside the eurozone do not have access to independent monetary tools, and with a single currency there are no exchange rates to adjust. Countries like France and Spain cannot fully offset Germany’s surplus absent prolonged and painful declines in relative wages and prices.

What has created Germany’s surpluses? Not its trade policies. German tariffs average 1%, slightly below the American average of 1.4%. This should not be a surprise, since lower tariffs generally increase the volume of trade but do not systematically affect the trade balance.

Germany’s massive and growing surpluses instead are rooted in macroeconomic forces. The current-account balance, as a simple accounting identity, is the gap between what an economy saves and what it invests. Say Germany’s

residents save \$100 and invest \$90 domestically. The difference, \$10, is exported as capital. That money is recycled when other nations purchase German exports.

The variable that has changed in recent decades is the rate of German savings. It used to be comparable with that of other advanced economies but has taken off, rising from 22% of GDP in 2000 to 28% in 2015. Germans argue, with some merit, that an aging society like theirs should be saving more to prepare for the future. But at the same time, Germany’s investment has fallen further and faster than other advanced economies—dropping from 24% of GDP in 2000 to 19% in 2015.

Germany’s capital outflows, then, are less an emblem of strength than an indication of the weakness of domestic investment opportunities (or the inability to capitalize on them). One particularly worrisome consequence—and possibly a cause of tepid investment—is Germany’s slow productivity growth. Americans have been disappointed to see their productivity growing at only 1.5% a year since 2000. But Germans have had it much worse, posting productivity gains of 1% a year over the same period. That puts Germany in the bottom half of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

The solution to this problem, contra Mr. Trump, is not for Germans to buy more Chevys and Fords or to

sell Americans fewer Mercedes-Benzes and BMWs (many of which, by the way, were made in places like Alabama and South Carolina). Instead it is to increase Germany’s domestic demand. Faster wage growth leading to stronger consumption would help, but the key is stronger public and private investment.

In addition to being a welcome source of demand in the short run, investment would help to expand the supply side of the economy as well. The case is clearest in the public sector, where the relative standing of Germany’s infrastructure has fallen over time along with spending on it. Berlin also could do more to catalyze investment in critical sectors like energy and broadband.

Global markets act as a brake on countries with growing current-account deficits. But there is no comparable autocorrect for current-account surpluses. This asymmetry calls for multilateral engagement on the true macroeconomic drivers of Germany’s rapidly expanding surplus.

Mr. Trump did make one concrete proposal that would materially help: He called on Germany to fulfill its commitment under NATO to spend 2% of its GDP on defense. Assuming Berlin obliged without cutting spending elsewhere, that would at least make a discernible difference.

Mr. Furman, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International



Bershidsky : The EU Isn't Raising an Army -- Yet

@Bershidsky
More stories by

Leonid Bershidsky

7-9 minutes

The European Commission is cautiously dipping a toe into the void left by U.S. President Donald Trump when he deleted an affirmation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's mutual defense commitment from his recent speech at NATO headquarters. And it's not just an initiative of Brussels bureaucrats: Germany, too, is clearly looking to conduct a more independent defense policy that isn't all about being a good U.S. ally.

The Commission on Wednesday extended its series of reflection papers on the future of Europe with a paper on offering scenarios for closer defense cooperation. "The Transatlantic relationship is evolving," says the document, signed by two Commission Vice Presidents, Federica Mogherini and Jyrki Katainen. "The onus of improving European security lies first of all in European hands." This statement echoes German Chancellor Angela Merkel's recent remarks about the need for Europeans to take their destiny into their own hands, and Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker's words last year that "Europe can no longer afford to piggy-back on the military might of others."

Defense self-sufficiency is easier to discuss than to achieve. The European Union, including the U.K., spends less than half on defense

than the U.S. One way to close the gap is for the 21 countries within the EU that are also NATO members to increase military spending to 2 percent of economic output, something that Trump demands as a condition of further U.S. protection. The Commission offers an alternative: Better coordination of defense spending and establishing a single market for the military industry, which would foster competition and eventually lead to a more manageable arsenal (currently, EU armies use 178 weapon systems compared with 30 in the U.S.).

It's the norm for EU reflection papers to offer several scenarios for the future. The defense paper makes clear its support for the deepest degree of military integration -- a common defense and security system with EU-led military operations that are independent of NATO, and EU-level cybersecurity, border and coast guards. Such a system, with joint procurement financed from the EU budget, should produce economies of scale. The Commission is already proposing, for the first time, a defense allocation in the 2017 EU budget -- at this point, a mere 25 million euros (\$28 million) for joint defense research, to be expanded to 500 million euros a year after 2020. There is also a plan for a fund that will leverage 1 billion euros a year contributed by member states to produce 5 billion euros a year in joint investment in military hardware.

The numbers, of course, are tiny compared with the total defense spending of some 227 billion euros a year. They are as understated as

the establishment of a small joint headquarters to run the EU's non-executive military missions, those that involve training and advice rather than fighting. And all the Commission proposals stress that they are meant to strengthen, not weaken NATO cooperation. But they only look timid; in reality, they are about laying the groundwork for an alternative safety system that will be needed if practical U.S. steps match Trump's rhetoric.

That's not really happening yet. Take the Trump administration's proposal that the European Reassurance Initiative -- an allocation meant to bolster European resistance to a potential Russian aggression -- be boosted to \$4.8 billion from \$3.4 billion. European governments assume the U.S. isn't protecting Europe out of altruism but rather as part of its own national security interests. But since these can now change with Trump's mercurial moods, an alternative mutual defense infrastructure needs to be put in place carefully, without irritating the U.S. That's what the Commission is trying to do.

The alternative to NATO is also necessary because the alliance is no longer the most comfortable framework for northern European countries, whose relations with a key NATO member, Turkey, have cooled in recent months. On Wednesday, Germany announced it would be moving its 260 personnel and its reconnaissance planes to Jordan from Turkey's Incirlik airbase, where they've been stationed to conduct reconnaissance flights over Syria. The Turkish government wouldn't let German

parliament members visit the troops at Incirlik because of numerous political disagreements with Germany, so Merkel's cabinet retaliated. It has also led several European countries in rejecting Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's invitation to hold the next NATO summit in Istanbul.

Though NATO's popularity in Germany has been increasing, a majority of Germans, according to a recent Pew Global study, wouldn't want their country to defend a NATO ally if it got into a military conflict with Russia. So Merkel has a political license to act outside NATO, whose leaders now include, from her point of view, two of the most irritating figures in global politics -- Trump and Erdogan. As in other areas of EU cooperation, she can expect support from French President Emmanuel Macron, who recently appointed Sylvie Goulard, a strong European federalist, as his defense minister.

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NATO is not breaking up, the EU is not building an army and Germany is not really looking to develop a nuclear capability, as some conservatives in Germany have proposed. Rather, a new, less restrictive framework is being explored for European defense. If the U.S. and Turkey eventually stop rocking the boat, it can at least save the EU members some money and make their militaries more compatible and more battle-ready.



Editorial : Europe (Finally) Shows How to Deal With a Failing Bank

Move quickly, protect deposits, and force losses onto shareholders and junior creditors.

With shareholders and junior creditors, not so much.

Photographer: Angel Navarrete/Bloomberg

Credit where credit's due: The sale for 1 euro of Banco Popular Espanol SA, a failing Spanish bank, to rival lender Banco Santander SA shows how the euro zone should handle such cases. The regulators acted swiftly and fairly. Global markets barely noticed. This is a model for future interventions.

Banco Popular's troubles date back to Spain's real-estate crisis, which left the lender with 37 billion euros in nonperforming loans. The bank reported a 3.6 billion-euro loss for the last financial year, spooking investors and leaving regulators looking for a solution.

On Tuesday, the European Central Bank labeled the bank "failing or likely to fail." The Single Resolution Board, the body in charge of managing bank closures, promptly stepped in, forcing the sale to Santander and pushing losses onto shareholders and junior creditors.

Speedy action will prevent the problem from getting any worse. The sale protects depositors and

keeps the bank's lending operations intact under new management, minimizing any knock-on effects. Investors took it all in stride. The Euro Stoxx 600 Banks Index rose on Wednesday and global markets were unperturbed.

Best of all, the sale spared Spain's taxpayers the cost of another bailout. The Single Resolution Board wisely insisted on forcing the bank's losses onto shareholders and junior creditors. It's right that investors should face the cost of the risks they take -- not only because it's fair, but also because it gives banks a clearer interest in managing those risks more carefully.

True, the sale raises some questions for Santander. Spain's largest bank will need to raise 7 billion euros in fresh capital and clean up a toxic loan book it may have had only a few days to assess. Some fear that the bank came under political pressure to agree to the deal. (Chairman Ana Botin says otherwise.) That would be a pity, especially if the bank comes to regret the acquisition.

Nonetheless, the decisive resolution of Banco Popular is a step forward for the euro zone. It's all the more valuable because investors had previously raised doubts about the credibility of Europe's regulators. In the case of Italy's troubled banks, the ECB's Single Supervisory

Mechanism has been slow to act, partly because the Italian authorities

have resisted the kind of bail-in used in Spain.

Perhaps that will now change, as it should. Swift bank resolutions don't

always succeed, but drawn-out denials of the problem always fail.

INTERNATIONAL

THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL.

Iran's Parliament and Shrine of Ayatollah Hit by Terrorists in Deadly, Rare Attacks (UNE)

Aresu Eqbali in Tehran, Iran, Farnaz Fassih in New York and Asa Fitch in Dubai

8-10 minutes

Updated June 7, 2017 8:52 p.m. ET

Suspected Islamic State gunmen struck the Iranian capital Tehran on Wednesday, killing 13 people and targeting two symbolic pillars of the regime: the parliament complex and the shrine of the Iranian revolution's founding father, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

The attacks are the first that Islamic State, a Sunni extremist group, has claimed in predominantly Shiite Iran and they brought a struggle between the two main branches of Islam to the heart of the country for the first time after decades of battles in other Middle Eastern countries. Iran and Sunni-led Saudi Arabia are vying for regional influence.

Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attacks through its official Amaq news agency, which published a video purportedly filmed inside the parliament complex during the attack, but the extent of its involvement—if any—couldn't be immediately verified.

The attacks on two of Iran's most secure sites, if confirmed as the work of Islamic State, would serve as the latest evidence of the group's ability to direct operations against foreign targets despite mounting military pressure on its home bases in Syria and Iraq.

As it loses territory, Islamic State has said recently that it was behind an array of attacks around the world, though it is unclear if it orchestrated the violence, inspired supporters from afar or laid claim to unrelated attacks.

President Donald Trump linked Wednesday's attacks to Tehran's support for terrorism. The U.S. has no diplomatic relations with Iran and has designated Tehran a state sponsor of terrorism.

"We grieve and pray for the innocent victims of the terrorist attacks in Iran, and for the Iranian

people, who are going through such challenging times," Mr. Trump said. "We underscore that states that sponsor terrorism risk falling victim to the evil they promote."

For its part, Iran pointed to Mr. Trump's recent visit to Saudi Arabia and what it said was Riyadh's support for terrorism.

The two attacks on Wednesday unfolded miles apart. Three attackers approached the parliament complex in the center of Tehran at 10:15 a.m. and pretended to have a meeting with lawmakers, according to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, an elite military force.

The attackers shot and killed the security guard at the entrance door and opened fire on civilians waiting to see their representatives, the Guard said.

The terrorists then clashed with security forces protecting lawmakers and took up positions on a floor of offices, where they killed employees, said the Guard, which is responsible for parliamentary security.

Witnesses and social media feeds from inside Iran suggested the parliament standoff took several hours to contain. Several witnesses said the attackers were dressed as women and covered in the head-to-toe black chador that is common attire among conservative Iranian women.

Revolutionary Guard special forces entered the parliament and within an hour contained the threat and killed all three terrorists, the Guard said.

The other attack on Wednesday took place at a shrine near Tehran that contains the remains of Iran's 1979 revolutionary leader, state television said.

Two attackers tried to enter the shrine but security forces became suspicious and tried to stop them, said Hossein Zolfaghari, the deputy interior minister for military and security.

One blew himself up in the courtyard of the shrine and the

second was killed by security forces, said Mr. Zolfaghari. A worker was killed and three security guards were wounded, state television said.

At least 13 people were killed and 42 wounded in the assaults, according to the Interior Ministry.

The U.S. State Department condemned the attacks. "We express our condolences to the victims and their families and send our thoughts and prayers to the people of Iran," State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert said. "The depravity of terrorism has no place in a peaceful, civilized world."

Asked to clarify the difference in tone from the White House statement, an administration official said neither is inconsistent with the administration's policy, and that "we as a government, whether at the State Department or the White House, are absolutely willing to call out the Iranian regime."

Sunni countries such as Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan and Oman also condemned the attacks.

Questions remain about how the attackers were able to plan and carry out a sophisticated attack on two of Iran's most secure sites. Visitors to the parliament are thoroughly searched and typically not allowed to take personal belongings inside, including even a pen. The attackers who entered the parliament had AK-47 rifles, grenades and suicide vests.

The Revolutionary Guard indicated that Saudi Arabia had a hand in the attacks, without providing evidence.

"World and Iranian public opinion view this attack as extremely significant given it comes one week after the president of America met with one of the Arab leaders of a regional country that has consistently supported infidel terrorists," the Guard said—an allusion to Saudi Arabia and to Mr. Trump's recent visit to Riyadh.

"We will not leave any bloodshed unanswered," the Guard said.

Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir dismissed the accusation and called Iran "the number one

state sponsor of terrorism" and a destabilizing force in the region.

Until Wednesday, Iran had largely shielded itself from terrorist attacks by Sunni extremist groups like Islamic State, which regards Shiites as apostates, relying on tight monitoring by its security forces and frequent arrests of people suspected of terrorist plots.

"Tens of terrorist groups were foiled [in Iran] over the past three years," Mr. Zolfaghari told state television, though he didn't identify the groups.

Last October, security forces said they arrested 11 people suspected of planning Islamic State suicide bombings, seizing large amounts of explosives. Another major terrorist plot was disrupted last June, according to state media.

The latest attacks, however, exposed a raft of new security challenges for Iran. They may dent public confidence in the government of recently re-elected President Hassan Rouhani and his ability to keep Iran free of the scourge of Sunni radicalism.

Iran already is fighting Islamic State in Syria, sending thousands of troops and elite members of the Revolutionary Guard to back Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's forces, although they have been accused of focusing more on rebel groups opposed to Mr. Assad's rule.

Iran is deeply involved in Iraq, too, through its support for Shiite militias engaged in a battle to oust Islamic State from the northern city of Mosul, among other areas.

Since the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, Iran has trained, funded and armed Shiite militia groups to fight Sunni insurgents. Those Sunni groups were also fighting American troops and the Iraqi government.

Some Iran watchers expressed skepticism that Islamic State had indeed carried out attacks inside the highly-secure sanctum of Shiite power.

Islamic State has claimed attacks opportunistically in the past, according to Mehdi Khalaji, a fellow at the Washington Institute for Near

East Policy, and the targets of the attack were unusual for the extremists, who usually strike groups of ordinary people rather than political symbols.

Amaq published a video it said was taken inside the parliament building in which two armed men are shown walking into an office. "Thank you God," one of the fighters shouts in

Arabic, as shooting is heard in the background. The video was distributed by the SITE Intelligence Group, which tracks jihadist activity online. It couldn't otherwise be independently verified as having been filmed inside parliament.

"Do you think we're leaving? We're staying until the end of time," one of the armed men said.

The quote was used by Abu Mohammed al Adnani, a founding member and chief spokesman for Islamic State, in a 2011 audio message distributed to jihadist forums.

—Nour Alakraa, Maria Abi-Habib, Carol E. Lee, Felicia Schwartz and Bertrand Benoit contributed to this article.

Write to Farnaz Fassihi at farnaz.fassihi@wsj.com and Asa Fitch at asa.fitch@wsj.com

Appeared in the June 8, 2017, print edition as 'ISIS Claims Its First Terror Attacks on Iran.'

**The
Washington
Post**

Iran parliament and Khamenei's shrine attacked; ISIS claims responsibility (UNE)

By Brian Murphy
and Kareem Fahim

7-9 minutes

The Islamic State has struck at Iran and its allies for years — but always from afar, in places such as Iraq against Tehran-backed militias and in Syria battling government troops aided by Iranian forces.

That appeared to change Wednesday when bloodshed came to Tehran. In a few chaotic hours, Iran endured the kind of deadly rampages so often claimed by the Islamic State elsewhere.

The twin attacks, the first major assaults in Iran claimed by the Islamic State, targeted the heart of Iran's political identity and the notion that militants were no match for the security forces zealously guarding Tehran.

At least 12 people were reported killed and 42 wounded in the assaults in the parliament building and outside the tomb of the leader of the nation's Islamic revolution. Security forces eventually killed all four assailants, state media reported. Hours later, Tehran's police chief said five suspects had been detained and were being interrogated.

While the attacks showed that the United States and Iran have a shared enemy, they appeared unlikely to reset U.S.-led efforts against the Islamic State or bring Iran more directly into the fight — especially since the Trump administration has embraced Iran's main regional foe, Saudi Arabia, as a bulwark in fighting Islamist militants and constraining Iran's regional influence.

In a White House statement, President Trump said Wednesday: "We grieve and pray for the innocent victims of the terrorist attacks in Iran, and for the Iranian people, who are going through such challenging times. We underscore that states that sponsor terrorism risk falling victim to the evil they promote."

The Washington-based National Iranian American Council promptly rebuked what it called Trump's "heartless message," saying that presidents who "cannot genuinely recognize victims of terrorism are incapable of leading the fight against terror."

Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guard Corps took a thinly veiled jab at Saudi Arabia as a source of militant ideology, saying it was "meaningful" that the attacks occurred less than three weeks after Trump visited Riyadh and asserted strong U.S. support for the Saudis and their allies.

The Revolutionary Guard statement added that the "spilled blood of the innocent will not remain unavenged."

[As ISIS loses ground in Syria, a scramble between U.S. and Iran for control]

Iran is predominantly Shiite Muslim and is at odds with Sunni extremist groups such as al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, which view Shiites as heretics and have attacked Shiite targets across the region.

While it is unclear what direct measures Iran could take against the Islamic State, the fallout is certain to deepen regional tensions at a difficult time. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and others have pledged to try to heal an unprecedented diplomatic break in which Saudi Arabia and its allies have severed ties with Qatar, a key U.S. military partner in the Persian Gulf.

The Saudis and their allies accuse Qatar of supporting Islamist militants and oppose its outreach to Iran.

For the Islamic State, striking directly at Iran appears to be part of a wider attempt to stir regional discord.

An attack inside Iran was "absolutely the realization of a long-term ideological goal" for the Islamic State, said Charlie Winter, a senior research fellow at the International

Center for the Study of Radicalization at King's College in London.

"Ideologically, the implications are huge," he said. "Attacking Iran is kind of like attacking the U.S. or Israel."

The near-simultaneous attacks — coming in the middle of the Islamic holy month of Ramadan — also appeared calculated to elicit maximum shock among Iranians.

The parliament is widely respected as a voice on domestic policies even though Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has the final word on most international and security issues. The shrine of Khamenei's predecessor, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, is a centerpiece of homage to the 1979 Islamic revolution, which overthrew Iran's Western-allied monarchy.

[Trump turned his Saudi trip into a rally against Iranian influence]

The timing, meanwhile, could have been intended to boost the Islamic State's stature among backers as it faces a two-pronged assault against its key urban strongholds: Mosul in northern Iraq and Raqqa in Syria. An expanded offensive by U.S.-backed forces against Raqqa, the Islamic State's de facto capital, began Tuesday.

"It is indeed a boost to ISIS morale, especially given that it's the first successful attack in Iran," said Dina Esfandiary, who studies global security issues at the Center for Science and Security Studies at King's College. The Islamic State is also known as ISIS.

Iranian state TV quoted Khamenei as dismissing the attacks as mere "fireworks" that would not weaken Iran's fight against groups such as the Islamic State.

The Islamic State's Amaq News Agency claimed that the group carried out the attacks. The Islamic State, however, is often quick to take ownership of spectacular assaults without providing evidence.

But the news agency also circulated a 24-second video that purported to

show a fighter walking near a body during the attack on the parliament.

"Oh, Sunni people in Iran, don't you feel the pain from those shackles that are tied around your wrists and ankles?" one militant said in the video, calling on Sunnis to wage battle against Shiites in their "dens and gatherings" in Tehran and other Iranian cities.

The Islamic State also began distributing its online magazine Rumiya in Persian late last month.

Iran views its parliament, or Majlis, as a symbol of participatory government in contrast with its main regional rivals, including Saudi Arabia and allied sheikhdoms in the Persian Gulf. Last month, Iran's president, Hassan Rouhani, won reelection in a race against hard-line challengers.

[Iran's election is over, but bigger issues of leadership loom]

"The parliament has very specific meaning for Iran after the recent election. Its democracy was attacked," said Marc Martinez, a senior analyst and Iran expert at the Delma Institute, a political consultancy in Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates.

The expansive complex around Khomeini's tomb is a spiritual and political testament to the Islamic revolution. The huge courtyard and buildings, including blue-tiled domes that tower over the mausoleum, are particularly filled with visitors during Ramadan, which began two weeks ago.

Act Four newsletter

The intersection of culture and politics.

Attacks of this kind are rare in Iran's capital, where security forces are deployed at prominent sites. The Revolutionary Guard Corps also maintains a vast network of informants and allies through a volunteer paramilitary force called the Basij.

The parliament building is in the center of the city, and Khomeini's

tomb complex is about 12 miles to the south.

Iran has suffered terrorist attacks in the past but rarely in cities or the capital. Separatist groups and Sunni extremists have carried out bombings in the border region near

Pakistan, including a suicide attack in 2010 that killed 39.

Paul Schemm in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; Loveday Morris in Irbil, Iraq; and William Branigin and Carol Morello in Washington contributed to this report.

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U.S. and Iran aligned against the Islamic State — for now

Iran president blames U.S. for Mideast violence

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**The
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Times**

At Least 12 Killed in Pair of Terrorist Attacks in Iran (UNE)

Thomas Erdbrink
and Mujib

Mashal

11-14 minutes

Iranian security forces outside the Parliament building on Wednesday. Tima, via Reuters

Armed assailants, including some disguised as women, stunned Iran on Wednesday with brazen attacks on the Parliament building and the tomb of its revolutionary founder, the worst terrorist strike to hit the Islamic republic in years.

At least 12 people were killed and 46 were wounded in the near-simultaneous assaults, which lasted for hours, clearly took Iran's elite security forces by surprise and shattered the self-proclaimed image of calm in a turbulent region.

The six known attackers also were killed, official news media said, and five suspects were reported detained. Their identities were not made clear.

"We will avenge the blood of those martyred in today's terrorism attacks," said Brig. Gen. Hossein Salami, deputy commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, the country's powerful paramilitary force.

In a statement, the Revolutionary Guards appeared to blame Saudi Arabia and the United States for the assaults even as responsibility for them was asserted by the Islamic State, the Sunni extremist group that has taken credit for terrorist attacks around the world in the past few weeks.

If the Islamic State's claim is true, that would be its first successful attack in Iran, which is predominantly Shiite Muslim and regarded by Sunni militants as a nation of heretics. Iranian-backed forces in Iraq and Syria are helping battle the Islamic State.

Eleven people died in the Parliament building assault, and one at the mausoleum of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, father of the 1979 revolution, whose shrine is a magnet for visitors. Four of the assailants were killed at the Parliament building, official news media said, and two at the

mausoleum. Five were men, and one mausoleum assailant was a woman.

The audacity of the assaults, and the hours it took to end them, suggested that Iranian security officials had been caught unprepared — especially for what seemed like a coordinated plan conceived well in advance.

"It's very clear that for this group to be able to mount such attacks it must have had a network inside the country that was not put in place yesterday, an infrastructure that took time to develop," said Randa Slim, an analyst at the Middle East Institute in Washington.

Tensions in the Middle East were already high after a visit by President Trump last month, in which he exalted and emboldened Saudi Arabia, Iran's regional rival. Saudi Arabia and several Sunni allies led a regional effort on Monday to isolate Qatar, the tiny Persian Gulf country that maintains good relations with Iran.

Expressions of sympathy from world leaders for the victims poured in after the assaults. But hours elapsed before a condolence statement was issued by the Trump administration, which has called Iran the leading state sponsor of terrorism.

"The United States condemns the terrorist attacks in Tehran today," the statement from the State Department said, adding, "The depravity of terrorism has no place in a peaceful, civilized world."

Afterward, however, the White House press office issued a modified version with a swipe at Iran's government. "We underscore that states that sponsor terrorism risk falling victim to the evil they promote," the statement said.

On Thursday, the Iraqi foreign minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, denounced the statement on Twitter. "Repugnant WH statement & Senate sanctions as Iranians counter terror backed by US clients. Iranian people reject such US claims of friendship," he said.

The Saudis rejected Iran's accusation of complicity. Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir, speaking in Germany, said that he did not know

who was responsible and that "we condemn terrorist attacks anywhere they occur."

Hours earlier, Mr. Jubeir said Iran should be punished for what he called its interference in the region.

The body of a man suspected of having attacked the mausoleum of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in southern Tehran on Wednesday. Ebrahim Noroozi/Associated Press

In their public pronouncements, Iranian leaders sought to belittle the assailants and their acts, emphasizing that the Parliament chamber itself had never been breached.

"The Iranian nation is moving forward and advancing; even these firecrackers that were set off today will not impact our nation's will; everyone must know this," Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the nation's supreme leader, said on his official website.

The speaker of Parliament, Ali Larijani, called the attacks a "minor incident," saying that "some cowardly terrorists" had infiltrated the legislative complex.

But accounts of lawmakers and journalists stuck inside the Parliament building suggested panic and mayhem, and state news media video showed some people escaping through windows.

The attacks started around 10:30 a.m., when men armed with assault rifles and suicide vests — some of them dressed as women — descended on the Parliament building, killing at least one guard and wounding and kidnapping other people. That standoff lasted until midafternoon.

In a sign that elite security forces had trouble containing the situation, one attacker left the Parliament building after an hour, ran around shooting on Tehran's streets, then returned to the building — where at least one assailant blew himself up on the fourth floor as others fired from the windows.

"I cannot talk, I'm stuck here, and the situation is really dangerous, the shooting is continuing, we are surrounded, and I cannot talk," an Iranian journalist, Ehsan Bodaghi, said by phone from inside the building during the standoff.

Korosh Karpur, a member of Parliament, said in an account reported by the Tasnim News Agency that he had played dead to avoid getting shot after leaving the hall to receive an arriving guest. He was chatting with a guard, Mr. Karpur said, when gunfire erupted.

Iranian police officers helping civilians leave the Parliament building in Tehran on Wednesday. Omid Vahabzadeh/Fars News, via Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

"As soon as one guard fell, a person screaming 'Allahu akbar' started firing on people and a second person followed and kept firing with a Kalashnikov," Mr. Karpur said. "I didn't have a weapon, so I dropped to the floor so the terrorists would think I also was hit."

He said the assailants kept shooting in a failed effort to enter the parliamentary chamber, then headed for lawmaker offices on a different floor.

Mohammad Ali Saki, editor of The Tehran Times, said in a phone interview that the Parliament building assailants had "targeted guards, cleaners, employees of the administrative and finance sections," but had "never got near the Parliament chamber itself."

The assailants were armed with AK-47s and hand grenades and wore what appeared to be explosive vests, he said.

Mohammed Abasi, a photographer who arrived as the attack was unfolding, said that he saw security forces "firing at the attackers from outside" and that some reporters and photographers covering the Parliament session were stuck inside awaiting rescue.

"Naturally, for a few hours a terrorist attack like this leaves a shock: Our countrymen were killed, and this was a terrorist attack," he said. "But I already see that it is uniting Iranians — there is a sense of fight."

The Islamic State released a graphic 24-second video showing a bloodied man lying in the Parliament building while a gunman shouted in Arabic: "Thank God! Do you think that we are going to

leave? We will remain here, God willing.”

The assault on the Khomeini mausoleum, about 10 miles south of Parliament, lasted for about 90 minutes, state news media reported.

Security personnel outside the mausoleum of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini after the attacks on Wednesday. Ebrahim Noroozi/Associated Press

Two assailants entered the west wing of the sprawling compound. According to local news agencies, at least one attacker detonated explosives in the western entrance. Another was reported to have committed suicide by swallowing a cyanide pill, although another account said the militant had been shot to death by security forces.

Mohammed Ali Ansari, overseer of the mausoleum, said that militants who appeared to have explosives strapped to them “started shooting

blindly and without a target.”

In the view of many in Iran, the Islamic State, also known as ISIS or ISIL, is inextricably linked to Saudi Arabia. “ISIS ideologically, financially and logistically is fully supported and sponsored by Saudi Arabia — they are one and the same,” said Hamidreza Taraghi, a hard-line analyst.

One Iranian security official said the attacks had been a message from Saudi Arabia meant to teach Iran a lesson. He also said the assaults were intended to test Iran’s reaction.

While terrorist attacks have become more frequent in Europe and in much of the Middle East, Iran had remained comparatively safe. During May’s election campaign, President Hassan Rouhani often lauded the country’s security forces and intelligence agencies for their vigilance.

For many years, however, the country endured a bitter campaign

of attacks by an armed opposition group, the Mujahedeen Khalq or M.E.K., which for decades had been supported by the former Iraqi dictator, Saddam Hussein.

In many M.E.K. attacks, members would take cyanide when cornered. In 2012, the group was taken off the United States’ list of terrorist organizations with the support of conservative Republicans who sought to recast it as a legitimate political opposition organization, which also goes by the name of the National Council of Resistance of Iran.

Some Iranian analysts suggested that the M.E.K. may have been connected to the Wednesday assaults, partly because of the targets: M.E.K. leaders had said Ayatollah Khomeini’s tomb would be among their first. The use of a female attacker and cyanide pill to commit suicide also smacked of the M.E.K.’s past practices.

“This is not to say that the attack was an M.E.K. operation,” said

Rasool Nafisi, an Iranian-American scholar, “but it is fair to say that the group’s ‘expertise’ might have been utilized in training those terrorists who targeted Iran.”

The group condemned the attacks, denied involvement and accused Iran’s leaders of having secretly welcomed them. Maryam Rajavi, president of the National Council of Resistance of Iran, said online that Ayatollah Khamenei was “trying to switch the place of murderer and the victim and portray the central banker of terrorism as a victim.”

Correction: June 7, 2017

A previous version of this article misstated the length of a video apparently made during the attack on the Parliament building in Tehran. It was 24 seconds, not 24 minutes.



Attacks Pose Challenge to Iranian Regime

Farnaz Fassihi in New York and Asa Fitch in Dubai

4-5 minutes

June 7, 2017 4:59 p.m. ET

Iranians reacted with horror and defiance after Wednesday’s attacks, as the country’s leaders confronted new security and political challenges in the wake of the unprecedented violence.

Islamic State claimed responsibility for the twin attacks, which targeted the parliament complex in Tehran and the shrine of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, Iran’s founding figure, killing 13 people and wounding dozens.

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei dismissed the attacks as “fireworks,” and said they left Iranians more determined than ever to fight terrorism. “The terrorists are too small to affect the will of the Iranian people and the authorities,” he said, according to his official website.

President Hassan Rouhani, a pragmatist who was elected to a second four-year term last month, said Iran was still the safest country in a chaotic region.

Yet the attacks, which included shootings and bombings, sent shock waves of worry through Tehran.

“Everyone is worried, we don’t know if this means it’s a start of terrorist attacks in Iran,” said Mina, a 52-year-old engineer in Tehran. “We always thought we were shielded here and safe.”

After the attacks, security forces were out in force in public squares and metro stations. Tehran residents said military checkpoints were set up across the capital and at entry and exit roads to the city.

Iranians said there was a sense of anxiety and rumors swirling about the possibility of more attacks, as people sent each other messages to avoid the subway or high-traffic areas.

Iranian forces have long fought Islamic State extremists on the battlefields of Syria and Iraq, but the

Sunni extremist group hadn’t successfully carried out any operations within predominantly Shiite Iran until Wednesday.

The attacks raise questions about Iran’s justification for its military involvement in Syria and Iraq—a presence that has cost billions of dollars to sustain. Mr. Khamenei has said Iran’s Revolutionary Guards must battle Islamic State and other Sunni extremists in places like Syria to prevent them from penetrating Iran’s borders.

“The excuse for Iranian forces in Syria was to safeguard Iran’s borders. Leave Syria alone and come protect your own country,” wrote Sepehr Khorami, a journalist with the reformist Etemad newspaper, on Twitter.

The attacks could also lead Iran to redouble its focus on combating Islamic State in Iraq and Syria.

“These attacks are likely to prompt a rally-round-the-flag effect, more popular support for Iran’s interventions in Iraq and Syria, and extreme domestic securitization,”

said Ali Vaez, a senior Iran analyst at the International Crisis Group.

Supporters of the regime leveraged the attacks as reason to pursue the fight against Islamic State in Syria and Iraq. Ahmad Tavakoli, a conservative politician, praised the Iranian fighters who were killed in Syria and said “may the martyrs rest in peace.”

Others shared pictures on social media of people holding hands across a map of the country. Several lawmakers trapped inside the parliament took selfies smiling and posted messages of defiance saying things were under control.

Lawmaker Gholamreza Tajardoost posted on Instagram an image of text messages he was exchanging with other lawmakers as the attacks were happening.

“We have no fear even if [Islamic State] is two steps from us,” Mr. Tajardoost wrote in a message that went viral in Iran.

Write to Farnaz Fassihi at farnaz.fassihi@wsj.com and Asa Fitch at asa.fitch@wsj.com



What the Islamic State Wants in Attacking Iran

Paul McLeary | 52 mins ago

5-6 minutes

After years of waiting and wanting to strike Iran, the Islamic State

claims to have finally done so. According to recent news reports, four militants went on a shooting spree in Iran’s parliament, while other operatives detonated a bomb inside the mausoleum of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Republic, killing 12

people. If the Islamic State indeed ordered the attacks, it has struck at the temporal and spiritual heart of the Iranian revolutionary government.

The Islamic State has aimed to strike Iran since at least 2007, when

it openly threatened to attack the country for supporting the Shiite-dominated government in Iraq. It regards Persian Shiites as apostate traitors who have sold out the Sunni Arabs to Israel and the United States. This determination to strike Iran marked a key difference with al

Qaeda, which long held off attacking the Islamic Republic in order to use it as a rear base and financial hub.

In 2007, Osama bin Laden wrote a private letter to the leaders of the Islamic State urging them to cease and desist. "You did not consult with us on that serious issue that affects the general welfare of all of us," the al Qaeda chief wrote. "Iran is our main artery for funds, personnel, and communication, as well as the matter of hostages," bin Laden went on to explain. "There is no need to fight with Iran, unless you are forced to."

Bin Laden's concerns were well placed. After 9/11, a contingent of al Qaeda operatives and members of bin Laden's family fled to Iran, where they were kept under house arrest or close surveillance. Among them was Bin Laden's son Hamza, now promoted by al Qaeda as its heir apparent. The Iranian government loosened or tightened its leash on the operatives and family for strategic reasons, and al Qaeda refrained from attacking the government to protect its people and to preserve

its corridor to Afghanistan and Iraq.

The Islamic State did not like the directive but bent the knee to its emir, bin Laden. But when al Qaeda and the Islamic State split in 2014, an Islamic State spokesman used this disagreement to paint his organization as the more committed jihadi group. He revealed that its rank and file had long pressed for an attack, but al Qaeda forbade it because the organization wanted to "protect its interests and its supply lines."

Presuming the Islamic State's claim of responsibility for today's attack is authentic, why did it wait three years to carry out a strike if it had been free to do so since 2014?

Presuming the Islamic State's claim of responsibility for today's attack is authentic, why did it wait three years to carry out a strike if it had been free to do so since 2014? Absent internal testimony from the organization, there are several ways to think about the timing. The Islamic State may not have had operatives capable of carrying out the attacks until now. During the past few years, it steadily

assembled and trained a cadre of Iranian commandos. It wouldn't surprise me to learn that some of them were able to return home and carry out a sophisticated attack, as French and Belgian jihadists have done over the past two years.

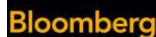
There may also be strategic reasons, as found in one of the group's favorite insurgent manuals, *The Management of Savagery*. Reasons for attacking Iran might include punishing an adversary for attacking its territory, provoking an all-out sectarian war to force Iraqi Sunnis to side with the Islamic State, or provoking the Iranian government to launch a domestic crackdown on Sunnis that would lead them to turn to the Islamic State for protection.

Finally, the Islamic State wants to win its struggle with al Qaeda for the hearts and minds of global jihadists. The group badly needs recruits in order to replenish its decimated ranks in Syria and Iraq. A daring attack on Iran's capital makes al Qaeda look foolish for refusing to carry out a siege of its own. The timing of the assault is also significant. To prove that it is

still relevant in order to attract new recruits, the Islamic State seeks to inspire or direct global attacks during Ramadan, the Muslim month of fasting. Last Ramadan was incredibly bloody, and this Ramadan is on pace to match or surpass it.

Whatever the case may be, if the claim proves true, the Islamic State will have succeeded where so many other Sunni jihadi groups have failed. It has struck at the heart of the hated theocracy of "Safavids," as the group describes Iran. At a time when the Islamic State's caliphate is crumbling and its morale flagging, the strike won't reverse its ill-fortunes — Iran may decide to hasten the demise of the Islamic State in response. But it is a vital shot in the arm for the group as it transitions from a proto-state to an insurgency.

Photo credit: OMD VAHABZADEH/AFP/Getty Images



Editorial : Stand Against Terrorism, Even in Iran

by The Editors
More stories by The Editors

3-4 minutes

Give peace a chance?

Photographer: Atta
Kenare/AFP/Getty Images

There is only one acceptable response to Wednesday's deadly terrorist attacks in Iran: swift and unequivocal condemnation of the perpetrators, and condolences to the victims. By joining the other world leaders who have offered their sympathy, U.S. President Donald Trump can reaffirm both



standing in the

Islamic State Stakes Global Claims as Territory Shrinks

Maria Abi-Habib
and Raja

Abdulrahim

7-8 minutes

Updated June 7, 2017 4:31 p.m. ET

BEIRUT—As its empire in Iraq and Syria fast crumbles, Islamic State has claimed responsibility for a flurry of attacks on three continents in a bid to project power when its survival as a self-proclaimed caliphate is at stake.

community of nations and its determination to defeat terrorism, whatever and wherever its source.

Yes, there is an obvious irony here: The U.S. has rightly condemned Iran's long history of support for violence and funding of groups such as Lebanese Hezbollah and Palestinian Hamas. Washington's sanctions on the Tehran government for this, as well as human-rights abuses and violations of United Nations' strictures on missile defense, will remain in place. But this is not the moment to talk of just deserts.

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The Sunni extremist group has already said it was behind 12 attacks around the world in the first seven days of June, including Wednesday's assaults on Tehran targeting symbols of the Shiite regime's power.

With real battlefield gains now few and far between, symbolic victories have become critical for Islamic State to remain relevant to supporters around the world, according to Western and Arab diplomats who monitor the group. Horrific, headline-grabbing attacks still have the power to stir sympathizers, they said, and project

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Nor can expressions of sympathy be offered in expectation of a change in behavior -- the idea that this horrific event may make Iranian leaders somehow more amenable to altering their strategy of supporting the Syrian regime and instead focus on defeating Islamic State, which has claimed responsibility for the attacks. Such attacks cannot help but change their perspective. Only time will tell how that will translate into policy.

It's unfortunate that a statement from Iran's elite military force, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, looks to pin part of the blame for the attacks on Trump's recent visit to Saudi Arabia. The U.S. should not

an image of power to seduce new recruits.

"For supporters, they need the organization itself to demonstrate its power so they are inspired to act themselves," said a senior U.S. official monitoring Islamic State.

It is unclear if the carnage has been orchestrated and directed by Islamic State, if the group's propaganda has inspired far-flung supporters to action, or if the group is laying claim to mayhem sown by others.

The spurt of violence over the past few weeks, however, has coincided with Islamic State losing its grip on

rise to the bait, and fortunately the State Department's pro-forma official statement does not. This is no time to score propaganda points.

For 16 years, the U.S. has insisted that the fight against terrorism is not against any religion but against an ideology of hate and murder. This is a chance to show the sincerity of those claims. Trump wasted no time condemning the spate of recent terrorist attacks in the U.K., and the same reaction is called for now. The murder of innocents is wrong, always and everywhere.

its main power centers in Syria and Iraq, and a call for action by the group in late May.

"As the organization is put under more pressure in Raqqa and Mosul, they'll launch more attacks in the West," the senior U.S. official said. "The question is: Do they have the ability and the networks available to them?" the senior U.S. official said. The official said that security forces have made progress unraveling terror networks in Europe.

Western officials have long warned that Islamic State would increase attacks abroad to offset the damage

inflicted to its image as it loses territory. The European Union police agency said last year that as Islamic State is weakened in Syria and Iraq, foreign fighters might try to enter the EU at a higher rate, and increasingly strike soft targets such as cafes, echoing past statements by European officials.

Wednesday's attack in Iran came a day after U.S.-backed forces began an assault to retake Raqqa—the de facto capital of a self-proclaimed caliphate that spanned Syria and Iraq and was once the size of Belgium.

The Pentagon estimates there are fewer than 1,000 Islamic State militants still in Raqqa, which was once the group's main population center and inhabited by Syrian, Iraqi and foreign fighters. At its peak, ISIS commanded some 25,000 fighters in both countries.

The iron grip with which Islamic State once ruled the city and its residents has loosened as the group's fighters struggle to hold on to territory. Current and former Raqqa residents have described a leadership in chaos, meting out fewer brutal punishments as residents break more of the group's strict rules.

A U.S.-backed Iraqi offensive, meanwhile, has been painstakingly routing the militants from Mosul over the past eight months. The militants are now cornered in a narrow strip of the city.

Islamic State has responded to offensives by calling for attacks wherever and however possible, no matter how rudimentary. Former spokesman Abu Mohammed Al Adnani, before his death in a U.S. airstrike in August, was known to encourage followers to strike in the West with methods including running people over or hitting them with a rock.

In London on Saturday, the attackers used a vehicle to mow down victims—a tactic also used in London in March, in Berlin in December and in the French city of Nice in July 2016. Vehicular attacks allow plotters to move under the radar of security forces. Bombings require more planning but often inflict higher casualties.

At the start of the Muslim holy fasting month of Ramadan in late May, Islamic State called on supporters to launch more attacks. Members and sympathizers posted messages on social media vowing a month of jihad.

Since then, the group has claimed responsibility for attacks by gunmen on a bus carrying Egyptian Christians, a suicide bombing at an Ariana Grande pop concert in Manchester and a deadly fire started by a gunman at a Manila casino that Philippine police said was a botched robbery attempt.

Islamic State has also deployed explosive devices, such as the one

that ripped through Brussels Airport last year.

But senior American officials say that so far, Islamic State seems unable to build the kind of complicated explosives that al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula is known to produce.

Also known by its acronym AQAP, the al Qaeda branch based in Yemen has become the parent group's nerve center for global plots. Those include the so-called underwear bomber who tried to take down a U.S.-bound airliner on Christmas 2009.

"So far, another Islamic State group hasn't emerged that is as competent" as AQAP, the senior American official said. "The technology issue is going to be a challenge, but give it time and it could develop."

The commander of the U.S.-led coalition fighting Islamic State, Lt. Gen. Steve Townsend, said Tuesday that capturing Raqqa would deliver a decisive blow to the idea of Islamic State as a physical caliphate and make it harder for the terrorist group to gain new recruits.

But he said that seizing Raqqa wouldn't destroy the group. "We all saw the heinous attack in Manchester, England," Gen. Townsend said. "ISIS threatens all of our nations, not just Iraq and Syria, but in our own homelands as well."

Inside Raqqa, residents have noted the absence of foreign fighters feared as brutal, hardened warriors. Instead, younger local fighters are now manning Raqqa's front lines, one resident said. He described this as a sign of Islamic State's hollowed-out ranks and desperation—teenagers as young as 15 who are recent graduates of what the group calls its Caliphate Cubs or child soldier training camps.

The few checkpoints left inside Raqqa city are mostly military police looking for Islamic State militants who don't have permission to be away from the front lines and inside the city, the resident said.

"The rest have been all thrown on the front lines," he added.

—Nour Alakraa contributed to this article.

Corrections & Amplifications
Islamic State claimed two attacks in Europe in March. A graphic that accompanied an earlier version of this article incorrectly stated that those claimed attacks had occurred in Africa. (June 7)

Write to Maria Abi-Habib at maria.habib@wsj.com and Raja Abdulrahim at raja.abdulrahim@wsj.com

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As ISIS retreats in Syria, U.S. and Iran scramble for control

<https://www.facebook.com/lovedaymorris?fref=ts>

7-8 minutes

BEIRUT — U.S.- and Iran-backed forces are locked in a race to take Islamic State strongholds in southeastern Syria and seize a stretch of land that will either cement Tehran's regional ambitions or stifle them.

The scramble for pole position in Deir al-Zour province is likely to be one of the most consequential fights against the extremist group in Syria, posing a regional test for President Trump as his administration turns up the rhetoric against Iran.

On Wednesday, the Islamic State asserted responsibility for twin attacks in Tehran that left at least a dozen people dead, a clear reminder of the group's reach as it faces off against Iranian and U.S. forces and the proxies they support in Syria and Iraq. If confirmed, they

would be the group's first major strikes in Iran.

U.S.-backed forces launched an offensive this week to push the Islamic State out of its self-proclaimed capital of Raqqa. But there are signs that the battle that follows, in the eastern province of Deir al-Zour, will be tougher still, and have greater consequences for the group's long-term survival as a force holding significant territory.

Experts say the Islamic State has moved senior leaders into Deir al-Zour, along with a growing number of foot soldiers as it loses control of Mosul, the group's "capital" in Iraq, and internationally backed forces move in on Raqqa.

[U.S. coalition begins 'long and difficult' battle for Islamic State stronghold]

Located between Raqqa and the Iraqi border, the city of Deir al-Zour is the largest urban center in eastern Syria. To the south, Syrian and Iran-backed forces are moving in on several fronts, as the United States supports its own coalition of

rebel groups to get to the province first.

Victory for the Iran-backed force would give Tehran control of a large swath of the Syrian-Iraqi border, securing a land route through Iraq and across southern Syria to its proxy, Hezbollah, in Lebanon.

For the United States, control of Deir al-Zour brings a bargaining chip for the future and demonstrates to regional allies its willingness to challenge Iran, after Trump promised to roll back the country's "rising ambition."

"The weakening of ISIS was always going to open a race for territory, dominance and influence. The aggressive tone coming from Washington incentivizes Iran to speed up its operations," said Emile Hokayem, a Middle East analyst at the International Institute for Strategic Studies. "The problem is that even what the U.S. sees as limited goals clash with more-ambitious Iranian ones."

Proximity has sharpened tensions between the two sides. On

Tuesday, the United States clashed directly with Iranian proxies for the second time in a month, bombing pro-government militia members advancing on an outpost used by U.S. Special Forces near Syria's southeastern border with Iraq.

[On the front lines of the fight for the Islamic State's capital of Raqqa]

To reach the province, both sides are moving through Syria's vast southern desert as they head for the Islamic State-held town of Bukamal, the first in a series of towns they must take in the push north to Deir al-Zour.

The race began last month after Russia, Turkey and Iran agreed to a cease-fire across parts of western Syria. Rebel commanders and Western diplomats say the deal was intended to help the Syrian government and its allies concentrate resources in the east as they struggled to hold ground on multiple fronts.

"We see the link clearly now. Accepting those de-escalation

zones meant the regime and its allies were able to relax and move resources," said Abu Waleed, a commander with the U.S.-backed rebel group Usoud al-Sharqiya.

The retaking of the oil-rich Deir al-Zour region would diminish the government's economic dependence on Iran and Russia, which have bankrolled its fight against the armed rebellion that began in 2011.

The U.S. military said last week that it had bolstered its "combat power" in southern Syria, warning that it viewed Iranian-backed fighters in the area as a threat to nearby coalition troops fighting the Islamic State.

U.S. Army Col. Ryan Dillon, a spokesman for the U.S.-led coalition in Iraq and Syria, told reporters last Thursday that Iranian-backed forces were 20 miles within a perimeter declared a week earlier in an attempt to de-escalate tensions and holding firm near the U.S. base at al-Tanf, a key border crossing.

Coalition aircraft, he said, dropped leaflets asking militia members to leave.

As Iraqi security forces fought pitched battles against Islamic State militants in Mosul in recent months, an array of Iran-backed and largely Shiite paramilitary groups have steadily pushed through the desert west of the city,

reaching the Syrian border last week.

Militia leaders said they aimed to move south along the border and retake the main crossing points into Syria.

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Photographs recently circulated showed Maj. Gen. Qasem Soleimani, commander of Iran's elite Quds Force, in the border area with Iraqi forces. Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi has also visited the popular mobilization forces there and praised their "achievement" in reaching the frontier.

"At this stage, it depends less on what Assad and Iran does and more on what the United States does," said Aron Lund, a fellow at the New York-based Century Foundation.

"If the U.S. and its allies have built up a strong enough force to move on al-Bukamal, then of course they can get there first. But can they get there in a way that is sustainable? They don't seem to be sure of what they want to do."

Zakaria Zakaria in Istanbul, Mustafa Salim in Baghdad, Dan Lamothe in Hawaii and Thomas Gibbons-Neff in Washington contributed to this report.



Arab States Drawing Up List of Demands for Qatar

Jay Solomon and Felicia Schwartz

6-7 minutes

June 7, 2017 6:40 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON—Leading Arab states are drawing up a list of demands that Qatar must meet to return to normal diplomatic and economic relations, including steps to significantly scale back the Al Jazeera media network, said Arab and U.S. officials involved in the discussions.

Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt and their allies are also seeking guarantees that Qatar's government will stop its alleged financing of Middle East extremist groups and sever relations with the political leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood, a global Islamist movement, according to these officials.

Some of the Brotherhood's leaders, particularly from Egypt, are in exile in Doha, Qatar's capital city.

These Arab states severed diplomatic ties with Qatar on Monday and closed their land and air borders, claiming the gas-rich monarchy was destabilizing the Mideast. Saudi and Emirati officials said they are preparing more steps to punish Qatar, including imposing additional economic sanctions, in the coming days.

U.S. President Donald Trump spoke by phone with Saudi Arabia's King Salman on Tuesday and with the emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani on Wednesday. Mr. Trump also spoke with Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohamed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, who drives U.A.E. policy.

The White House said Mr. Trump stressed the importance of maintaining unity among Gulf states, but not if doing so compromises efforts to eliminate funding for extremism or to defeat terrorism.

However, Germany and Turkey have made a show of support for Qatar on Wednesday, weighing in on a regional crisis that is beginning to drive a wedge between the U.S. and some of its closest allies.

In a meeting with his Saudi counterpart in Berlin, German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel called on Saudi Arabia and others to help de-escalate the crisis, saying cooperation is necessary to fight Islamic State. Like Germany, Turkey—another close ally of both the U.S. and Qatar—has criticized the hard-line stance of Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries against Qatar.

Senior U.S. officials said Mr. Trump told the Arab monarchs he is prepared to mediate the dispute between the Arab states, some of whom host major American military installations. But the Trump administration stressed it needed a clear list of grievances to pass on to Qatar's leadership, and that Washington wouldn't necessarily endorse them.

These Arab and U.S. officials said this official list of demands is being compiled and could be completed in the coming days. Qatar's ambassador to Washington, Meshal bin Hamad Al-Thani, said in an interview on Wednesday that his government still didn't know the specifics behind these Arab states' decision to sever ties. He stressed that Doha is open to the Trump administration trying to mediate a diplomatic resolution.

"Until now, there have been no clear requests," said Mr. Al-Thani, a member of Qatar's ruling family. "We are working toward de-escalation."

Saudi and Emirati officials have publicly accused Qatar of channeling funds to al Qaeda-linked groups in Syria and Yemen and providing a diplomatic safe-haven for the Muslim Brotherhood. Ambassador Al-Thani denied Qatar knowingly has provided funding to any terrorist organizations. He said Doha is willing to take additional actions.

The Brotherhood took power in Egypt in 2012 following the political revolt against Cairo's longstanding strongman, Hosni Mubarak. The Egyptian military overthrew his elected successor, the Islamist politician Mohammed Morsi, the following year.

Qatar also has hosted the political leadership of the Palestinian militant group, Hamas, which is affiliated with the Brotherhood and has been designated as a terrorist organization by the U.S. and European Union. Both the Barack Obama and George W. Bush administrations at times used Qatar as a diplomatic channel to Hamas, according to current and former U.S. officials.

"Do we need to do more? We all need to do more," the Qatari official said. "We have to take action."

Al Jazeera, the pan-Arab television network, has emerged in recent years as a particular source of tension between Qatar and many of its Arab neighbors. Qatar staunchly supported the political rebellions that spread across the Middle East in 2011. And Al Jazeera and affiliated media organizations have regularly provided a platform for Muslim Brotherhood

leaders. Officials with Al Jazeera, which is funded by Qatar's government, didn't respond to a request to comment.

Saudi Arabia, the U.A.E., and Egypt, in particular, charge Qatar has used Al Jazeera to try to destabilize their countries. One Arab official said reining in the media network will definitely be among the demands on the list.

"This has been going on for years," said the senior Arab diplomat involved in the discussions.

Mr. Trump's offer to help resolve differences among the parties came a day after he appeared to take credit for the rift and sided with Saudi Arabia and the U.A.E. in the dispute.

But on Wednesday, Mr. Trump offered to host all of the parties at the White House, "if necessary," according to a White House statement.

He also said: "A united Gulf Cooperation Council and a strong United State-Gulf Cooperation Council partnership are critical to defeating terrorism and promoting regional stability."

The GCC includes Saudi Arabia, U.A.E., Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain and Oman.

Unlike a series of tweets on Tuesday singling Qatar out, Mr. Trump on Wednesday "emphasized the importance of all countries in the region working together to prevent the financing of terrorist organizations and stop the promotion of extremist ideology," in a the White House statement.

—Andrea Thomas, Margherita Stancati and Margaret Coker contributed to this article.

**The
New York
Times**

Eric Schmitt

7-8 minutes

Trump Has Busy Day in Vortex of Middle East Relations (UNE)

David E. Sanger,
Mark Landler and

maintain 'America First' — another way of saying keeping a light footprint in the region."

WASHINGTON — Rarely has the Trump administration spoken of Iran other than to condemn it as the world's chief sponsor of terrorism and an aspiring nuclear weapons state. So when the White House woke on Wednesday to images of a possible Islamic State attack on Tehran, it prompted a sharp quandary: How does President Trump condemn the violence without seeming to embrace the victims?

Several administration officials said it took most of the day for the White House to work out the terse, curt wording of a statement that sought to show sympathy for the Iranian public even as it pointedly suggested that the behavior of Tehran's clerical leaders made its people a target.

"We grieve and pray for the innocent victims of the terrorist attacks in Iran, and for the Iranian people, who are going through such challenging times," Mr. Trump wrote. "We underscore that states that sponsor terrorism risk falling victim to the evil they promote."

The statement capped a day during which Mr. Trump thrust himself into the messy politics of Persian Gulf states, trying to also play peacemaker in a bitter dispute between Qatar and other Sunni Muslim neighbors that threatens to splinter a Middle Eastern alliance fighting the Islamic State.

For the administration, Wednesday served as a reminder that the world does not operate in the black-and-white terms that Mr. Trump used on the campaign trail and on Twitter, one in which the Sunni-dominated Islamic State and Shiite Iran are part of a continuum of "radical Islamic extremism."

"This is an illustration of the competing priorities and contradictions facing this administration, which will prove hard to reconcile," said Robert Malley, the top Middle East policy official for the Obama administration. "You can't be all-out against Iran, all-out against ISIS and terrorism, and

Just a day earlier, on Tuesday, Mr. Trump posted a series of tweets taking credit for Saudi Arabia's move to isolate Qatar and appearing to ally with Riyadh. The president also asked King Salman of Saudi Arabia in a call to draw up a list of grievances for Qatar to address, according to a senior administration official.

Defense Secretary James Mattis was greeted by military dignitaries as he arrived at Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar in April. Jonathan Ernst/Reuters

That call followed several by Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson, who knows the Sunni gulf leaders from his days as chief executive of Exxon Mobil. He asked Saudi officials to list the demands they want Doha to meet in return for an end to the dispute, and lift a newly imposed embargo against Qatar by Saudi Arabia, Egypt and several other states.

Inside the administration, Mr. Tillerson and Defense Secretary Jim Mattis repeatedly noted that the United States could not afford a rupture between Saudi Arabia and Qatar. There are roughly 11,000 American troops at Al Udeid Air Base, outside Doha, where the air war against the Islamic State is managed.

The Qataris were shocked at the contradiction between evenhanded statements from the State Department and Pentagon, and Mr. Trump's tweets castigating the tiny Gulf state. They began asking American officials whether their longtime alliance was in peril.

By Wednesday, Mr. Trump offered to invite both sides to the White House and suggested Mr. Tillerson as a mediator. The president also called the Qatari emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, to repeat his urgings on Twitter to cut off financing of extremist groups. While Qatar's support for those groups — including the Muslim Brotherhood, which the Saudis and the Egyptians consider a serious threat — is without question, the same charge could be leveled at the Saudis, who have allowed funds to flow to other Sunni extremists.

Analysts said Mr. Trump's public support for Saudi Arabia emboldened the kingdom and sent a chill through other Gulf states, including Oman and Kuwait, that fear that any country that defies the Saudis or the United Arab Emirates could face ostracism as Qatar has.

"Everyone in the region is looking over their shoulder, thinking, 'This is potentially us,'" said Gerald M. Feierstein, a former ambassador to Yemen who was the State Department's second-ranking diplomat for Middle East policy from 2013 to 2016.

Mr. Feierstein, now the director for gulf affairs at the Middle East Institute, said that "the bottom line for us is, we have to come out of all this with a consensus on combating terror finance and not blowing the G.C.C. to smithereens," he said, referring to the Gulf Cooperation Council, the loose association of Sunni Arab states.

Among the Saudi complaints about Qatar — mostly that it finances extremists and hosts Al Jazeera, the Arab news channel that is frequently critical of the Saudis — is its episodic cooperation with Iran. That may add to Mr. Trump's suspicions about Qatar.

Ultimately, Mr. Trump told the Saudi and Qatari leaders that the campaign against the Islamic State would be more effective with a unified alliance. Mr. Trump also spoke on Wednesday with Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, the crown prince of Abu Dhabi in the U.A.E., underscoring G.C.C. unity to promote regional stability, "but never at the expense of eliminating funding for radical extremism or defeating terrorism," according to an administration statement.

Mr. Trump's hesitant response to the terrorist attack in Iran underscored that the hurdles to pursuing a unified strategy come from Washington as well.

The Trump administration is divided about how to deal with Tehran, and two White House reviews of Iran policy have been grinding ahead for weeks.

The carefully bifurcated White House statement about the onslaught in Iran, which killed 12 and wounded 46, was issued

shortly before 4 p.m. in Washington. More than three hours earlier, the State Department issued its own statement to stoutly condemn the attacks.

"We express our condolences to the victims and their families, and send our thoughts and prayers to the people of Iran," said a State Department spokeswoman, Heather Nauert. "The depravity of terrorism has no place in a peaceful, civilized world."

One faction in the National Security Council has been pressing to find ways to sanction Iran, hoping to reimpose economic penalties against Tehran that were lifted after the 2015 nuclear agreement between world powers and the Islamic republic. But that strategy risks blowing up the accord, which others in the administration — including Mr. Mattis and the national security adviser, Lt. Gen. H. R. McMaster — want to preserve to keep Iran from quickly developing a nuclear weapon. To date, Iran has complied with the agreement.

But there appears to be no chance, administration officials say, that the Trump administration will try to find common cause with Tehran on fighting the Islamic State. Nor does there appear to be a strategy yet for managing the growing competition between Saudi Arabia and Iran for dominance of the Middle East.

The result is that while the Trump administration now finds itself in the middle of the Saudi-Qatari dispute, it may soon find itself caught between the Saudis and Iran. On Wednesday, Tehran accused the Saudis of likely being behind the terrorist attack against the Parliament in Tehran, despite no evidence of such responsibility so far.

"It's in U.S. interests to try and compel Tehran and Riyadh to address their differences and cooperate against ISIS," said Karim Sadjadpour, a senior fellow in the Middle East Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. "Acrimony and distrust between Iran and Saudi Arabia only causes more civilian casualties in Syria and Yemen, more refugees pouring into Europe, and more Sunni and Shia radicalism."

**The
Washington
Post**

Trump's pressure on Iran may be stoking sectarian tensions in Mideast

<https://www.facebook.com/greg.jaffe.5>

8-10 minutes

President Trump has for weeks pressed disparate forces throughout the Middle East to band together with Saudi Arabia to fight terrorism and punish Iran, long viewed by hawks inside his administration as the main source of instability and terrorism in the region.

But in his push to empower the Saudis, Trump may have unleashed problems, including increased sectarianism and regional strife, that are as bad as the one he was trying to fix, inflaming tensions that could imperil the battle against the Islamic State and other critical U.S. priorities.

"That's the fundamental problem in the Middle East," said Phil Gordon, a former official in the Obama White House who focused on the region. "Solving one problem in the region inevitably exacerbates others and can easily lead to escalation."

Trump administration officials, meanwhile, attributed rising regional tensions to the failed policies of the Obama administration, which in recent years had unnerved traditional U.S. allies in the region with policies that appeared to empower Iran.

The signs of that escalation were apparent Wednesday when Iran's leaders blamed Saudi Arabia for an attack by the Islamic State in Tehran that left 12 people dead and wounded 42 others. The stunning assault capped several days of spiraling tensions that kicked off when Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates led a group of Arab allies to move against Qatar — a U.S. partner and host of the main American air base in the region — which had sought accommodation with Iran.

Trump immediately celebrated the Saudis' move and even took some credit for it on Twitter.

"During my recent trip to the Middle East I stated that there can no longer be funding of Radical Ideology," Trump said on Tuesday. "Leaders pointed to Qatar - look!"

[As ISIS loses ground in Syria, a scramble between U.S. and Iran for control]

The danger for the United States and the Trump administration is that the spiraling tensions and saber-rattling throughout the region could imperil some of its key initiatives.

Sunni-led monarchies Saudi Arabia and Qatar are both part of the U.S.-led coalition against the Islamic State, a Sunni extremist movement that both have been accused over the years of at least indirectly financing.

Qatar is also part of a fragile, Saudi-led coalition fighting against Houthi rebels, in Yemen, backed by Iran's Shiite government.

Defense Secretary Jim Mattis has made rolling back Iran's ambitions in Yemen and reaching a negotiated settlement with the rebels a top priority as a step toward containing it across the region. A split among the Arab partners fighting there would be a significant boon for Iran, said analysts.

Yet Trump appeared to take Saudi Arabia's side this week in a dispute with Qatar that his own senior national security advisers tried to quell with evenhandedness.

Qatar is an "artificial crisis," said Michele Dunne, a Middle East expert at the State Department from 1986 to 2003 and director of the Middle East program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

"All of the issues being cited — support for Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood" and the Qatar-based media organization Al Jazeera, which has been critical of both the Saudis and the U.A.E. — "have been going on for years now," Dunne said. "Why, all of a sudden, is there a crisis over it now? It does seem as though the Trump administration's approach to the region has sent a message to Saudi Arabia and the Emirates that they can call the shots in the region, and the U.S. will stick with them."

Dunne and Christopher Davidson, associate professor in Middle East politics at Durham University in England, suggested that Saudi Arabia's long-range plan, in addition

to forcing Qatar to mitigate its more open attitude toward both Iran and political Islam, may include inviting the United States to move its air operations in the region from Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar back to Saudi Arabia.

So far, Davidson said: "Qatar is sticking to its guns. Turkey has pledged to support them, and there is provocative news that Iran might support them, too."

Senior Trump administration officials criticized the idea that Trump's backing for the Saudis on his recent trip or his latest tweets condemning Qatar for terrorism financing had contributed to instability or sectarian tension in the region. Instead, one White House official said that it was the previous administration's chilly relationship with Saudi Arabia and its deal with Iran to halt its nuclear weapons program that had "unleashed sectarianism."

From the opening moments of his trip to the Middle East, Trump made clear that he was determined to take the opposite approach of his predecessor. President Barack Obama assiduously avoided taking sides in the region's sectarian conflicts and infuriated the Saudis by suggesting that they would have to "share" the region with Iran.

"The Saudis interpreted that as the president telling them that the Iranians are a predator, and they should acquiesce to their ambitions and surrender to them," said Dennis A. Ross, who served as a senior Middle East adviser to Republican and Democratic presidents. "That is not my interpretation. That is literally what I was told in the region."

Since taking office, Trump has flipped the script, prioritizing the battle against all forms of terrorism over sectarian and regional tensions. The result for now is a stepped-up battle against the Islamic State that has led to deeper U.S. military involvement, some impressive battlefield gains and greater civilian casualties.

Both Trump and the Saudis described the president's meetings in the kingdom last month as the beginning of a new era in U.S.-Arab

relations, the fight against terrorism and a much harder line on Iran.

"People have said there has really never been anything even close in history," Trump said.

His national security adviser, H.R. McMaster, amplified that message and spoke hopefully of a new alliance involving Israel and America's Arab partners — "all friends of America but too often adversaries of each other" — to roll back Iranian influence.

In a meeting with reporters, McMaster described Iran as "the greatest state sponsor of terrorism in the world" and a malign influence that has perpetuated civil war throughout the region.

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"These are really, really good reasons to focus on a concerted effort to counter Iran's destructive activities," McMaster said.

The long-term bet is that the United States' allies will be willing to take a harder line against Sunni Arab terrorist groups, such as the Islamic State, if the United States is also taking a harder line against Iran, which the Saudis and the Emiratis see as an existential threat.

In recent days, though, it has been hard to divine the exact policy that the administration is pursuing, especially regarding the dispute between the Qataris and the powerful Saudi-led bloc opposing them, and whether it is promoting more or less stability.

"What they are doing vis-a-vis Qatar is really unprecedented," Ross said. "This is not symbolic. You break diplomatic relations, deny Qatari planes the ability to operate in your airspace, call back nationals. This is a very tough response."

"The policy looks very much like a work in progress," Ross said.

Greg Jaffe is a reporter on the national staff of The Washington Post, where he has been since March 2009. Previously, he covered the White House and the military for The Post.



Will Qatar's Diplomatic Exile Spark the Next Great War?

Paul McLeary | 50 mins ago

7-9 minutes

Sarajevo 1914, Doha 2017? We could be at a historic moment akin to the assassination of the heir

presumptive to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which resulted in what became known as the Great War. This time, though, the possible clash is between a Saudi-United Arab Emirates force and Iran. Washington is going to have to act quickly to stop the march to war,

rather than wait for the carnage to begin.

The nominal target of Saudi Arabia and the UAE is Qatar, which has long diverged from the Arab Gulf consensus over Iran. Riyadh and a growing list of Arab countries broke ties Monday with the gas-rich

emirate, and Saudi Arabia announced that it had halted permission for Qatari overflights, closed the land border, and banned ships bound for Qatar transiting its waters. This is a casus belli by almost any definition. For perspective, the Six-Day War, which occurred 50 years ago this week,

was prompted by Egypt's closure of the Straits of Tiran, thus cutting off Israel's access to the Red Sea.

In response, Iran reportedly announced it will allow Qatar to use three of its ports to collect the food imports on which the country is dependent — a gesture that Riyadh and Abu Dhabi will probably see as only confirming Doha's treacherous ties with Tehran.

There are at least two narratives for how we got here. If you believe the government of Qatar, the official Qatar News Agency was hacked on May 24 and a fake news story was transmitted quoting Emir Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani as saying, "There is no reason behind Arabs' hostility to Iran." The allegedly false report reaffirmed Qatar's support for the Muslim Brotherhood and its Palestinian offshoot, Hamas, as well as claiming Doha's relations with Israel were good.

The government-influenced media in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, meanwhile, adopted an alternative narrative, treating the news story as true and responding quickly with a burst of outrage. The emir's comments were endlessly repeated and, to the anger of Doha, internet access to Qatari media was blocked so that the official denial could not be read.

There is a possibility that the initial hacking was orchestrated by Tehran, which was annoyed by the anti-Iran posture of the May 20-21 summit in Riyadh, when President Donald Trump met King Salman bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud Salman and representatives of dozens of Muslim states. On June 3, the Twitter account of Bahraini Foreign Minister Sheikh Khalid bin Ahmed al-Khalifa was hacked for

several hours in an incident his government blamed on Shiite opposition activists, rather than pointing the finger at Iran. Iran's motive would be to show Gulf disunity — as well as its irritation with Trump's endorsement of the GCC stance against Tehran.

For its part, Qatar sees itself as a victim of a plot by Riyadh and Abu Dhabi, which have had a traditionally antagonistic relationship with Doha despite the shared membership of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

Riyadh views Qatar, which, like the kingdom, gives Wahhabi Islam a central role as a regional troublemaker.

Riyadh views Qatar, which, like the kingdom, gives Wahhabi Islam a central role as a regional troublemaker. Doha, which allows women to drive and foreigners to drink alcohol, in turn blames the Saudis for giving Wahhabism a bad name. Meanwhile, Abu Dhabi despises Doha's support for the Muslim Brotherhood, which is banned in the UAE.

Although there was an awkward eight-month diplomatic hiatus in 2014, the root of today's trouble harkens back to 1995, when Emir Tamim's father, Hamad, ousted his increasingly feckless and absent father from power in Doha. Saudi Arabia and the UAE regarded the family coup as a dangerous precedent to Gulf ruling families and plotted against Hamad. According to a diplomat resident in Doha at the time, the two neighbors organized several hundred tribesmen for a mission to murder Hamad, two of his brothers, as well as the ministers of foreign affairs and energy, and restore the old emir.

The UAE even put attack helicopters and fighter aircraft on alert to support the attempt, which never actually happened because one of the tribesmen betrayed the plot hours before it was to take place.

With such events as background, any paranoia on the part of Emir Tamim may be justified. Over the weekend, a UAE newspaper reported that an opposition member of Qatar's ruling al-Thani family, Sheikh Saud bin Nasser, intended to visit Doha "to act as mediator."

With just 200,000 or so citizens, it can be hard to explain the importance of Qatar. Foreigners living there sometimes regard it with bemusement. The Doha skyline at night is dominated by often-empty though lit-up skyscrapers, one of them nicknamed, because of its shape, "the pink condom." Yet, Qatar has the planet's highest per capita income. After Iran, the emirate boasts the largest natural gas reserves in the world and is a huge exporter to markets stretching from Britain to Japan. It also is host to the giant al-Udeid Air Base, from which American aircraft flew combat operations during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and which is a command center for the U.S. campaign against the Islamic State.

For the 37-year-old Emir Tamim — who rules in the shadow of his father, who abdicated in his favor in 2013 — the key priorities are probably to remain a good U.S. ally while not doing anything to annoy Iran. His country's gas wealth is mostly in a huge offshore field shared with the Islamic Republic. So far, the Qatari drinking straw has taken more out of this hydrocarbon milkshake than Iran has.

Washington can play an important role in defusing this potentially explosive situation. U.S. officials may believe that Qatar was being less than evenhanded in its balancing act between the United States and Iran — but a drawn-out conflict between Riyadh and Doha, or a struggle that pushes Qatar into Tehran's arms, would benefit no one. In this respect, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson is arguably well-placed. ExxonMobil, where he was CEO before joining the U.S. government, is the biggest foreign player in Qatar's energy sector, so he presumably knows the main decision-makers well.

Riyadh and the UAE also seem to be establishing their bona fides as alternative sites for the U.S. forces now at al-Udeid. Their credentials are not as good as they might argue. In 2003, Saudi Arabia pushed U.S. forces out of Prince Sultan Air Base, as Riyadh tried to cope with its own Islamic extremism in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. Abu Dhabi already hosts U.S. tanker and reconnaissance aircraft, but it would take time to establish a fully equipped command center to replace the facility at al-Udeid.

The confrontation marks a test for Trump's young administration. It was only weeks ago when at the photo-op in Riyadh, Emirati Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan shouldered aside Emir Tamim so he could be at the U.S. president's right hand. Now, Saudi Arabia and the UAE are trying to do the same thing on the international stage. Of all the possible Middle East crises, Trump's advisors probably never mentioned this one.

Photo credit: FAYEZ NURELDINE/AFP/Getty Images

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL.**

COMMENTS

3-4 minutes

Editorial : Qatar's Reckoning

June 7, 2017
7:33 p.m. ET 24

The rift between Qatar and four of America's Sunni-Arab allies led by Saudi Arabia broke into the open this week. On Tuesday Riyadh closed ground routes to Qatar, and the Saudis and others blocked Qatari vessels and aircraft from their waters and airspace, all but isolating the tiny Persian Gulf monarchy. President Trump seemed to signal support for the diplomatic blockade on—where else?—Twitter. This is an overdue reckoning for Qatar, albeit with some risk to Western interests.

On Monday Bahrain, Egypt, the Saudis and the United Arab Emirates suspended diplomatic ties with the Qataris. The Saudis spoke for the other three when they accused Doha of "financing, adopting and sheltering extremists," and they are right. For years the Qataris have maintained a two-faced policy toward the West, their Arab neighbors and the various Islamist movements that threaten Middle East stability.

Qatar hosts a U.S. military base that is crucial to American operations against jihadists including Islamic State. The base is also a guarantor of the tiny country's independence, against the Saudis as well as Iran, with which Doha shares a natural-gas field in the Gulf.

At the same time the Qataris have supported the Islamist groups that

seek to overthrow established regimes. Al Jazeera, the Qataris' popular television network, provides a platform to Yusuf al-Qaradawi, a leading Islamist ideologue who has praised Hitler for carrying out "divine punishment" against the Jews.

Qatar has also funded and provided a refuge to leaders of the Palestinian terror group Hamas, and it financed Islamist militias in Libya after the fall of Moammar Gadhafi. Qatari individuals and charities fund the Syrian branch of al Qaeda, according to the U.S. State Department, and the Qatari state is open about its support for the Muslim Brotherhood.

It isn't clear what triggered this week's rupture, which some attribute to a recent ransom payment of \$1 billion to an Iranian-backed militia that had kidnapped

prominent Qataris in Iraq. Others point to Mr. Trump's tough anti-Islamist rhetoric during his visit to Riyadh last month. The Saudis may have interpreted Mr. Trump's speech as a green light to confront Qatar after eight years during which his predecessor looked the other way. Mr. Trump bolstered that conclusion with a tweet Tuesday: "During my recent trip to the Middle East I stated that there can no longer be funding of Radical Ideology. Leaders pointed to Qatar—look!"

Mr. Trump can't seem to resist giving himself credit for everything. But the goal of U.S. policy now should be to restore Arab unity to forge a common front against Sunni radicals and Iranian imperialism. The aim of the current pressure shouldn't be to permanently isolate

Doha but to bring its conduct into line with what is expected of a Western ally. The diplomatic brawl

has put Qatar on notice that it must stop supporting radicals, but the

country will be an even larger problem if it joins arms with Iran.

Appeared in the June 8, 2017, print edition.

**The
New York
Times**

Editorial : President Trump Picks Sides, Not Diplomacy, in the Gulf

The Editorial Board

4-5 minutes

"During my recent trip to the Middle East I stated that there can no longer be funding of Radical Ideology," he wrote, adding, "Leaders pointed to Qatar — look!" In two other tweets he reinforced this message, saying: "So good to see the Saudi Arabia visit with the King and 50 countries already paying off. They said they would take a hard line on funding ... extremism, and all reference was pointing to Qatar. Perhaps this will be the beginning of the end to the horror of terrorism!"

It is true that Qatar, like Saudi Arabia, can be a troublesome partner, but Saudi Arabia's complaint about Qatar and terrorism is hypocritical. Qatar has long been accused of funneling arms and money to radical groups in Syria, Libya and other Arab countries. But so has Saudi Arabia, a fact that Mr. Trump, seduced by royal flattery, chose to ignore. Instead, he made common cause with Saudi Arabia

against its perceived adversaries — Iran, the main enemy, and Qatar, faulted for supporting terrorism and Iran's regional ambitions. A far wiser course would have been to seek a balance between Qatar and Saudi Arabia. That he did not is one more in a string of bad decisions that have unnerved allies and partners.

This is also a bad time to alienate Qatar. With the United States allies beginning an assault on Raqqa, the Islamic State's "capital" in Syria, America needs its bases.

Energy-rich Qatar has also played a unique role by mediating regional conflicts and pursuing an independent foreign policy, sometimes angering the Saudis and other gulf states. It supported the 2011 Arab Spring uprisings that made the Saudis fearful, and it established the pan-Arab news network Al Jazeera as a vehicle for expanding its influence. Qatar has engaged Israeli officials, while at the same time hosting leaders of Hamas; maintained ties to Iranian leaders, while hosting U.S. forces; and allowed the Afghan Taliban to open an office in Doha, Qatar's capital, that has facilitated talks

between the militants and the United States.

The American ambassador to Qatar, Dana Shell Smith, this week retweeted one of her posts, saying that Qatar made "real progress" in curbing financial support for terrorists, reportedly including prosecuting people for funding terrorist groups, freezing assets and putting stringent controls on its banks. The State Department stressed that Qatar still has a ways to go, and there is continuing debate about Qatar's support of groups linked to the Muslim Brotherhood, a Sunni Muslim group seen by Qatar as a constructive example of "political Islam" but by Saudi Arabia as a threat to hereditary rule and regional security.

On Iran, Qatar has generally adopted a middle ground by supporting efforts to limit Iran's regional influence while maintaining a conversation with Iran's senior officials. Qatar has a reason to work with Iran: They share a large natural gas field in the Persian Gulf. At the same time, Qatar is helping a Saudi-led coalition fight the Iranian-linked Houthi rebels in Yemen, and

backing insurgents fighting an Iranian ally, President Bashar al-Assad of Syria.

One thing seems clear in all this complexity: Tiny Qatar is much more adept at diplomacy than is Mr. Trump. The man who sold himself as a shrewd deal maker seems to believe instead in green lights and blank checks, causing great damage to American interests. Even the \$110 billion weapons package he signed in Riyadh turned out to be fantasy, a collection of letters of interest or intent, not contracts, all begun during the Obama administration, according to Bruce Riedel, a former C.I.A. analyst who was a senior official in the Obama White House.

Legislation blocking this deal is working its way through Congress. At a minimum, lawmakers should refuse to resupply the Saudis with precision-guided munitions that are killing civilians in Yemen and implicating America in the process. Even better would be to hold up the package until the Saudis enter into serious negotiations on Yemen and resolve their differences with Qatar.

Bloomberg

Editorial : Give Qatar a Break

by The Editors
More stories by

The Editors

4-5 minutes

A tree grows in Doha.

Photographer: Stringer/AFP/Getty Images

A family feud has broken out in the Arabian Gulf, threatening a crucial American military base, and the best thing the U.S. can do is act as mediator. Unfortunately, that is not President Donald Trump's preferred role -- especially when he's on Twitter.

A coalition of Arab states, led by Saudi Arabia and including Egypt and the United Arab Emirates, have cut diplomatic relations and barred travel and commerce with Qatar. That small nation, the world's richest per capita, has spent years trying to become a player in regional politics, often to the irritation of its Gulf neighbors.

QuickTake Q&A: Qatar vs. Saudi Arabia

Qatar opposed the coup in Egypt that installed a military government, for example, and supports Islamist movements, while the government-sponsored TV network, Al Jazeera, is frequently critical of the Gulf monarchies. These are among the issues that led those same Arab neighbors to temporarily cut off relations in 2014. The biggest current issue is Qatar's relationship with Iran, which they consider an existential threat.

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The situation reached a crisis point last month when Qatar's emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, phoned Iranian President Hassan Rouhani to congratulate him on his re-election. The official state news agency also published a story with quotes from the emir both favorable to Iran and critical of Trump -- remarks the Qatari government denies, and which the U.S. is said to be investigating as a possible plant by Russian hackers.

Regardless, Trump tweeted on Tuesday that his trip to Riyadh last month, when he sided firmly with the Arab states against the Tehran government, is "already paying off." Qatar's funding of extremism, he tweeted, was the reason for its isolation.

But Qatar is not the only Gulf state that funds terrorists, which Trump knows. More to the point, Trump should be working to reconcile the monarchies, to ensure that the winners in all this aren't Iran, the terrorists and Russia, which has volunteered to play peacemaker.

Qatar's wealth depends on an underwater natural gas field it shares with Iran, so it has to maintain at least cordial relations. Some of its other "offenses" are even more defensible, such as Al Jazeera's subjective yet uncensored news coverage.

Most important, Qatar hosts the U.S.'s main Middle Eastern airbase and the forward headquarters of the Pentagon's Central Command. This is the nerve center of the wars against Islamic State and the

Taliban -- and all officials from the boycotting countries have been yanked away on the eve of a climactic battle in Raqqa, Syria.

It is futile, at this point, to advise Trump not to use Twitter. But someone has to be able to persuade him not to undermine his own administration and U.S. interests. Pushing Qatar into the arms of the Kremlin and Tehran would be a colossal mistake. The president, or at least Secretary of State Rex Tillerson -- who as former CEO of Exxon Mobil has deep ties to most of the players -- should be working to heal this rift, not widen it.

--Editors: Tobin Harshaw, Michael Newman.

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Editorial : One antidote to the use of female jihadists

The Christian Science Monitor

Fars News Agency.

2-3 minutes

June 7, 2017 —Analysts are still weighing the potential repercussions in the Middle East of the June 7 terrorist strikes in Iran. If Islamic State (ISIS) is behind the attacks, as the group claims, that may influence the wars in Syria and Iraq, tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia, or ISIS's competition with Al Qaeda. But one aspect of the assault in Iran is worth noting: One of the attackers was a woman, according to the

Hundreds of women have joined ISIS since 2014, but none has had such a prominent role as in the Iran attacks. As more terrorist groups use female jihadists, several Muslim countries are trying to raise the role of women in Islamic life — as spiritual guides. The hope is that women, either as teachers or preachers of moderate Islam, can prevent the radicalization of young people, either men or women.

These efforts are only a few years old but they are worth noting as a possible antidote to women becoming terrorists. Morocco has already trained more than 400

women since 2006 to work in mosques, schools, and other institutions. Turkey has been increasing the number of female preachers since 2003 while Egypt decided earlier this year to appoint as many as 200 female imams.

While women leading men in prayer is still forbidden in most Muslim countries, China, with some 21 million Muslims, has long had female preachers. And Indonesia, which is home to the highest number of Muslims, has a long history of women as preachers. In April, it held what may have been the first "congress" of female

Muslim clerics. The event attracted participants from several countries.

Giving authority to women in religious leadership has changed many religions for the better. It promotes equality based on the idea that all are equal before God. Within Islam, women trained as spiritual guides might be better able to reach would-be recruits of groups like ISIS. If successful, such efforts could not only reduce the number of recruits but change life for women in many Islamic societies.

The Washington Post

'The U.N. bullies Israel, ' Haley tells Netanyahu in Jerusalem

By Ruth Eglash

conservative pro-Israel organizations in the United States.

4-5 minutes

JERUSALEM — The U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, said in Jerusalem on Wednesday that Israel faces bullying at the United Nations — and that she has no patience for it.

Haley arrived in Israel to a hero's welcome one day after warning that the United States might pull out of the U.N. Human Rights Council unless it changes its ways in general and its negative stance on Israel in particular.

Haley, a former governor of South Carolina who often is touted as a future Republican presidential candidate, has focused heavily on what she calls the mistreatment of Israel during her six months at the United Nations.

Her efforts have made her a darling of Israeli leaders, and have endeared her to

"Thank you for all your help and standing up for Israel, standing up for the truth," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told Haley after the two met in Jerusalem.

He said that with backing from President Trump, Haley had begun to "change the discourse" on Israel within the international forum based in New York.

"You know, all I've done is to tell the truth, and it's kind of overwhelming at the reaction," she said. "It was a habit. And if there's anything I have no patience for it's bullies, and the U.N. was being such a bully to Israel, because they could."

[U.S. says it may pull out of U.N. human rights body, citing member abuses, treatment of Israel]

Haley said she has started to see a change in attitude at the United Nations, a body that Israel has complained is overwhelming against it, mostly in regard to its 50-year

occupation of the West Bank and day-to-day treatment of the Palestinians.

Israeli leaders are hopeful that with support from the Trump administration, the United Nations will change the way it treats Israel.

At a meeting of the Human Rights Council in Geneva on Tuesday, Haley said the United States was "looking carefully" at its participation in the council, which she lambasted for allowing countries involved in human rights abuses to remain members while maintaining what she called "chronic anti-Israel bias."

"It's hard to accept that this council has never considered a resolution on Venezuela, and yet it adopted five biased resolutions in March against a single country, Israel," she said.

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Haley will spend three days in Israel, where she is scheduled to visit the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial, spend time in Tel Aviv and take a helicopter ride to Israel's border with the Gaza Strip. She also will meet with Palestinian leaders, Israeli media reported.

"We are honored to welcome you to our country and thank you for standing resolutely by our side," Israeli U.N. Ambassador Danny Danon said at a welcoming ceremony for the American diplomat.

Danon will accompany Haley throughout most of the trip, except during her meetings with the Palestinians and while she takes a private tour of Jerusalem's holy sites.

He said that with help from Haley and the U.S. administration, "now is the time to enact real reforms at the U.N. so that it will reflect Israel's true stature in the international community."

The New York Times

Farkas : Jared Kushner's Not-So-Secret Channel to Putin

Evelyn N. Farkas

6-7 minutes

Matt Chase

In developed capitalist democracies, financial, media and energy companies are private enterprises that don't report to presidents. In Russia, things are different. Most of those businesses are majority-state-owned corporations, virtual branches of the government. And that means when you talk to the head of a Russian bank or oil company, you are effectively talking to the Kremlin.

In 2000, when Vladimir Putin assumed the presidency, he consolidated competing power centers — media, business, local government, opposition parties and the Parliament — under his authority. He called it "a vertical of power." This system now includes organized crime and cybercriminals. Today the top management of these enterprises are Putin allies, and many, like Mr. Putin himself, have worked in the security services, specifically in the K.G.B. and its successor organization, the F.S.B.

The Russian government owns the major television outlets and, according to Russian journalists,

sets the daily news agenda. The head of Rosneft, the state-owned oil company, is Igor Sechin, a former K.G.B. and F.S.B. security officer who served as a top lieutenant to Mr. Putin. Gazprom, the state gas company, is run by Alexei Miller, another former St. Petersburg associate of Mr. Putin. With exclusive rights to export gas, Gazprom controls prices, pipelines and energy diplomacy in Russia. It also owns the country's largest media holding company, Gazprom Media.

The deal Mr. Putin made with these companies, oligarchs and banks was that they would be free to make

money with state help (often to the detriment of the Russian people) as long as Mr. Putin and his cronies got their cut of the profits — and the Kremlin and security forces were free to govern without interference. Failure to comply could lead to loss of one's company or worse: The oil magnate Mikhail Khodorkovsky challenged Mr. Putin on corruption in 2003 and was stripped of his company and put in jail. Oligarchs once close to Mr. Putin have died under suspicious circumstances.

There was one more part of this arrangement: Since the government facilitated the moneymaking, the Kremlin could also demand in return

payments or loans to favored individuals and institutions — no questions asked.

All this is important to understand when considering the case of Jared Kushner, Mr. Trump's son-in-law and senior adviser. According to news reports, Mr. Kushner held a secret meeting with the chief executive of a Russian bank, Vnesheconombank, or VEB, in December, before the Trump administration took office. The purpose of the meeting remains unclear. Was it related to some diplomatic issue, as the White House has suggested? Or was it about Trump or Kushner family enterprises? It is possible the meeting was entirely legal (although actually doing business with the bank would not have been). Because of the nature of Russian banks, either scenario raises troubling questions.

In the case of the major Russian state banks, their

lending decisions are often politically directed, and when capital is tight — such as after the 2008 recession or the 2014 imposition of sanctions by the United States and the European Union on banks for supporting Moscow's military adventurism in Crimea and eastern Ukraine — the Russian government has provided cash infusions from the state treasury.

The bank executive Mr. Kushner met with last December, Sergey Gorkov, is a graduate of the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service academy. His bank, VEB, is regularly used by the Kremlin to finance politically important projects, including some of the infrastructure for the Sochi Olympics in 2014, which cost the Russian government a total of about \$50 billion. VEB also bailed out Ukrainian banks after the 2008 global financial crisis and purchased two failing steel plants in Ukraine — aid reportedly designed to keep President Yanukovich, a

Putin ally, under the Kremlin's control. In Chechnya, the bank provided funds for an industrial park to Ramzan Kadyrov, the republic's ruthless leader and a staunch Putin loyalist. The bank also purchased shares in a Ukrainian steel maker from a Russian-Canadian partner of Mr. Trump in 2010, who built a Trump hotel in Toronto.

VEB employed and financed the defense of a Russian intelligence operative, Evgeny Buryakov, who was deported in April after pleading guilty and being sentenced in 2016 to 30 months in prison for his role in a spy ring. That ring also attempted in 2013 to recruit Carter Page, a foreign policy adviser to the Trump campaign who has sought to do business with Gazprom. Another Trump campaign adviser, Michael Caputo, did work for Gazprom Media in the early 2000s.

The United States government is aware of the special role Russian banks play in advancing Moscow's

espionage efforts and foreign policy. That is almost certainly one reason the F.B.I. has been looking into computer communications between Alfa Bank, a private bank with close Kremlin ties, and the Trump Organization, as part of its broader investigation into Russian meddling in the 2016 election.

Russian banks conduct legitimate business with law-abiding companies around the world, including American banks. But their close ties to the Russian government make Mr. Kushner's meeting with Mr. Gorkov worthy of deeper scrutiny. Mr. Gorkov is part of the Putin power vertical. When Mr. Kushner spoke to him, he was also talking to the Kremlin, and we should know what they discussed.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

4-6 minutes

Updated June 8, 2017 3:55 a.m. ET

SEOUL—North Korea fired multiple cruise missiles into the waters between Korea and Japan on Thursday morning, a day after Seoul said it would suspend any further deployment of a controversial missile-defense system to conduct an environmental review.

The South Korean Joint Chiefs of Staff said they were likely antiship missiles fired from near the city of Wonsan on North Korea's east coast that flew about 125 miles.

The missile launch comes less than a week after the United Nations Security Council passed a new resolution expanding sanctions against North Korea as punishment for its missile tests.

It also comes a day after South Korean President Moon Jae-in formally said he would halt the deployment of a controversial U.S. missile-defense system in South Korea while the government conducts an environmental assessment of the site in southern South Korea.

North Korea Fires Several Ground-to-Ship Missiles

Jonathan Cheng

The Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense, or Thaad, battery currently has two launchers, short of the full array of six launchers that typically comprises a Thaad battery.

The Moon administration said that those two launchers could remain, but that any further deployment would be subject to the review. The U.S. says that the battery, with its two existing launchers, is operational and capable of shooting down North Korean missiles.

Both the White House and Pentagon referred questions about the launches elsewhere. Thursday's launch didn't appear to involve the use of ballistic missile technology, the primary concern of U.S. officials for its potential threat to the American homeland.

Officials in Washington have avoided comment on the controversy surrounding the Thaad missile defense battery, saying they regard it as a domestic issue in South Korea. Proponents of the deployment said the system remains critical to efforts to protect South Koreans from Pyongyang's increasingly sophisticated abilities.

"I hope any environmental concerns related to the full deployment of Thaad will be dispelled with a quick and thorough review," said Rep. Ed Royce (R., Calif.), chairman of the

House Foreign Affairs Committee. "And we must continue to press China and Russia to play more productive roles, since North Korea's nuclear program endangers us all."

Earlier this month, Mr. Moon ordered an investigation after the South Korean Ministry of National Defense deliberately withheld information from the presidential Blue House about the arrival to South Korea of four additional launchers for the Thaad battery.

Mr. Moon has said in recent weeks that he would put the Thaad battery through a full environmental review, following on his campaign pledge earlier this year that he would review the Thaad decision process. But during a meeting last week with Sen. Richard Durbin of Illinois, the second-ranking Senate Democrat, he said that he wasn't planning to reverse Thaad's deployment, according to the presidential Blue House's account.

At other times, Mr. Moon has also appeared to soften his campaign stance against Thaad, notably in his inaugural speech last month, where he said he would work to strengthen the U.S.-South Korea alliance. "Strong security is made possible with mighty defense capabilities," Mr. Moon said then.

Thursday's test-firing comes nearly two weeks after the North's most recent missile launch, which Pyongyang later said was far more precise than any other missile it has launched. Before Thursday, North Korea had launched 12 missiles this year, claiming a number of technological advances as it ramps up its testing in pursuit of an arsenal of missiles that can threaten the U.S. mainland and its allies in the region.

Last week, China and Russia joined the U.S. in passing the new U.N. sanctions, the first since 2013 to respond directly to a North Korea missile launch. The new sanctions target assets and ban travel for 14 individuals and four entities, including a North Korean bank.

At a regular briefing Thursday, a spokeswoman from China's Foreign Ministry urged all relevant parties to refrain from provocative behavior and to make active efforts to ensure the stability of the region.

—Gordon Lubold & Carol E. Lee in Washington and Lingling Wei in Beijing contributed to this article.

Write to Jonathan Cheng at jonathan.cheng@wsj.com

Appeared in the June 8, 2017, print edition as 'North Korea Fires Multiple Missiles.'

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

China Attacks Pentagon Report, Laments U.S. 'Cold War Mentality'

Josh Chin

3-4 minutes

Updated June 7, 2017 8:54 a.m. ET

BEIJING—China pushed back against a Pentagon warning about the Chinese military's growing

ambitions outside Asia, calling the U.S. report "irresponsible" and saying China's defense policy was

aimed at safeguarding its sovereignty.

In a new report on the Chinese military published Tuesday, the U.S.

Defense Department said China's military, the People's Liberation Army, was likely to try to expand its operations outside the region, while strengthening its ability to defend expansive territorial claims closer to home.

"China's defense is for safeguarding China's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said at a regular press briefing Tuesday. Criticizing the U.S. for maintaining a "Cold War mentality," Ms. Hua said the Pentagon report was written "without regard for the facts."

In a statement released late Wednesday, Chinese Defense Ministry spokesman Wu Qian said that the country's military development was reasonable in scope and that criticisms in the

report were "based purely on speculation." He said the PLA "isn't pushing for military expansion, and isn't seeking a sphere of influence."

The report, an assessment of China's military capabilities the Pentagon is required to submit to Congress annually, noted the PLA's construction of a military base in Djibouti, its first overseas outpost, and said it expected China to seek to build bases in other friendly countries, including Pakistan.

Ms. Hua called the mention of Pakistan as a potential site for a Chinese base "speculation." She didn't comment further beyond noting that China and Pakistan "have been long conducting mutually beneficial cooperation in different fields."

The Pentagon report also for the first time examined China's "maritime militia," a growing civilian fleet staffed by military-trained fishermen that Beijing uses for "low-intensity coercion" in defending its vast maritime claims in nearby seas. While the militias used to rent boats from companies or fishermen, China now appears to be building a state-owned fleet to patrol the South China Sea, the report says.

"The maritime militia is literally on the front lines of advancing China's sovereignty claims in the South China Sea," said Andrew Erickson, an expert in Chinese maritime strategy at the U.S. Naval War College.

Mr. Erickson said there were several incidents in the past decade in which militia boats conducted surveillance and carried supplies

during conflicts with China's neighbors over disputed islands. Its inclusion in the report was important, he said.

"By 'calling it out' in public, the U.S. government can reduce the force's room for maneuver," he said.

"China is determined to defend the country's sovereignty and security" in the East and South China Seas, Mr. Wu said in his statement, blaming reconnaissance activities by U.S. warships for increasing tension in the region.

—Pei Li contributed to this article.

Write to Josh Chin at josh.chin@wsj.com

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**The
New York
Times**

Oldest Fossils of Homo Sapiens Found in Morocco, Altering History of Our Species (UNE)

Carl Zimmer

5-6 minutes

Fossils discovered in Morocco are the oldest known remains of Homo sapiens, scientists reported on Wednesday, a finding that rewrites the story of mankind's origins and suggests that our species evolved in multiple locations across the African continent.

"We did not evolve from a single 'cradle of mankind' somewhere in East Africa," said Philipp Gunz, a paleoanthropologist at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, Germany, and a co-author of two new studies on the fossils, published in the journal Nature. "We evolved on the African continent."

Until now, the oldest known fossils of our species dated back just 195,000 years. The Moroccan fossils, by contrast, are roughly 300,000 years old. Remarkably, they indicate that early Homo sapiens had faces much like our own, although their brains differed in fundamental ways.

Today, the closest living relatives to Homo sapiens are chimpanzees and bonobos, with whom we share a common ancestor that lived over six million years ago. After the split from this ancestor, our ancient forebears evolved into many different species, known as hominins.

Continue reading the main story

For millions of years, hominins remained very apelike. They were

short, had small brains and could fashion only crude stone tools.

Photo

A composite reconstruction of the earliest known Homo sapiens fossils from Jebel Irhoud in Morocco based on micro computed tomographic scans of multiple original fossils. Credit Philipp Gunz/Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology

Until now, the oldest fossils that clearly belonged to Homo sapiens were discovered in Ethiopia. In 2003, researchers working at a site called Herto discovered a skull estimated to be between 160,000 and 154,000 years old.

A pair of partial skulls from another site, Omo-Kibish, dated to around 195,000 years of age, at the time making these the oldest fossils of our species.

Findings such as these suggested that our species evolved in a small region — perhaps in Ethiopia, or nearby in East Africa. After Homo sapiens arose, researchers believed, the species spread out across the continent.

Only much later — roughly 70,000 years ago — did a small group of Africans make their way to other continents.

Yet paleoanthropologists were aware of mysterious hominin fossils discovered in other parts of Africa that did not seem to fit the narrative.

In 1961, miners in Morocco dug up a few pieces of a skull at a site called Jebel Irhoud. Later digs

revealed a few more bones, along with flint blades.

Using crude techniques, researchers estimated the remains to be 40,000 years old. In the 1980s, however, a paleoanthropologist named Jean-Jacques Hublin took a closer look at one jawbone.

The teeth bore some resemblance to those of living humans, but the shape seemed strangely primitive. "It did not make sense," Dr. Hublin, now at the Max Planck Institute, recalled in an interview.

Since 2004, Dr. Hublin and his colleagues have been working through layers of rocks on a desert hillside at Jebel Irhoud. They have found a wealth of fossils, including skull bones from five individuals who all died around the same time.

Just as important, the scientists discovered flint blades in the same sedimentary layer as the skulls. The people of Jebel Irhoud most likely made them for many purposes, putting some on wooden handles to fashion spears.

Many of the flint blades showed signs of having been burned. The people at Jebel Irhoud probably lit fires to cook food, heating discarded blades buried in the ground below. This accident of history made it possible to use the flints as historical clocks.

Dr. Hublin and his colleagues used a method called thermoluminescence to calculate how much time had passed since the blades were burned. They estimated that the blades were roughly 300,000 years old. The

skulls, discovered in the same rock layer, must have been the same age.

More Reporting on Human Origins

Despite the age of the teeth and jaws, anatomical details showed they nevertheless belonged to Homo sapiens, not to another hominin group, such as the Neanderthals.

Resetting the clock on mankind's debut would be achievement enough. But the new research is also notable for the discovery of several early humans rather than just one, as so often happens, said Marta Mirazon Lahr, a paleoanthropologist at the University of Cambridge who was not involved in the new study.

"We have no other place like it, so it's a fabulous finding," she said.

The people at Jebel Irhoud shared a general resemblance to one another — and to living humans. Their brows were heavy, their chins small, their faces flat and wide. But all in all, they were not so different from people today.

"The face is that of somebody you could come across in the Metro," Dr. Hublin said.

The flattened faces of early Homo sapiens may have something to do with the advent of speech, speculated Christopher Stringer, a paleoanthropologist at the Natural History Museum in London.

"We really are at very early stages of trying to explain these things," Dr. Stringer said.

The brains of the inhabitants of Jebel Irhoud, on the other hand, were less like our own.

Although they were as big as modern human brains, they did not yet have its distinctively round shape. They were long and low, like those of earlier hominins.

Some of the stone tools found at the Jebel Irhoud site. Mohammed Kamal/Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology

Dr. Gunz, of the Max Planck Institute, said that the human brain may have become rounder at a later phase of evolution. Two regions in the back of the brain appear to have

become enlarged over thousands of years.

"I think what we see reflect adaptive changes in the way the brain functions," he said. Still, he added, no one knows how a rounder brain changed how we think.

The people of Jebel Irhoud were certainly sophisticated. They could make fires and craft complex weapons, such as wooden handled spears, needed to kill gazelles and other animals that grazed the savanna that covered the Sahara 300,000 years ago.

The flint is interesting for another reason: Researchers traced its origin to another site about 20 miles

south of Jebel Irhoud. Early Homo sapiens, then, knew how to search out and to use resources spread over long distances.

Similar flint blades of about the same age have been found at other sites across Africa, and scientists have long wondered who made them. The fossils at Jebel Irhoud raise the possibility that they were made by early Homo sapiens.

And if that is true, Dr. Gunz and his colleagues argue, then our species may have been evolving as a network of groups spread across the continent.

John Hawks, a paleoanthropologist at the University of Wisconsin who

was not involved in the new study, said that it was a plausible idea, but that recent discoveries of fossils from the same era raise the possibility that they were used by other hominins.

Correction: June 7, 2017

An earlier version of this article misspelled the first name of a paleoanthropologist at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology. He is Philipp Gunz, not Phillipp. The article also misstated where the paleoanthropologist Christopher Stringer works. It is the Natural History Museum in London, not the National Museum.

ETATS-UNIS

THE WALL
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JOURNAL

Viswanatha

9-11 minutes

Updated June 8, 2017 12:01 a.m. ET

Then-FBI Director James Comey worried President Donald Trump was seeking to secure Mr. Comey's loyalty and wanted him to help "lift the cloud" the investigation of possible Russian interference with the U.S. election was casting over his administration, according to prepared testimony Mr. Comey is set to deliver Thursday to Congress.

In seven pages vividly detailing his interactions with Mr. Trump before he was abruptly fired last month, Mr. Comey described a president determined to clear his own name amid several investigations looking into whether Trump associates colluded with Russia.

The impression painted by Mr. Comey is one of the president seeking to exert control over him and his agency, and a vexed FBI director pushing back—a narrative the White House rejects.

"At one point, I explained why it was so important that the FBI and Department of Justice be independent of the White House," Mr. Comey wrote, describing a dinner with president in January. "I said it was a paradox: Throughout history, some Presidents have decided that because 'problems' come from Justice, they should try to hold the Department close. But blurring those boundaries ultimately makes the problems worse by

Former FBI Director Comey Details Pressure From Trump (UNE)

Del Quentin Wilber and Aruna

undermining public trust in the institutions."

Mr. Comey also confirmed the president's previous statements that the director had repeatedly assured Mr. Trump that the FBI hadn't opened a counterintelligence investigation into him.

The president has denied allegations that he sought to pressure Mr. Comey or influence the Russia investigation in any way. Mr. Trump has dismissed the collusion allegations and called inquiries into alleged Russian meddling a "witch hunt." The Russian government has denied interfering with the election.

Marc Kasowitz, Mr. Trump's personal attorney, said in a statement that the president "feels completely and totally vindicated."

"The President is pleased that Mr. Comey has finally publicly confirmed his private reports that the President was not under investigation in any Russian probe," Mr. Kasowitz said. "He is eager to continue to move forward with his agenda."

Mr. Comey's version of events was laid out in written testimony to be delivered Thursday before the Senate Intelligence Committee, a highly anticipated hearing at which lawmakers will have their first chance to question Mr. Comey about his firing on May 9 and Mr. Trump's alleged efforts to influence the Federal Bureau of Investigation's probe.

Democrats on the Senate Intelligence Committee are expected to press Mr. Comey to provide details about the president's

actions that raise questions about his motivations for seeking to curtail investigative efforts. They are also likely to push for more information about the bureau's probe.

Republicans, on the other hand, are expected to poke holes in Mr. Comey's accounts to raise doubts about his veracity. They may also question him in a way that gets him to say he didn't believe Mr. Trump's actions amounted to obstruction of justice.

"Mr. Comey's statement describes behavior by Donald Trump that was at best inappropriate, and at worst illegal," Senator Edward J. Markey (D., Mass.) said in a statement. He added, "I urge my Senate colleagues—both Democrats and Republicans—to focus on one thing and one thing only during the hearing—getting to the truth."

Sen. James Lankford (R., Okla.), a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee, said on Fox News Wednesday night that he didn't believe the president's comments to Mr. Comey amounted to obstruction of justice.

"I would disagree that it rises to that level," Mr. Lankford said. "The president wasn't saying to him 'you have to do this or else.'"

Mr. Comey said in his prepared remarks that he was basing his testimony on detailed notes he took of interactions with Mr. Trump, and that he started writing such memos after his first meeting with the president-elect at Trump Tower on Jan. 6. Mr. Comey remarked that he went on to have nine one-on-one conversations with Mr. Trump in four months—three in person and six on the phone—compared with

the two times he spoke alone with former President Barack Obama in person—once in 2015 to discuss policy issues and in late 2016 to say goodbye to the departing president.

Mr. Comey testified that he didn't take such notes after his meetings with Mr. Obama.

Mr. Comey wrote that he met Mr. Trump for the first time at a briefing he and other intelligence officials provided on their findings that Russia had interfered in the 2016 election. As the meeting ended, Mr. Comey remained alone with the president-elect to discuss "personally sensitive" information contained in an unverified dossier of political-opposition research that would soon become public, according to his testimony.

Mr. Comey said he had discussed with his FBI leadership team whether he should be prepared to assure the president-elect that the bureau wasn't investigating him personally. "We agreed that I should tell him if the circumstances warranted," Mr. Comey wrote, adding he indeed offered that assurance.

On Jan. 27, Mr. Comey was invited to dinner at the White House where he sat down with Mr. Trump at "an oval table in the center of the Green Room." Mr. Trump asked if he wanted to remain as FBI director, a question Mr. Comey said he found strange because "he had already told me twice in earlier conversations that he hoped I would stay."

Soon, the former director said, he was feeling uneasy. "My instincts told me that the one-on-one setting, and the pretense that this was our

first discussion about my position, meant the dinner was, at least in part, an effort to have me ask for my job and create some sort of patronage relationship," Mr. Comey wrote. "That concerned me greatly, given the FBI's traditionally independent status in the executive branch."

Mr. Comey told the president that he wanted to finish his 10-year term and added he was "not 'reliable' in the way politicians use that term, but he could always count on me to tell him the truth."

Moments later, according to Mr. Comey's account, Mr. Trump said, "I need loyalty, I expect loyalty." Mr. Comey said he "didn't move, speak or change my facial expression in any way in the awkward silence that followed. We simply looked at each other in silence."

Later, Mr. Comey promised to offer the president "honesty," and Mr. Trump replied: "That's what I want, honest loyalty."

As the dinner ended, Mr. Trump returned to the salacious material in the dossier. He expressed "disgust for the

allegations and strongly denied them," Mr. Comey wrote, and said he was considering ordering an investigation to prove "it didn't happen."

On Feb. 14, Mr. Comey met again with Mr. Trump and other national-security officials in the Oval Office. When the session adjourned, the president asked to speak to the FBI director alone, according to Mr. Comey's account.

The president pressed Mr. Comey to back off the FBI investigation of former national security adviser Mike Flynn, the former director said. Mr. Flynn had resigned a day earlier under pressure for having misled Vice President Mike Pence about the nature of his conversations with Sergey Kislyak, the Russian ambassador to the U.S., during the transition.

Mr. Trump said Mr. Flynn "hadn't done anything wrong in speaking with the Russians," according to Mr. Comey. "He is a good guy. 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."

Mr. Trump has denied that he asked Mr. Comey to end his probe of Mr. Flynn. Asked directly at a news conference in mid-May, Mr. Trump said: "No. No. Next question."

Shortly after the February meeting, Mr. Comey wrote, he "implored" Attorney General Jeff Sessions to "prevent any future direct communication between the President and me."

On March 30, the president called Mr. Comey and complained that the Russia investigation was like "a cloud" that was impairing his ability to act on behalf of the country," Mr. Comey said, and asked the FBI director what "we could do to 'lift the cloud.'" Mr. Comey replied that the FBI was working as quickly as possible.

Mr. Trump asked Mr. Comey to tell the country that he wasn't personally under investigation. "We need to get that fact out," Mr. Trump told Mr. Comey, the ex-director said.

Mr. Comey said he was reluctant to make such a statement in part because "it would create a duty to

correct" the record if the president's investigative status changed.

Twelve days later, Mr. Trump called Mr. Comey to see if he had made any progress on his request to "get out" the fact he wasn't personally under investigation. Mr. Comey encouraged Mr. Trump to have the White House counsel reach out to the acting deputy attorney general, and Mr. Trump said he would do that. Mr. Comey said Mr. Trump told him: "Because I have been very loyal to you, very loyal; we had that thing you know."

Mr. Comey didn't ask what he meant by "that thing," he wrote. "That was the last time I spoke with President Trump," he said. He was fired 28 days later.

—Rebecca Ballhaus and Kristina Peterson contributed to this article.

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Appeared in the June 8, 2017, print edition as 'Comey Details Pressure From Trump.'



'I expect loyalty,' Trump told Comey, according to written testimony (UNE)

By Devlin Barrett

9-11 minutes

Fired FBI director James B. Comey said President Trump told him at the White House "I need loyalty, I expect loyalty" during their private dinner conversation in January, according to written remarks from Comey offering a vivid preview of his testimony Thursday before the Senate Intelligence Committee.

In seven remarkable pages of prepared testimony, Comey describes a president obsessed with loyalty and publicly clearing his name amid an FBI investigation of his associates, and the FBI director's growing unease with the nature of the demands being made of him in their private conversations.

Since firing Comey last month, the president has denied reports that he sought a pledge of loyalty from the FBI director amid a Justice Department probe into possible coordination between Trump associates and Russian operatives. Comey's written remarks do support another Trump claim — that the FBI director repeatedly assured the president that he was not personally under investigation.

But overall, Comey's testimony portrays Trump as a domineering

chief executive who made his FBI director deeply uncomfortable over the course of nine separate private conversations, beginning with their first meeting in early January before Trump was sworn into office. In that conversation, Comey warned the president-elect of a dossier that was circulating with unsubstantiated allegations against him and his advisers.

The details of the conversations as described by Comey are likely to further fuel the debate over whether the president may have attempted to obstruct justice by pressuring the FBI director about a sensitive investigation.

The Post's Robert Costa explores how the Senate testimony of former FBI director James B. Comey on June 8 could have a lasting impact on President Trump's tenure. The Senate testimony of former FBI director James B. Comey on June 8 could have a lasting impact on President Trump's tenure. Here's why. (Video: Bastien Inzaurrealde/Photo: Matt McClain/The Washington Post)

(Bastien Inzaurrealde/The Washington Post)

Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Richard Burr (R-N.C.), who is leading the Senate probe of possible Russian coordination with

Trump associates, said he was not alarmed by Comey's account.

"I don't think it's wrong to ask for loyalty of anyone inside an administration," Burr said. "I don't think of what I've read there's anything of wrongdoing."

Comey writes with almost novelistic detail about his interactions with the president, describing a call on Jan. 27 around lunchtime inviting him to dinner.

"It was unclear from the conversation who else was going to be at the dinner, although I assumed there would be others," Comey wrote. "It turned out to be just the two of us, seated at a small oval table in the center of the Green Room. Two Navy stewards waited on us, only entering the room to serve food and drinks."

The president began the conversation, Comey wrote, by asking him whether he wanted to stay on as FBI director, "which I found strange because he had already told me twice in earlier conversations that he hoped I would stay, and I had assured him that I intended to."

The president replied, according to Comey, that lots of people wanted his job and "he would understand if I wanted to walk away."

Comey's instincts, he wrote, were that both the setting and the conversation "meant the dinner was, at least in part, an effort to have me ask for my job and create some sort of patronage relationship. That concerned me greatly, given the FBI's traditionally independent status in the executive branch."

The Senate Intelligence Committee on June 7 released a written statement that former FBI director James B. Comey will read when he appears before senators June 8. Here's what you need to know. The Senate Intelligence Committee released a written statement that former FBI director James B. Comey will read when he appears before senators June 8. (Video: Bastien Inzaurrealde/Photo: Matt McClain/The Washington Post)

(Bastien Inzaurrealde/The Washington Post)

The president then made his demand for loyalty.

"I didn't move, speak, or change my facial expression in any way during the awkward silence that followed," Comey wrote. "We simply looked at each other in silence. The conversation then moved on, but he returned to the subject near the end of our dinner."

[Read Comey's prepared remarks for his upcoming testimony]

When prompted again on the subject of loyalty, Comey said he replied, "You will always get honesty from me."

Comey said that once before Trump's inauguration, and again at the January dinner, he assured the president that he was not personally under investigation. He also told the president later on that he had shared that information with congressional leaders.

In his letter firing Comey, Trump wrote that three times Comey had assured him he was not under investigation. After the firing, Comey's defenders publicly challenged the accuracy of that statement.

Trump's lawyer, Marc Kasowitz, said Wednesday that the president "is pleased that Mr. Comey has finally publicly confirmed his private reports that the President was not under investigation in any Russian probe. The President feels completely and totally vindicated."

Overall, Comey's written testimony describes a strained, awkward relationship between the two powerful men, punctuated by exchanges in which the president expressed his displeasure about the Russia probe in ways that alarmed the FBI director. Even the number of contacts between the two were alarming to Comey, who noted that he only spoke twice privately with President Barack Obama.

The written testimony also recounts a face-to-face conversation the two men had on Feb. 14 in the Oval Office, where many senior officials had gathered for a counterterrorism briefing.

After the meeting, the president asked everyone to leave. Attorney General Jeff Sessions and senior adviser Jared Kushner lingered in the room, but the president told them to leave, too, according to Comey.

When the door by the grandfather clock closed, Comey wrote, the president said, "I want to talk about Mike Flynn" — the former national security adviser who was forced out after disclosures about his conversations with the Russian ambassador to the United States, Sergey Kislyak. Flynn had resigned a day earlier.

"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 said, according to Comey. The FBI director replied only that "he is a good guy."

In that conversation, the president repeatedly complained to the FBI director about leaks, and Comey said he agreed with him about the harm caused by leaks of classified information.

Comey said he understood the president to be asking for him to "drop any investigation of Flynn in connection with false statements

about his conversations with the Russian ambassador in December. I did not understand the president to be talking about the broader investigation into Russia or possible links to his campaign."

The former FBI director wrote that he found the conversation "very concerning, given the FBI's role as an independent investigative agency."

Later, Comey complained to Sessions that he should not have been left alone with the president, and Sessions did not reply, according to the written testimony. Sessions declined to comment.

Then, in late March, Trump called Comey at the FBI. In that conversation, the president called the Russia probe "a cloud" hanging over his ability to lead the country.

He also expressed continued frustration that unsubstantiated allegations in a private dossier about him had become public, including lurid claims of sexual activity while in Russia.

"He said he had nothing to do with Russia, had not been involved with hookers in Russia, and had always assumed he had been recorded when in Russia," Comey wrote.

"He asked what we could do to 'lift the cloud.' I responded that we were investigating the matter as quickly as we could, and that there would be great benefit, if we didn't find anything, to our having done the

work well. He agreed, but then re-emphasized the problems this was causing him," Comey wrote.

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After that phone call with the president, Comey said he called acting deputy attorney general Dana Boente to tell him what was discussed and to "await his guidance." Comey said he never heard back from Boente. A spokesman for Boente did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Then, on April 11, Comey wrote, the president called him and asked him what he had done about getting out word that he was not personally under investigation. The president told him "the cloud" of the probe was interfering with his ability to do his job.

"I have been very loyal to you, very loyal; we had that thing you know," Trump told Comey, according to the written testimony. "I did not reply or ask him what he meant by 'that thing.'"

He added: "That was the last time I spoke with President Trump."

Sari Horwitz and Karoun Demirjian contributed to this report.



Comey's testimony could turn congressional probes toward question of obstruction (UNE)

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/E-d-OKeefe/147995121918931>

11-14 minutes

Former FBI director James B. Comey's highly anticipated appearance on Capitol Hill Thursday could bring the question of whether President Trump attempted to obstruct justice to the forefront of several wide-ranging congressional investigations.

In testimony before the Senate Intelligence Committee scheduled to begin at 10 a.m., Comey is likely to be asked about his firing as well as reports that Trump asked him to end an investigation into former national security adviser Michael T. Flynn. In a preview of his opening statement released by the committee Wednesday afternoon, Comey said Trump said to him during a meeting at the White House in February: "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."

Comey's testimony comes on the heels of new revelations that Trump also asked two of his top intelligence officials to intervene with Comey to back off its focus on Flynn. In testimony before the Senate Intelligence Committee Wednesday, those two officials — Director of National Intelligence Daniel Coats and National Security Agency Director Michael S. Rogers — declined to describe private conversations with the president. Instead, they both said they never felt pressure to do anything inappropriate.

[Top intelligence official told associates Trump asked him if he could intervene with Comey on FBI Russia probe]

A series of such revelations in recent weeks have fueled accusations of obstruction, but at least four congressional inquiries have remained wide-ranging, with

some lawmakers expressing greater concern about whether Trump campaign associates colluded with Russian officials to meddle in the 2016 election and others more focused on prosecuting those who have leaked classified information to the media.

A guide to the five major investigations of the Trump campaign's possible ties to Russia

In addition to those congressional probes, the FBI is heading up a counterintelligence investigation into collusion and Russia's interference last year.

Still unknown is whether Comey will offer more details about his conversations with Trump than he already detailed in his opening statement. Additionally, his opening statement does not recount his firing. He will be careful not to discuss classified information, which is likely to prevent him from providing new details about the

Russia probe, several associates said.

Comey also will try to steer clear of saying anything that could compromise or constrain the work of special counsel Robert S. Mueller III, now heading up the FBI's investigation, such as offering legal or prosecutorial judgments, these people said.

Comey insisted on testifying publicly, but he will also address the committee behind closed doors following the public forum.

An intensification of the obstruction question could cause the center of gravity to shift on Capitol Hill. Besides the FBI, the House and Senate intelligence panels are exploring Russian meddling and the potential politicization of intelligence gathering. Members of both parties and in both chambers generally agree that the Senate investigation is the most comprehensive and advanced of the congressional probes.

The House and Senate Judiciary committees could become a more central focus after Thursday if Comey's testimony suggests that Trump's actions constituted obstruction of justice, as that could potentially shift congressional focus from intelligence matters to legal and criminal matters that those two committees oversee. In addition, House Judiciary is where any discussion of impeachment proceedings would begin.

To date, Democrats are split on the question of impeachment proceedings, with some readily suggesting the possibility but House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) impatiently dismissing that as premature.

Still, Democrats again this week called for Comey to testify next before the Senate Judiciary Committee as the panel continues its duties overseeing the FBI and preparing to confirm Comey's successor. An aide on the House Judiciary Committee said the panel has no current plans to launch a new, separate inquiry.

The House Oversight Committee also has begun exploring how Trump and his associates may have attempted to influence the FBI investigation.

In addition to Flynn, current and former Trump associates, including his campaign manager, Paul Manafort, former adviser Carter Page, and Jared Kushner, his son-in-law and senior adviser, are the focus of the ongoing probes.

Republicans, already wary of how the investigations are impeding their legislative ambitions, said they will be listening Thursday for how Comey describes what the president said to him in a series of meetings and what he told Trump in response.

"I think the whole world has the same question," said Sen. Bob Corker (R-Tenn.), adding that Comey's version of events is "possibly going to be very illuminating."

Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), a long-serving member of the Intelligence Committee, said that "Having more details — fleshing out what was said, who was involved, was it documented — I think will very much clarify where things were at the time Mr. Comey was fired."

Legal analysts said the testimony adds detail that would beef up an obstruction of justice case.

While no one meeting itself is the smoking gun that Trump tried to illegally hinder an investigation, the totality of his interactions with

Comey suggest he might have acted corruptly, said Cornell Law School Professor Jens David Ohlin.

"I think that the stuff that's now been put on the record, if you add it all up together, to me it spells obstruction of justice," Ohlin said. "The pieces are (1) Trump demanding loyalty, (2) Trump telling Comey or directing Comey to end the Flynn or close the Flynn investigation (3) Trump firing Comey when Comey refuses to close the Russia investigation, and then (4) Trump admitting on national television that the reason he fired Comey was because of the Russia investigation and not any of the other reasons cited in the memo."

Ohlin said that Trump seemed to have been particularly concerned with Flynn, though he said Comey's interpretation that he only wanted the Flynn aspect of the probe shut down was "a very generous interpretation of Trump's comments."

At best, Ohlin said, Trump might be looking out for a "loyal surrogate" he thought had been wronged. At worst, he said, Trump might view Flynn "as this potential pressure point in the whole investigation in the administration, and that he's a little bit worried about Flynn as someone who could potentially do a lot of damage if he were charged and decided to cut a deal and reached some sort of plea agreement where he had to provide information about the administration."

Barak Cohen, a former federal prosecutor now in private practice at Perkins Coie, said of Comey's testimony: "There's enough here to raise serious questions about whether obstruction occurred." He noted particularly Trump's comment about FBI Deputy Director Andrew McCabe, whose wife received money from the political action committee of Virginia Gov. Terry McAuliffe (D) during her run for a state senate seat.

"It's a suggestive statement by President Trump and could be read as, 'I did you a solid by not making a big deal out of the McCabe campaign contributions, you owe me,'" Cohen said.

Senators said that much of the attention on Thursday is expected to focus on a May 9 letter informing Comey of his firing. Trump wrote that he appreciated the director's repeated reassurances that the president himself was not the focus of the investigation.

"I find that phrase to be very curious," said Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine), a member of the intelligence panel, who said she

planned to press Comey for his side of the story and that she could "see no reason why" Comey wouldn't be forthcoming.

Comey kept memos of several conversations with Trump pertaining to the FBI's ongoing probes, but not all of them are unclassified. Senators are likely to quiz Comey about his memo regarding his conversations with Trump about Flynn, which is unclassified, according to an associate of Comey.

"It makes a big difference what the exact words were, the tone of the president, the context of the conversation," Collins said.

Wyden declined to tell reporters whether Comey planned to describe or read from his personal notes at the hearing, citing private "committee deliberations."

"We'll have debates about what constitutes obstruction of justice, but the comments the president made with respect to why he fired Mr. Comey on national television I think constitutes an attack on national institutions," Wyden said, adding that Comey deserves a chance to publicly respond.

Other lawmakers said the former director will face close scrutiny too.

"Comey has to answer some hard questions about why didn't he do more" to raise concerns about Trump's comments, said Sen. Lindsey O. Graham (R-S.C.). "If you really believe that the man was trying to obstruct justice and you're the head of the FBI, more than writing a note to yourself, you probably ought to do something about it."

Comey is a practiced witness in front of congressional committees, having taken political heat from lawmakers over controversial decisions during his time as FBI director and previously as deputy attorney general during the second Bush administration.

He is also unbothered by the prospect of crossing his superiors in an open forum. In some ways, doing so has defined his career, from his arguments during George W. Bush's presidency against the use of torture to his more recent testimony contradicting Trump's claims that the government had wiretapped Trump Tower. On another occasion, in front of the House Intelligence Committee, Comey was asked to respond in real time to a Trump tweet claiming that Comey had testified that Russia did not influence the election. "It certainly wasn't our intention to say that today," Comey replied.

Comey may be pressed again to respond to Trump in real time, given that the president is not planning to refrain from Twitter on Thursday, according to administration officials.

He is also likely to be asked for his personal take on the tone of his meetings with Trump.

"I just hope he tells everything he can," Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.) said this week, adding that the former director "should tell the whole story. The American people on a subject as serious of this are entitled to the whole truth and nothing but."

Other senior Democrats said that Comey's appearance is by no means the end of congressional investigations — with some suggesting that it may constitute a major step toward more discussion of impeachment.

"There has been discussion about obstruction of justice charges or even impeachment, but very little can happen until we obtain the documents we need to evaluate the reports we have heard to date," said Rep. Elijah E. Cummings (D-Md.), top Democrat on the House Oversight Committee. He faulted committee Republicans for not yet requesting or obtaining a series of memos that would detail Trump and Comey's interactions.

"At some point, Republicans need to start holding President Trump accountable."

Oversight Committee Chairman Jason Chaffetz (R-Utah) has requested Comey's memos and papers and threatened to use his subpoena power to obtain them. But he is retiring from Congress this month, and GOP leaders have not yet picked a successor, leaving the committee investigation in limbo.

Pelosi is less ready to discuss impeachment than other Democrats.

"Anything you do has to be based on data, evidence, facts," she said on ABC's "The View."

The Health 202 newsletter

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When the hosts persisted, Pelosi shot back: "Let's take a deep breath and just calm down as a country. This is a serious matter."

Matt Zapposky, Devlin Barrett and Robert Costa contributed to this report.

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Comey Says Trump Pressured Him to 'Lift the Cloud' of Inquiry (UNE)

Matt Apuzzo and
Michael S.

to torpedo the investigation — questions that senior national security officials refused to answer in a separate congressional hearing on Wednesday.

WASHINGTON — From his first days in office, President Trump repeatedly put pressure on his F.B.I. director, James B. Comey. He demanded loyalty. He asked that an investigation into an adviser be dropped. And he implored Mr. Comey to publicly clear his name.

As Mr. Comey described Wednesday in written testimony prepared for the Senate Intelligence Committee, Mr. Trump's entreaties continued for months, in unexpected phone calls and awkward meetings. As Mr. Comey's discomfort grew, so did the president's persistence and his frustration with Mr. Comey's unwillingness to help.

Mr. Trump fired Mr. Comey last month, and his account offered an extraordinary back story, one that unfolded with cinematic detail, terse dialogue and tense moments across a White House dinner table.

Mr. Comey is scheduled to deliver the testimony on Thursday at a Senate hearing that is shaping up to be the most dramatic moment so far in the tangle of congressional and F.B.I. investigations into Mr. Trump's associates and possible collusion with Russian operatives during the 2016 election.

Mr. Trump has repeatedly denied any such collaboration, and Mr. Comey confirmed that he told the president three times that he was not personally under investigation. Mr. Trump had encouraged Mr. Comey to say so publicly, but Mr. Comey refused — in part because he did not want to have to recant if that changed.

"He asked what we could do to 'lift the cloud,'" Mr. Comey wrote after a March 30 phone call with Mr. Trump. "I responded that we were investigating the matter as quickly as we could, and that there would be great benefit, if we didn't find anything, to our having done the work well. He agreed, but then re-emphasized the problems this was causing him."

Many of the details in his testimony have been reported in recent weeks by The New York Times and other news organizations. But in addition to filling out Mr. Comey's account, his remarks added to the chorus of questions about Mr. Trump's efforts

By asking that his remarks be released a day early, Mr. Comey also overshadowed the president's announcement that he would nominate Christopher A. Wray to be the next F.B.I. director. And Mr. Comey surprised the White House, which had been preparing to defend against him, but not until Thursday.

We talk through James Comey's prepared remarks for the Senate Intelligence Committee hearing today and what President Trump might have meant when he said, "We had that thing, you know."

"The president is pleased that Mr. Comey has finally publicly confirmed his private reports that the president was not under investigation in any Russian probe," Mr. Trump's personal lawyer, Marc E. Kasowitz, said in a statement. "The president feels completely and totally vindicated. He is eager to continue to move forward with his agenda."

Mr. Comey's testimony chronicled a relationship that was strained from the beginning. At a meeting at Trump Tower on Jan. 6, two weeks before Inauguration Day, Mr. Comey briefed Mr. Trump on the contents of a dossier of salacious, unsubstantiated allegations that a former British spy believed the Russian government had collected on Mr. Trump. In that meeting, Mr. Comey assured Mr. Trump that F.B.I. agents were not investigating him personally, Mr. Comey said.

"I felt compelled to document my first conversation with the President-Elect in a memo," Mr. Comey said. "To ensure accuracy, I began to type it on a laptop in an F.B.I. vehicle outside Trump Tower the moment I walked out of the meeting."

That became Mr. Comey's standard practice after his conversations with Mr. Trump. "This had not been my practice in the past," Mr. Comey said, a sign of his unease with their conversations and of how unusual the situation was. Mr. Comey met alone just twice with President Barack Obama in more than three years as F.B.I. director.

Soon after Mr. Trump took office, he summoned Mr. Comey to the White House. Over dinner on Jan. 27, Mr. Trump asked whether Mr. Comey wanted to keep his job, an unexpected question because F.B.I.

directors have 10-year terms, Mr. Trump had already asked him to stay and Mr. Comey had notified his work force that he would.

"My instincts told me that the one-on-one setting, and the pretense that this was our first discussion about my position, meant the dinner was, at least in part, an effort to have me ask for my job and create some sort of patronage relationship," Mr. Comey wrote. "That concerned me greatly."

Moments later, Mr. Comey wrote, the president told him, "I need loyalty, I expect loyalty."

"I didn't move, speak, or change my facial expression in any way during the awkward silence that followed," Mr. Comey wrote. "We simply looked at each other in silence."

While the F.B.I. is a component of the Justice Department, a part of the president's cabinet, the bureau is generally regarded as independent, particularly on matters of law enforcement. Conversations between the F.B.I. and the White House are seen as so perilous that Justice Department rules strictly limit who can have them. Mr. Comey, in particular, regards himself as fiercely independent — a position he has staked out over the years to both his benefit and his detriment.

"I need loyalty," Mr. Trump repeated.

"You will always get honesty from me," Mr. Comey says he replied.

"That's what I want," Mr. Trump said. "Honest loyalty."

Mr. Comey said he paused and said the president would have it. "I decided it wouldn't be productive to push it further," Mr. Comey wrote. "The term — honest loyalty — had helped end a very awkward conversation and my explanations had made clear what he should expect."

After an Oval Office meeting on terrorism a few weeks later, Mr. Trump asked Mr. Comey to stay behind to talk. Mr. Trump said he wanted to talk about Michael T. Flynn, who had resigned as national security adviser a day earlier and was under investigation over his foreign ties.

"He is a good guy and has been through a lot," Mr. Trump said, according to Mr. Comey's testimony. He added: "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."

What Congress Will Ask James Comey

The New York Times reporter Matt Apuzzo explains what James B. Comey, the former F.B.I. director, can expect to be asked when he testifies before the Senate Intelligence Committee.

By A.J. CHAVAR, MATT APUZZO and ROBIN STEIN on June 7, 2017. Photo by Gabriella Demczuk for The New York Times. Watch in Times Video »

Mr. Trump's intent is important. Some in Congress believe Mr. Trump was trying to interfere with the F.B.I. investigation, and the newly appointed special counsel, Robert S. Mueller III, has the authority to investigate obstruction.

For Mr. Comey, though, the meaning was clear. "I had understood the President to be requesting that we drop any investigation of Flynn," he said.

Mr. Comey told senior F.B.I. officials about the meeting but withheld it from the agents conducting the investigation. The F.B.I. did not drop the case, and Mr. Mueller is investigating both Mr. Flynn and Mr. Trump's former campaign chairman, Paul Manafort.

On March 30, Mr. Comey said, he received a call in his office from the president. "He described the Russia investigation as 'a cloud' that was impairing his ability to act on behalf of the country," Mr. Comey wrote. Mr. Trump denied many of the sensational and unverified claims in the dossier, including any involvement with Russian prostitutes. He encouraged Mr. Comey to "lift the cloud" by saying publicly that he was not under investigation. Mr. Comey did not do so.

Finally, on April 11, Mr. Trump called him again and renewed his request. Mr. Comey said he encouraged the White House counsel to call the Justice Department, following the rules.

Mr. Trump said he would and added, "Because I have been very loyal to you, very loyal; we had that thing, you know." Mr. Comey said he did not ask the president what he meant by "that thing."

"That was the last time I spoke with President Trump," Mr. Comey said.

POLITICO 5 things to watch in Comey's testimony on Trump and Russia

By Kyle Cheney

8-9 minutes

Fired FBI Director James Comey comes before Congress on Thursday with the power to plunge Donald Trump's presidency even deeper into crisis.

Trump ousted Comey on May 9, amid an investigation into whether the president's associates aided a Russian effort to interfere in the 2016 presidential election. And on Wednesday, Comey described for the first time a series of uncomfortable interactions — in the months before his firing — in which Trump nudged Comey to publicly absolve him of any connection to the Russia probe. According to Comey's prepared testimony, the president also demanded loyalty and asked Trump to go easy on Michael Flynn, his former national security adviser, who is under FBI investigation.

Story Continued Below

Since Comey's departure, the White House has become increasingly consumed by the Russia investigation, and Comey's testimony presents the most perilous moment yet for the Trump administration.

For the first time since his firing, Comey will speak publicly on Thursday about the unfolding crisis. Here are five things to watch as he faces the Senate Intelligence Committee:

1. Clamming up for the special counsel

Comey's testimony comes amid a secretive and still-forming probe led by special counsel Robert Mueller, who was appointed by the Department of Justice to investigate potential crimes connected to the ongoing Russia probe. If there are details Comey withheld from his prepared testimony, it's possible he's deferring to the special counsel's probe to avoid any interference. It's also unclear what Mueller's apparent comfort with Comey testifying publicly means about the direction of his probe.

"I have not included every detail from my conversations with the President, but, to the best of my recollection, I have tried to include information that may be relevant to the Committee," Comey wrote in his seven-page written testimony.

Comey's detailed accounts of interactions with Trump were eye-opening for their level of detail, which he says he logged in contemporaneous memos. But it's unclear whether he'll diverge from the statement to reveal more details about the FBI's broader Russia investigation, or his other interactions with Trump and members of the president's team.

For now, it appears there's been little coordination between the Senate Intelligence Committee and Mueller. Sen. Richard Burr of North Carolina, the committee's top Republican, and his Democratic counterpart, Sen. Mark Warner of Virginia, say they haven't discussed separate "lanes" for their parallel investigations, nor have they been waved off of pursuing any particular avenue of inquiry.

But acting FBI Director Andrew McCabe and Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein — pushed on the matter during a separate hearing on Wednesday — at times declined to answer, pointing to the special counsel's ongoing investigation.

2. Answering for previous testimony

Comey is going to have to square his remarks Thursday with his previous statement — delivered under oath at a previous congressional hearing — that he hadn't been dissuaded from any investigation by the Justice Department throughout his career.

"I'm talking about a situation where we were told to stop something for a political reason, that would be a very big deal. It's not happened in my experience," Comey said in testimony on May 3. The answer, however, was in response to a question about whether the attorney general or senior Justice Department officials had tried to interfere. And Comey was speaking generally about his experience at the FBI, not specifically about the Russia probe.

A day after he was fired, McCabe said Comey's firing hadn't impeded the FBI's work. "There has been no effort to impede our investigation today," he said.

Trump's defenders have leapt on both statements as evidence that Comey somehow changed his tune. Though neither man's statement categorically ruled out interference from the president, Comey will be

asked to mesh their statements with what he now claims occurred — and explain why he didn't alert lawmakers to the issue sooner.

McCabe declined Wednesday to say whether Comey had discussed his concerns about Trump with him contemporaneously, repeatedly insisting that he would defer to Comey on the matter.

3. The Trump counterpunch

How long can Trump resist taking to Twitter to bash Comey midhearing? Even his aides can never be sure, and reports suggest Trump is going to be watching Comey's testimony and prepared to respond.

Even if he stays silent, the prospect of a presidential smackdown from the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue will hang over the hearing all morning — and possibly become grist for other ongoing investigative efforts.

The White House's allies have made clear they want to cast Comey as a showboating lone ranger with limited credibility. But they also decided to trumpet one key detail from Comey's pre-hearing testimony: that he informed Trump on multiple occasions that he was — at that time — not the subject of an FBI counterintelligence investigation.

Supporters of the president will have to walk the line between bashing Comey as untrustworthy while also presenting that element of his testimony as ironclad. Of note: Comey's testimony ends with his last talk with the president on April 11 — there's no indication about further investigative steps that may have occurred since. In addition, Comey notes that he was wary to publicly absolve Trump because if that ever changed, he'd be obligated to publicly announce it.

Trump's lawyer, Marc Kasowitz, already offered the president's interpretation of Comey's testimony: "The President is pleased that Mr. Comey has finally publicly confirmed his private reports that the President was not under investigation in any Russian probe," Kasowitz said in a statement. "The President feels completely and totally vindicated. He is eager to continue to move forward with his agenda."

4. What do Senate Republicans do?

Burr has generally worked collaboratively with Democrats on the Senate intel panel. And Sens. Susan Collins (R-Maine), Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) and John McCain (R-Ariz.) have also expressed deep concern about the stream of revelations about Trump associates' connections to Russia that have emerged in press reports and testimony.

What's less clear is whether Trump will have any pit bulls defending him inside the hearing room. Sen. John Cornyn (R-Texas) was on Trump's shortlist to run the FBI before he pulled himself out of contention, and he has largely focused on leaks of classified information and dismissed a connection between Trump's decision to fire Comey and the president's desire to end the Russia investigation.

Cornyn told POLITICO on Wednesday that he had no specific advice for Trump during the hearing.

"I think we all want to hear what Director Comey has to say," he said. "It could well be a nothingburger, or it could be something different, and we just need to hear from him directly."

5. The other conversations

Comey revealed in his written testimony that he's had nine one-on-one conversations with Trump — "three in person and six on the phone." Yet he goes into detail about only five of those instances.

Senators are sure to ask Comey about the other conversations — their substance, their tone and their timing — to see whether they give a fuller picture of Trump's posture toward his FBI director in those crucial months.

Comey says his last interaction with Trump came on April 11, a month before he was fired. If so, what might have transpired in the intervening weeks that led Trump to ax Comey at the moment he did?

Burgess Everett, Ali Watkins and Josh Gerstein contributed to this report.

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Post-ABC Poll: Most say Trump is interfering with Russia investigations

By Scott Clement and Emily Guskin
5-7 minutes

Analysis Interpretation of the news based on evidence, including data, as well as anticipating how events might unfold based on past events

June 7

A majority of Americans report grave suspicions about President Trump's firing of FBI Director James B. Comey and his conduct during investigations of Russia's interference in the 2016 election, according to a new Washington Post-ABC News poll.

A 56 percent majority of U.S. adults say Trump is interfering with such investigations rather than cooperating, while 61 percent say Trump fired Comey to protect himself rather than for the good of the country.

[Top intelligence official told associates Trump asked him if he could intervene with Comey on FBI Russia probe]

Comey also faces serious credibility problems ahead of his highly anticipated Senate testimony Thursday, with 36 percent of Americans saying they trust what he says about Russia and the election "a great deal" or "a good amount,"

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Editorial : The 'Independent' Mr. Comey

June 7, 2017
7:31 p.m. ET 482
COMMENTS

8-10 minutes

The Senate Intelligence Committee released James Comey's prepared testimony a day early on Wednesday, and it looks like a test of whether Washington can apprehend reality except as another Watergate. Perhaps the defrocked FBI director has a bombshell still to drop. But far from documenting an abuse of power by President Trump, his prepared statement reveals Mr. Comey's misunderstanding of law enforcement in a democracy.

Mr. Comey's seven-page narrative recounts his nine encounters with the President-elect and then President, including an appearance at Trump Tower, a one-on-one White House dinner and phone calls. He describes how he briefed Mr. Trump on the Russia

while 55 percent trust him less or not at all. The poll finds substantial skepticism across party lines, evidence that his role investigating the campaigns of Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump has taken a toll.

[Read full poll results | How the poll was conducted]

Trump is seen as even less trustworthy, however, with just over 1 in 5 saying they trust what he says about Russia's role in the 2016 campaign, while just over 7 in 10 trust him less. Fully half of adults say they do not trust what Trump says "at all" on these issues, compared with one-quarter who say the same of Comey. Fully 4 in 10 Americans have doubts about both Comey and Trump's statements on Russia and the election.

The Post-ABC poll was conducted Friday to Sunday, before The Washington Post reported Tuesday that the Director of National Intelligence told associates that Trump asked him if he could intervene with Comey on the FBI's Russia probe to back off its focus on former national security adviser Michael Flynn.

In May, Trump was widely criticized for firing Comey, who was leading a counterintelligence investigation to determine whether associates of Trump may have coordinated with Russia to interfere with last year's

counterintelligence investigation and what he calls multiple attempts to "create some sort of patronage relationship."

But at worst Mr. Comey's account of Mr. Trump reveals a willful and naive narcissist who believes he can charm or subtly intimidate the FBI director but has no idea how Washington works. This is not new information.

When you're dining alone in the Green Room with an operator like Mr. Comey—calculating, self-protective, one of the more skilled political knife-fighters of modern times—there are better approaches than asserting "I need loyalty, I expect loyalty." Of course the righteous director was going to "memorialize" (his word) these conversations as political insurance.

Mr. Trump's ham-handed demand for loyalty doesn't seem to extend beyond the events of 2016, however. In Mr. Comey's telling, the President is preoccupied with getting credit for the election results

presidential election. Trump's shifting explanations for removing Comey provoked questions about his motivations, as did an interview with NBC News where Trump said he made his decision with "the Russian thing" on his mind.

Democrats are nearly united in their suspicions of Trump, with 88 percent saying he fired Comey in May to protect himself and 87 percent saying Trump is trying to interfere with investigations of possible Russian influence in the election.

Political independents, a group that Trump won in last year's election, are also largely critical. By 63 to 20 percent, more independents say Trump fired Comey to protect himself rather than for the good of the country. And by roughly 2 to 1, more independents say Trump is trying to interfere with Russia investigations rather than cooperating with them (58 to 27 percent). More than three-quarters of independents say they trust Trump's statements about Russia "just some" or not at all.

Large majorities of Republicans say Trump fired Comey for the good of the country (71 percent) and that he is cooperating with investigations into Russia's election influence (77 percent). At the same time, roughly 1 in 5 Republicans say Trump fired Comey to protect himself, while

about 1 in 6 think he is trying to interfere with investigations, criticisms shared by more than 3 in 10 conservatives.

Trump's trustworthiness also lags among fellow partisans, with less than half of Republicans (45 percent) saying they trust what he says about Russia investigations "a great deal" or "a good amount," while about as many trust him less (48 percent).

Comey's credibility on Russia investigations also has a partisan tinge, with 54 percent of Democrats saying they trust what he says compared with 32 percent of independents and 18 percent of Republicans. Even among Democrats, whose leaders have decried Comey's firing, about 4 in 10 say they trust the former FBI director "just some" or "not at all." Those doubts rise to 59 percent among independents and 76 percent among Republicans, ample skepticism ahead of the former FBI director's testimony this week.

The Post-ABC poll was conducted Friday to Sunday among a random national sample of 527 adults, including users of cellular and landline phones. The margin of sampling error for overall results is plus or minus five percentage points.

and resentful that the political class is delegitimizing his victory with "the cloud" of Russian interference when he believes he did nothing wrong.

Mr. Comey also confirms that on at least three occasions he told Mr. Trump that he was not a personal target of the Russia probe. But Mr. Comey wouldn't make a public statement to the same effect, "most importantly because it would create a duty to correct" if Mr. Trump were implicated. This is odd because the real obligation is to keep quiet until an investigation is complete.

More interesting is that Mr. Trump's frustration at Mr. Comey's refusal raises the possibility that the source of Mr. Trump's self-destructive behavior isn't a coverup or a bid to obstruct the investigation. The source could simply be Mr. Trump's wounded pride.

The most troubling part of Mr. Comey's statement is his belief in what he calls "the FBI's traditionally independent status in the executive branch," which he invokes more

than once. Independent? This is a false and dangerous view of law enforcement in the American system.

Mr. Comey is describing an FBI director who essentially answers to no one. But the police powers of the government are awesome and often abused, and the only way to prevent or correct abuses is to report to elected officials who are accountable to voters. A director must resist intervention to obstruct an investigation, but he and the agency must be politically accountable or risk becoming the FBI of J. Edgar Hoover.

Mr. Comey says Mr. Trump strongly suggested in February that he close the Michael Flynn file, but after conferring with his "FBI senior leadership" he decided not to relay the conversation to Attorney General Jeff Sessions or any other Justice Department superior. If he thought he was being unduly pressured he had a legal obligation to report, and in our view to resign,

but he says he didn't because "we expected" that Mr. Sessions would recuse himself from Russia involvement.

Well, how did he know? Mr. Sessions didn't recuse himself until two weeks later. Mr. Comey also didn't tell the acting Deputy AG, who at the time was a U.S. attorney whom Mr. Comey dismisses as someone "who would also not be long in the role."

This remarkable presumptuousness is the Comey mindset that was on display last year. He broke Justice Department protocol to absolve Hillary Clinton's mishandling of classified material, without the involvement of Justice prosecutors or even telling then Attorney General Loretta Lynch. Mr. Comey's disregard for the chain of legal command is why Mr. Trump was right to fire him, whatever his reasons.

Also on Wednesday two leaders of the intelligence community told the Senate Wednesday that they had not been pressured to cover up anything. "I have never been pressured—I have never felt pressured—to intervene or interfere in any way with shaping intelligence in a political way or in relation to an ongoing investigation," said Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats. National Security Agency Director Mike Rogers added that he never been asked "to do anything I believe

to be illegal, immoral, unethical or inappropriate."

Meanwhile, Mr. Trump announced that he is nominating respected Justice Department veteran Christopher Wray as the next FBI director. Let's hope Mr. Wray has a better understanding of the FBI's role under the Constitution than Mr. Comey does.

Appeared in the June 8, 2017, print edition.

**The
New York
Times**

Editorial : James Comey and the Fear of Being Alone With Donald Trump

The Editorial Board

5-6 minutes

Andrew Harrer/Bloomberg

The tone is dry and unemotional, the language is simple and clear — but make no mistake: The prepared remarks of James Comey, the former F.B.I. director, which the Senate released in advance of his sworn testimony before the Intelligence Committee on Thursday, tell a shocking story.

Starting days after the inauguration and continuing until mid-April, President Trump made multiple attempts to secure Mr. Comey's personal loyalty and to interfere with the F.B.I.'s investigations into contacts between Mr. Trump's former national security adviser and the Russian government, as well as a broader inquiry into the Trump campaign's possible collusion with Russian efforts to swing the 2016 election to Mr. Trump.

After a meeting in the Oval Office in February, the president asked everyone but Mr. Comey to leave. Then, according to Mr. Comey, he asked him to drop his investigation into Michael Flynn, who had just resigned as national security adviser after his lies about contacts with the Russian ambassador became public. "I hope you can see

your way clear to letting this go, to letting Flynn go," he said, according to notes Mr. Comey made immediately afterward.

Mr. Comey was so unnerved, he said, he told Attorney General Jeff Sessions that he did not want to be left alone with Mr. Trump again. (Mr. Sessions reportedly would not guarantee that the president would respect that request.)

The president went further the next month, asking Mr. Comey to "lift the cloud" of the broader investigation into the campaign's Russia ties. When Mr. Comey told Mr. Trump that he was not personally under investigation, the president pleaded that he make that public. More entreaties followed in April and then, in May, Mr. Trump fired Mr. Comey.

Anyone left wondering how to connect the dots got some help from the president, who a few days after the firing said on national TV: "When I decided to just do it, I said to myself ... this Russia thing with Trump and Russia is a made-up story."

On Wednesday, Dan Coats, the director of national intelligence, refused to answer questions in testimony before the Senate Intelligence Committee about whether Mr. Trump had pushed him to have Mr. Comey curtail the

investigation of Mr. Flynn, as The Washington Post has reported.

It's hard to see how this ends well for the administration.

Unsurprisingly, Mr. Trump is trying to deflect attention from Mr. Comey's impending testimony. On Wednesday, he announced that Christopher Wray was his pick for F.B.I. director, calling him "a man of impeccable credentials."

That's evidently true — Mr. Wray is a former top Justice Department official and now a widely respected criminal defense lawyer. It's also the least Americans should expect of someone seeking such a consequential post.

A far more important qualification, however, is one no one will find on his résumé: the ability to protect the bureau's independence from political meddling. This task is all the more critical when the White House is led by a man with no respect for the established barriers between politicians and law enforcement.

Mr. Comey was tapped to be the F.B.I. director by President Barack Obama largely because of his reputation for independence. In 2004, when he was deputy attorney general, Mr. Comey physically intervened when President George W. Bush's chief of staff and White House counsel sneaked into the

hospital room of the ailing attorney general, John Ashcroft. They were there to extract Mr. Ashcroft's authorization of the administration's warrantless data collection program, parts of which Mr. Comey believed violated the law.

Mr. Wray has no comparably dramatic evidence to offer, but by most accounts he is a smart and accomplished lawyer. He ran the Justice Department's criminal division from 2003 to 2005, handling terrorism cases and corporate fraud scandals. He is a partner at King & Spalding, where he specializes in white-collar criminal defense.

Mr. Wray is also a better choice than others Mr. Trump was said to be considering, including politicians like former Senator Joe Lieberman and former Representative Mike Rogers. Still, he will need to address concerns about his political connections and biases, including his role defending Gov. Chris Christie of New Jersey — who at one point led Mr. Trump's transition — in the Bridgegate scandal, and the tens of thousands of dollars he has donated to Republican candidates over the last decade.

The bigger question for Americans is how Mr. Wray will respond, if he hasn't already, when Mr. Trump comes looking for a pledge of loyalty.

Bloomberg

Editorial : What Comey Said and What It Means

by The Editors
More stories by

The Editors

5-6 minutes

Hmm.

Photographer: Eric Thayer/Getty Images

As former FBI Director James Comey testifies before the Senate Intelligence Committee, it's useful to

bear two things in mind: What he's describing isn't normal. And it isn't going away.

In a written statement released before his appearance, Comey depicted a disturbing sequence of events related to the investigation into Russia's meddling in the 2016 election. President Donald Trump repeatedly asked Comey to pledge his loyalty, requested that he state publicly that Trump wasn't under investigation, and suggested that he drop a probe into Michael Flynn, the

erstwhile national security adviser. Comey declined on all counts, and Trump fired him not long afterward.

By itself, this looks like another inappropriate-but-maybe-not-technically-illegal incident of the kind Trump specializes in. Considered in a larger context, though, it starts to look like something worse.

For starters, pressuring the country's top law-enforcement officer to drop an investigation that

implicates members of your administration certainly looks like an abuse of power. Demanding that he pledge you his loyalty suggests disregard for the rule of law. It's not clear which is more disturbing.

Trump's interactions with Comey are part of a pattern. The president reportedly made similar requests of Dan Coats, the director of national intelligence; Mike Rogers, the director of the National Security Agency; and Mike Pompeo, the director of the Central Intelligence

Agency. When questioned on the topic at a hearing Wednesday, Coats and Rogers resorted to elaborate euphemism. Trump's administration exerted similar pressure on officials at the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the chairmen of the House and Senate intelligence committees, asking them to rebut negative media reports about the Russia investigation.

If it is satisfied that Comey's testimony is true -- and his credibility is certainly higher than Trump's -- Congress would be within its rights to formally censure the president over it. That would still leave the questions of what to do about Russia's interference in the election and why Trump is so keen to suppress the

investigation into it.

That interference is beyond dispute. Its efforts included a sophisticated propaganda and social engineering operation. It conducted espionage against campaigns, lobbyists and think tanks. Its operatives stole and published politically damaging emails, accessed state and local electoral boards, and targeted election officials with malicious software.

Trump has insisted that none of this is worth investigating. That may be because U.S. intelligence agencies have concluded that it was intended to help him win. It may be because the FBI is probing ties between his associates and Russian agents. Or there may be some other explanation.

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Which suggests a final concern. Much about Trump's relationship to Russia remains inexplicable. Against all advice, his administration has pushed to end sanctions on the country. His son-in-law and top adviser held secret meetings with Russian officials and tried to set up a secret communications link with the Kremlin. Trump himself has dabbled in Russian propaganda, effusively praised Russia's president, and shared highly sensitive intelligence with Russian officials in the Oval Office. There were laughs all around.

Congress has an obligation to continue investigating this matter. The FBI must determine if any crimes were committed. And the president? He must accept that these probes will continue, whether he likes it or not.

--Editors: Timothy Lavin, Michael Newman.

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Editorial : What we still need to know from James Comey

The Times Editorial Board

4-6 minutes

Former FBI director James B. Comey is scheduled to testify before the Senate Intelligence Committee on Thursday, just one day after President Trump announced the nomination of former Asst. Atty. Gen. Christopher Wray to succeed him.

Comey's prepared statement for Thursday's meeting is deeply disturbing — particularly his accounts of how Trump sought to have him drop any investigation of former National Security Advisor Michael Flynn and asked him for a profession of "loyalty." (Comey says he replied that "you will always get honesty from me.") Although both the request for leniency for Flynn and the plea for loyalty have been reported in the media, Comey's confirmation of those accounts is chilling.

Comey's statement is incomplete, however, on some matters that acquired additional urgency after he was unceremoniously fired by Trump last month — and after the conflicting accounts from the administration about why he

was dismissed. (Initially, the White House suggested that Trump acted on the recommendation of Deputy Atty. Gen. Rod Rosenstein, who had found fault with Comey's investigation of Hillary Clinton's use of a private email server; later Trump himself acknowledged: "I was going to fire regardless of [Rosenstein's] recommendation" and that when he made the decision he had "this Russia thing" on his mind.)

Senators particularly need to question Comey about his view of what Trump hoped to achieve in his conversations with Comey, which the FBI director clearly considered inappropriate. He also needs to be asked why, if he regarded the president's interventions into FBI business as so troublesome, he didn't immediately sound the alarm with his superiors.

As expected, Comey expresses discomfort in his prepared statement with a meeting in the Oval Office on Feb. 14 at which Trump — after dismissing other participants at a meeting — tells Comey that Flynn is "a good guy and has been through a lot" and says, "I hope you can see your way clear to letting this go, to letting Flynn go."

Comey makes it clear in his statement that he did not agree to "let this go." And he makes it plain that "I had understood the president to be requesting that we drop any investigation of Flynn in connection with false statements about his conversations with the Russian ambassador in December." This, he said, was "very concerning."

That's an understatement. Yet Comey and his advisors decided not to report on Trump's request to Atty. Gen. Jeff Sessions or the U.S. attorney who was serving as the acting deputy attorney general. He seems to regard that as "no harm, no foul" because the investigation continued; but senators should press him on whether it was wise not to immediately advise the Justice Department of this "concerning" event. And was it really only "concerning" — or was it an attempt to obstruct justice?

Another ripe subject for questioning is this passage in Comey's statement about his conversation with Trump on Feb. 14: "I did not understand the president to be talking about the broader investigation into Russia or possible links to his campaign. I could be wrong, but I took him to be focusing on what had just happened with Flynn's departure and the

controversy around his account of his phone calls."

Yet elsewhere in his statement Comey describes Trump's anxiety about the burden that larger investigation was creating for him. In a March 30 telephone call, Comey said, Trump told him the Russia investigation was "a cloud" that was impairing his ability to act on behalf of the country." Trump mention the "cloud" again in an April 11 phone call, Comey said, a conversation in which the president reiterated a request that Comey "get out" the information that Trump wasn't personally being investigated by the FBI. (Comey earlier had given Trump such an assurance privately.)

Does Comey now believe that Trump wanted to sideline the larger investigation into possible ties between his campaign and Russia, which he publicly has dismissed as a "hoax" used by Democrats to explain away his victory over Hillary Clinton? And, if so, does he also believe that that was why he was fired less than four years into his 10-year term?

Congress is entitled to answers to these questions; so are the American people.



Editorial : Comey testimony darkens cloud over Trump

The Editorial Board, USA TODAY

4-5 minutes

Comey says Trump asked for 'loyalty'

In former FBI director James Comey's account, Donald Trump

comes across more like a mob boss than a newly sworn president. In their one-on-one meetings, Trump demands loyalty. He treats the FBI directorship, a 10-year term designed to preserve independence, like a patronage job. He pressures Comey to publicly clear him. When that doesn't happen, the president

abruptly fires the FBI director in humiliating fashion.

Most disturbingly, by Comey's telling in a statement released Wednesday, Trump tries to obstruct an investigation into former national security adviser Michael Flynn, who had just been dismissed for lying about communications with the Russians. In a scene that sounds

like something out of *The Godfather*, Trump clears the Oval Office of everyone except Comey. "I hope you can see your way clear to letting this go, to letting Flynn go. He is a good guy," Comey quotes the president as saying.

Comey leaves the meeting uncertain about what to do about

this "very concerning" event and unsure whom he can trust at the Justice Department. The new attorney general, Jeff Sessions, is a Trump loyalist who seems compromised because of his own Russia connections. The second in command at Justice is a short-timer, so Comey writes down everything that happened and decides to keep it "very closely held" within the FBI.

At Thursday's highly anticipated hearing before the Senate Intelligence Committee, Trump's defenders will undoubtedly grill Comey about this decision, try to undermine his account, and paint him as a



Rep. McDaniel: Media narrative doesn't add up

Ronna McDaniel
Published 8:11 p.m. ET June 7, 2017 | Updated 12 hours ago

3 minutes

In his prepared testimony, former FBI director James Comey once again confirmed that he told President Trump three times that he was not under investigation and reaffirmed that the president did not impede the FBI's investigation into Russia.

Democrats and the alarmist news media machine have already begun twisting the testimony, but the facts couldn't be any clearer.



Campbell: James Comey is a servant leader, not a showboat

Joshua Campbell, Opinion contributor

6-8 minutes

Published 3:16 a.m. ET June 8, 2017 | Updated 2 hours ago

James Comey is sworn in as FBI Director in 2013. (Photo: Evan Vucci, AP)

"I wonder what her story is," FBI Director James Comey said to no one in particular as our motorcade rolled through Lower Manhattan, past an elderly woman on a bench embracing a swaddled child.

"Everyone has a story and I bet her story is incredible."

This was not an unusual musing from our now departed leader — a giant of a man with an even bigger heart, whose focus was always on trying to understand and improve the lives of others.

This particular visit centered on a meeting in New York with

disgruntled ex-employee. Trump has already denied trying to quash the Flynn investigation.

But Comey's account, which confirms and expands on weeks of leaks, carries a ring of authenticity. In a he-said, he-said situation, the by-the-book former FBI director is far more credible than a president famous for playing fast and loose with the facts.

REPUBLICAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE:

Comey's testimony paints a picture of a president acting wholly inappropriately, unable or unwilling to abide by normal ethical constraints. It should prompt

In his public testimony on May 3, Comey himself said that at no point was he asked to stop an investigation for a political reason. Nothing in his written testimony contradicts this statement. Then again, on May 11, acting FBI Director Andrew McCabe corroborated Comey's testimony when he told the Senate Intelligence Committee that there had been no effort to impede their investigation. So unless Comey and McCabe both perjured themselves before the Senate Intelligence Committee, the ongoing Trump-Russia media narrative just doesn't add up.

The fact of the matter is that Comey lost the confidence of leaders on

counterterrorism officials. Afterward, rather than head back to the airport, Comey asked to be taken to the local FBI office so he could visit "the troops." As the head of a deployed organization with offices nationwide, he would utilize any visit outside Washington to connect with our people. He walked the building floor by floor, meeting colleagues at their desks, extending his hand and offering a simple thank you for their service.

To say his firing jarred much of the FBI family would understate the varying levels of sadness, anger and confusion that followed the sudden dismissal of a man held in such high regard throughout American law enforcement. With the election and its aftermath consuming the national psyche, it may be hard to see past current headlines to reflect upon the incredible impact he had on our organization — but his legacy is a story worth telling.

How does one describe the impact someone like Comey had on the

congressional investigators to redouble their efforts to get to the bottom of Russian meddling in last year's presidential election, and any possible collusion between Moscow and Trump associates. It should also add vital fuel to special counsel Robert Mueller's broad investigation into the Russian connection and whether any crimes were committed.

Much attention will now turn to the questions of whether Trump's actions met the legal definition of obstruction of justice, what — if any — underlying activity was being covered up, and what the appropriate remedy is.

both sides of the aisle. The president knew firing Comey would come with lots of backlash, but a strong leader doesn't cave to political pressures. Unlike Democrats who all of a sudden are crying foul on Comey's firing, after months of asking for the same, President Trump will not be whipped around in the political winds.

Try as they may to find new ways of packaging old information, the fact remains that there has still been no evidence to suggest the president was the subject of or impeded an FBI investigation.

OUR VIEW:

FBI? You start by doing something he would have shunned: highlighting his success. Like his predecessor, who faced and tackled challenges unique to his era, Comey took on growing problems within the organization in key areas such as leadership, agility and diversity. It might seem strange to call a respected leader a maniac, but Comey was nothing short of maniacal in driving change throughout the organization in order to right an off-axis leadership selection process, make the FBI more agile, and correct a major diversity problem.

Comey's servant leadership principles were contagious and spread like wildfire throughout our organization. He purposefully populated our senior ranks with leaders who were kind but tough, confident yet humble. He cultivated a cadre of team-oriented field commanders who were not threatened by the notion that their subordinates might know more than they did.

But divining whether a citizen Trump would end up behind bars is entirely the wrong standard for President Trump. The highest office in the land demands its occupant set a standard for integrity, not merely escape indictment.

According to Comey's account, the president was desperate to "lift the cloud" that the Russia investigation was casting. Thanks to the lawman Trump fired, that cloud is now a thunderstorm over the presidency.

The constant media feeding frenzy reeks of desperation to keep a fabricated anti-Trump narrative alive despite there being no basis in fact. The effort by the left to distract from the work the president is doing on behalf of the American people is truly troubling, yet this administration remains laser-focused on advancing the agenda he promised to the American people.

That is what President Trump was elected to do, and no amount of Democratic obstruction or media distraction will stop him from working day in and day out to fulfill those promises.

Ronna McDaniel is chairwoman of the Republican National Committee.

Realizing he himself could never stop improving, he fought to ensure he would not get trapped in a bubble devoid of varying perspectives, or become comfortable with the trappings of power. He got his own lunch, placed his own calls, and had zero patience for ego or arrogance. Any of our 36,000 employees could email him directly and he would respond. His servant leadership style was reflected in those who surrounded him: senior staff who shared his passion for the rule of law; junior staff like myself who never once felt hesitant to speak up to challenge him with a differing point of view; and, as would prove his most important picks, an accomplished deputy director and senior executives who are now successfully navigating us through transformational waters.

Concerned the bureau was not as agile as it could be in adjusting to address emerging threats, Comey worked tirelessly to ensure that new ideas and inventive ways of doing business were not only accepted,

but embraced. As he would passionately admonish new recruits during regular visits to the FBI Academy: "Do not let the grumpy old people crush your spirits! I'm a grumpy old person, and I can't see us as freshly as you do. Study us and make us better."

Comey looked at the organization and realized we soon risked a proverbial fall down the stairs. Our agent population had become increasingly white and change was needed. As he would say, not only is focusing on diversity the right thing to do, it is also an issue of effectiveness. If we do not accurately reflect the communities we serve, we risk being less effective. He assembled a machine of personnel and

resources dedicated to attracting diverse talent. Indeed, his personal commitment to diversity was illustrated in the reason we flew 2,000 miles to Los Angeles on the day he was fired — so he could attend a diversity recruitment event and personally pitch talented young people on joining the FBI.

POLICING THE USA: A look at race, justice, media

When asked how he wanted to be remembered, Comey would quip that he wanted to be forgotten. He imagined finally getting us to a place where the solutions to our leadership, agility and diversity challenges were so ingrained in our culture, we would no longer remember even having a problem.

Those of us shaped by him will tirelessly work to ensure his goals are achieved — although he will not soon be forgotten.

It's strange writing about Comey in the past tense, because it feels like writing an obituary. In a way I am doing just that, because despite curious observations from outsiders regarding Comey's standing among our FBI family, we are very much an organization in mourning. Fortunately for the FBI, his legacy of leadership and service will permeate our great institution for generations to come as the countless young leaders he touched rise in the organization. Although we must eventually move on and accept recent events — the security of the American people demands

our focus on mission — many of us will never stop celebrating the legacy of our seventh director. Like the woman on the bench we passed that day in Manhattan, Director Comey has a story, and it's incredible.

Joshua Campbell is a special agent with the FBI who served as special assistant to former FBI director James Comey. The opinions expressed here are his own and do not represent those of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The New York Times

4-5 minutes

Kristof : James Comey and Our Own Tin-Pot Despot, Donald Trump

Nicholas Kristof

him, but that this might change. Comey seems to have an open mind — a good lesson for all of us.

classified information. He has publicly savaged Democrats and Republicans who stand up to him.

courses for these charity events, so that virtually all of the money raised was flowing to the sick children. Instead, Forbes says, the Trumps charged huge sums to hold the events — misleading the public, and profiting from donations intended for sick children.

Trump's behavior is reminiscent of what tin-pot despots do. I know, for I've covered the overthrow of more than I can count.

To frame the Comey testimony, consider the staggering comments this week of James Clapper, the director of national intelligence until early this year.

More broadly, Trump has ignored longstanding democratic norms, such as that a presidential candidate release tax returns and obey certain ethics rules. He flouts conventions against nepotism. And perhaps most fundamentally, he simply lies at every turn: Politicians often spin and exaggerate, they even lie in extremis to escape scandal. But Trump is different. He lies on autopilot, on something as banal as the size of inauguration crowds.

Skimming money meant for kids with cancer? This is cartoonlike. (The family hasn't responded in detail, although Eric did say that, to him, the critics are "not even people." He lamented that "morality's just gone.")

So let's not get mired in legal technicalities. Whether or not it was illegal for Trump to urge Comey to back off his investigation into Russia ties to Mike Flynn, who was fired as national security adviser, it was utterly inappropriate. What comes through is a persistent effort by Trump to interfere with the legal system. There's a consistent pattern: Trump's contempt for the system of laws that, incredibly, he now presides over.

"Watergate pales really, in my view, compared to what we're confronting now," said Clapper, a former lieutenant general with a long career in intelligence under Republican and Democratic presidents alike. He added: "I am very concerned about the assault on our institutions coming from both an external source — read Russia — and an internal source — the president himself."

Obama was meticulous about ethics rules. He consulted lawyers before accepting the Nobel Peace Prize; aides were forced to give up Twitter accounts when they left office, to ensure they had not benefited improperly by gaining followers.

President Trump sought office as a law-and-order campaigner, and he is overseeing a crackdown on refugees, immigrants, drug offenders and other vulnerable people. But he is also systematically undermining the rule of law as "those wise restraints that make men free," in the words of the late law professor John Maguire.

All this is of course tied to Russia and its equally extraordinary attack on the American political system last year. The latest revelation is that Russian military intelligence executed a cyberattack on at least one supplier of American voting software and tried to compromise the computers of more than 100 local voting officials.

As Clapper suggested, Trump has been undermining the institutions and mores that undergird our political process; whether or not his conduct was felonious, it has been profoundly subversive.

In contrast, the Trump family seems indifferent to optics — and determined to monetize the presidency. The latest ugliness is in a devastating exposé by Forbes about charity work by Eric Trump to raise money for children with cancer.

So as we watch Comey testify, remember that the fundamental question is not just whether the president broke a particular law regarding obstruction of justice, but also whether he is systematically assaulting the rule of law that makes us free.

Comey specifies in his testimony, to be presented Thursday, that he told Trump that there was no personal investigation of

Apart from Comey and the Russia investigation, Trump has systematically attacked the institutions of American life that he sees as impediments. He denounced judges and the courts. He has attacked journalists as "the enemy of the people," and urged that some be jailed for publishing

Eric raised some \$16 million, which is wonderful. The Trump family had claimed to donate the use of its golf

The Washington Post

<http://www.facebook.com/ejdionne>

6-7 minutes

Dionne Jr. : Trump doesn't understand how to be president. The Comey story shows why.

Succeeding in politics in a democratic nation is different from making a go of it in a business centered on one person — or in an autocracy. Almost all of President

Trump's problems can be traced to his failure to grasp this. It explains why he now has such a big problem with former FBI director James B. Comey.

obnoxious media. No annoying political opposition. No independent judiciary. No need to show any concern about the people who work for you. Despots can make them disappear. It's no accident that "You're fired" is the phrase that made Trump famous.

In Trump world, everything is a deal, everything is transactional, everything is about personal loyalty — to him. What can I give you to make you do what I want? What can I threaten you with to force you to do what I want? Will you be with me no matter what?

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In constitutional democracies, rules and norms get in the way of this sort of thing. Other institutions in government have autonomy and derive their authority from being at least partly independent of politics. The boss does not have absolute power.

This is how we should understand Comey's extraordinary prepared testimony released on Wednesday in advance of his Thursday appearance before the Senate Intelligence Committee.

The Post's Robert Costa explores how the Senate testimony of former FBI director James B. Comey on June 8 could have a lasting impact on President Trump's tenure. The Senate testimony of former FBI director James B. Comey on June 8 could have a lasting impact on President Trump's tenure. Here's why. (Video: Bastien Inzaurrealde/Photo: Matt McClain/The Washington Post)

(Bastien Inzaurrealde/The Washington Post)

Here are the things Trump still

doesn't get: (1) Comey is his own person concerned with his own reputation and standing. (2) A president, unlike a despot, can't unilaterally change the rules that surround a legal investigation. (3) People in government don't work only for the president; their primary obligation is to the public. (4) Personal relationships matter a great deal in government, but they aren't everything; Comey could not go soft on Michael Flynn just because Trump likes Flynn or fears what Flynn might say. (5) Because of 1, 2, 3 and 4, Comey was not going to do what Trump asked, even if this meant being fired.

Comey's testimony describes the interactions of a classic odd couple. They're spectacularly ill-suited for each other. Everything Trump said made Comey uncomfortable.

When Trump asked Comey at a Jan. 27 White House dinner if he wanted to keep the FBI job, Comey found the question "strange" and a "pretense," because Trump had already said twice he hoped Comey would stay. Comey thought Trump was trying to "create some sort of patronage relationship." (No kidding.) Later, Trump got to the

point: "I need loyalty, I expect loyalty."

Hearing those words, Comey reports, "I didn't move, speak, or change my facial expression in any way during the awkward silence that followed. We simply looked at each other in silence."

This really wasn't going well.

Trump returned to his demand. "I need loyalty," Trump said again. Comey replied: "You will always get honesty from me." That was the beginning of the end, but the incompatible duo held things together for a while on the basis of a compromise: They agreed on "honest loyalty." But for Trump, this may have sounded like an oxymoron. It would never fly.

For fans of irony, the next effort to make this dysfunctional relationship work came on Valentine's Day in the Oval Office. It was then that Trump cleared the room and said: "I want to talk about Mike Flynn." And eventually came the words that could get Trump into a lot of trouble: "He is a good guy and has been through a lot. ... I hope you can see your way clear to letting this go,

to letting Flynn go. He is a good guy."

The best one-liner in Comey's prepared remarks: "I did not say I would 'let this go.'"

And that's when their breakup became inevitable.

There has been a lively debate among Trump critics about whether he's dangerous because he's inclined toward authoritarianism or because he's incompetent. The Comey episode allows us to reach a higher synthesis in this discussion: Trump is incompetent precisely because he believes he can act like an autocrat in a constitutional democracy. This doesn't work, and it makes him do stupid things.

Trump operates as if he were still running the Trump Organization, as if the rules that worked fine when nobody challenged him are the rules he's under now. His worst mistakes flow from this profound misunderstanding.

As a democratic leader, Trump is an apprentice with little desire to learn. And his role models teach him the wrong lessons.



Trump to nominate Christopher Wray as next FBI director (UNE)

<http://www.facebook.com/matt.w.potosky>

10-13 minutes

President Trump announced Wednesday that he would nominate Christopher A. Wray — a white-collar criminal defense attorney who led the Justice Department's criminal division during the George W. Bush administration — to serve as the next FBI director.

Trump posted the announcement on Twitter, declaring Wray a "man of impeccable credentials." His appointment would still have to be confirmed by the Senate, which is sure to scrutinize Trump's nominee intensely.

Wray, now a partner at King & Spalding, led the criminal division from 2003 to 2005, and his firm biography says that he "helped lead the Department's efforts to address the wave of corporate fraud scandals and restore integrity to U.S. financial markets." He oversaw the president's corporate fraud task force and oversaw the Enron Task Force. Before that, he worked in a variety of other Justice Department roles, including as a federal prosecutor in Atlanta.

More recently, he has served as attorney for New Jersey Gov. Chris

Christie (R), a Trump ally. He also represented the Swiss bank Credit Suisse AG in a tax evasion case that ended in a \$2.6 billion settlement with U.S. authorities. In 2014, the bank pleaded guilty to conspiring to aid and assist U.S. taxpayers in filing false income tax returns.

In a statement, Wray called his selection a "great honor" and said, "I look forward to serving the American people with integrity as the leader of what I know firsthand to be an extraordinary group of men and women who have dedicated their careers to protecting this country."

Trump said Wray would "again serve his country as a fierce guardian of the law and model of integrity once the Senate confirms him to lead the FBI."

It is unclear how soon that could happen. Sen. Charles E. Grassley (R-Iowa), who chairs the Judiciary Committee, said the panel would begin consideration of his nomination once receiving it formally, which he indicated might take a few weeks.

People who had worked with Wray said he is an accomplished, low-key lawyer who would not hesitate to stand up to the president if necessary.

Bill Mateja, who worked with Wray in the Justice Department in the early 2000s and is now in private practice at the Polsinelli law firm, said, "If people thought that Trump might pick a lackey, Chris Wray is not Trump's lackey."

[A packed day of interviews could lead to 'a fast decision' on the next FBI director, Trump says]

But others were not so sure.

Faiz Shakir, national political director of the American Civil Liberties Union, said in a statement that Wray's firm's legal work for the Trump family and his history of defending Christie, who was Trump's transition director, "makes us question his ability to lead the FBI with the independence, evenhanded judgment, and commitment to the rule of law that the agency deserves."

With former FBI director James Comey due to testify before the Senate Intelligence Committee on June 8, here's what to expect from the high-profile hearing. With former FBI director James Comey due to testify before the Senate Intelligence Committee on June 8, here's what to expect from the high-profile hearing. (Video: Jenny Starrs/Photo: Matt McClain/The Washington Post)

(Jenny Starrs/The Washington Post)

Wray represented Christie during the federal investigation into politically motivated lane closures at the George Washington Bridge that connects New Jersey and Manhattan. He kept a low profile during the scandal, but behind the scenes, he served as a comforting presence to Christie, who on Wednesday called Wray an "extraordinary lawyer" and "a nonpolitical choice."

"When I was at the absolute lowest point of my professional life, he's who I called," Christie told reporters at an event in New Jersey. "I don't think you can get a better recommendation than that."

Christie would not say whether he recommended Wray to Trump.

Wray's nomination will bring an end to a herky-jerky search that has seen several contenders take their own names out of the running. Top Justice Department officials initially held talks with eight candidates, and Trump said he could make a "fast decision" on whom to select because "almost all of them are very well known."

None of those people ultimately panned out, and Trump soon turned his focus to former senator and Democratic vice presidential nominee Joe Lieberman. But Lieberman, too, withdrew from consideration because another

lawyer at his firm was tapped to help Trump with the investigation into whether his campaign coordinated with Russia during the 2016 election.

[Trump interviews two more FBI director candidates]

Wray was one of two candidates Trump interviewed last week. The other was John S. Pistole, an FBI veteran and former Transportation Security Administration director who is now the president of Anderson University in Indiana.

Legislators vowed to scrutinize Wray — although he did not face immediate condemnation from Democrats. Rep. John Conyers Jr. (D-Mich.) said he was “deeply concerned that the next director is being selected according to the criteria of a president, whose campaign and administration are under investigation, and who fired the prior FBI director on the basis of his zeal in investigating these matters and refusal to swear loyalty to the president” but that he looked forward to learning more about Wray.

Sen. Christopher A. Coons (D-Del.), who serves on the Judiciary Committee, said, “I’m encouraged that President Trump has nominated someone with significant federal law enforcement experience, rather than a career in partisan politics, as was rumored over the past several weeks.”

Lawmakers will probably examine whether Wray’s work presents any conflicts of interest. Bobby Burchfield, another lawyer at Wray’s firm, was hired earlier this year by Trump’s company as an ethics adviser — though there was no indication Wray himself did work for Trump or his businesses. Wray’s firm also indicates on its website that it did work for at least one unnamed major Russian oil company.

If confirmed, Wray will succeed James B. Comey, whom Trump abruptly fired last month amid the Russia investigation. That probe is now being overseen by a special counsel, former FBI director Robert S. Mueller III. Andrew McCabe, who had been deputy director, is leading the FBI on an interim basis.

[5 things to expect when ex-FBI director James B. Comey testifies on Russia]

Mateja, who served as senior counsel to Comey when he was the deputy attorney general, said Wray and Comey are “very much the same,” although Wray is more introverted.

“I know both of them very well, and I will tell you first, I think the American people should feel good about the fact that President Trump did not pick a wallflower. He picked somebody with a real moral compass that’s very similar to Jim Comey’s moral compass,” Mateja said.

Neil MacBride, a former U.S. attorney who worked with Wray both inside and outside of government, said Wray’s selection was reminiscent of Mueller’s in 2001.

“Like Bob, Chris has great law enforcement chops; both were former heads of the criminal division, former [principal associate deputy attorneys general] and former line prosecutors who handled the department’s most serious terrorism and criminal cases. Both are men of integrity and independence, who are serious, thoughtful, even-tempered, with great judgment,” MacBride said.

Trump’s announcement on Wray — which took Grassley and Sen. Dianne Feinstein (Calif.), the ranking Democrat of the Judiciary Committee, by surprise — came the day before Comey is scheduled to testify before the Senate Intelligence Committee in what will

probably be one of the most closely watched congressional hearings in recent years. Comey has alleged that, before Trump fired him, the president requested that his FBI director pledge loyalty and urged him to back off his investigation into former national security adviser Michael Flynn.

The firing itself was an unusual move. FBI directors are generally appointed to 10-year terms so they can avoid political interference, and Trump has declared he was thinking of the Russia probe when he ousted Comey.

Legal analysts have said Comey’s removal — and his memos describing the talks before it — might be evidence of obstruction of justice.

Although Wray might not be the ultimate supervisor on the Russia probe, he could play a role in it, as FBI agents are still working on the case with Mueller.

Wray is no stranger to high-profile cases. His name appears on several redacted records in the ACLU’s database of torture documents. According to a 2005 profile in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, he had to assess on his first day at the Justice Department how the FBI misplaced files in the trial of Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh. He was also involved in the response to the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and helped coordinate the investigation into the D.C.-area snipers, according to the newspaper, although in an interview, he noted that his work was not all terrorism-related.

“I think a lot of people thought all the focus would be on terrorism and everything else would go into the ditch,” Wray said. “In fact, I think we’ve accomplished incredible things. I feel so fortunate to have had this job in this time.”

Joe Robuck, a retired FBI special agent who worked with Wray when Wray was a federal prosecutor in Atlanta and has remained in contact with him through the years, said he first saw the news that his friend had been interviewed last week and sent him an email saying, “Chris, you got to go for it. The country needs you.”

Checkpoint newsletter

Military, defense and security at home and abroad.

Robuck said Wray later called to ask what current FBI agents might think of him taking the post, having not worked himself in the bureau previously. FBI Agents Association President Thomas O’Connor said in a statement that the group, which had previously backed former representative Mike Rogers (R-Mich.), looks forward to meeting with him.

Robuck said Wray did not bring up the president, but he did mention an interview with Attorney General Jeff Sessions.

Sessions, Robuck said, had asked Wray about his experience as an assistant U.S. attorney, and Wray told him about a case he and Robuck had worked together years ago in which an Atlanta investment officer illegally steered millions of dollars to a particular banker in exchange for payoffs. Robuck said he had talked to jurors after the trial in that case, and they told him they had a nickname for Wray: “the bulldog.”

“He’s completely mission-oriented,” Robuck said. “It’s a tough job, it’s a really hard job, but he will deal with the pressure, and he won’t let anybody influence him.”

Ellen Nakashima, Devlin Barrett, Ed O’Keefe, Karoun Demirjian, Shawn Boburg, Julie Tate and Sari Horwitz contributed to this report.

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL.**

Del Quentin Wilber, Rebecca Ballhaus and Aruna Viswanatha

6-8 minutes

Updated June 7, 2017 7:59 p.m. ET

President Donald Trump said Wednesday he intends to nominate a criminal defense lawyer and former top federal prosecutor to lead the FBI, a post that has become even more high-profile since the president abruptly fired the former director a month ago.

Trump Taps Former Assistant Attorney General as New FBI Chief

Del Quentin Wilber, Rebecca Ballhaus and Aruna Viswanatha

Mr. Trump made public his selection of Christopher Wray on Twitter, saying the former assistant attorney general in the GOP administration of former President George W. Bush had “impeccable credentials” to succeed James Comey, the director he fired last month.

Mr. Comey’s dismissal was followed by the appointment of a special counsel to spearhead an investigation into Russia’s alleged meddling in the 2016 presidential election, an inquiry Mr. Trump has called a “witch hunt.”

The president’s announcement came a day before Mr. Comey’s highly anticipated testimony before a Senate committee. Mr. Comey is scheduled Thursday to describe publicly for the first time his private interactions with the president.

Mr. Trump’s decision to fire Mr. Comey last month—as the Federal Bureau of Investigation probed whether the president’s associates colluded with Moscow—roiled Washington and the FBI. Mr. Trump has denied any collusion, and Russian officials have denied interfering in the U.S. election.

The Justice Department’s recent decision to name Robert Mueller as special counsel overseeing the Russia investigation in a sense removed pressure from Mr. Trump’s search for a new FBI director because the agency’s new leader won’t oversee the Russia inquiry as Mr. Comey had.

The FBI handles a wide range of matters from bank fraud to counterterrorism to kidnappings. With 35,000 employees, including 13,000 agents, the bureau has been buffeted in recent months by criticism of the Russia probe and Mr. Comey’s handling of an injury

into former Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton's use of a private email server when she was secretary of state.

Mr. Wray's selection capped a month-long search that began shortly after Mr. Comey's dismissal. Mr. Trump interviewed a number of candidates, including Acting FBI Director Andrew McCabe and former Deputy Director John Pistole.

His decision to nominate Mr. Wray marked a shift from the president's earlier consideration of several political figures, including Sen. John Cornyn (R., Texas) and former Sen. Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut, a Democrat who became unaffiliated with any party.

Mr. Wray, who declined to comment when reached on his cellphone Wednesday, fits the traditional mold of FBI directors. He is a well-known lawyer who is respected in the national-security and legal communities.

In a statement, he said he looked forward to serving "with integrity."

A graduate of Yale Law School, Mr. Wray, 50 years old, was a federal prosecutor in Georgia before becoming a close aide to Deputy Attorney General Larry Thompson, whom he served in the aftermath of

the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

He was nominated in 2003 to be the assistant attorney general in charge of the criminal division, a position he held for two years before leaving the department to become a partner at the law firm of King & Spalding. Friends describe Mr. Wray as a dogged prosecutor who doesn't seek the limelight but isn't afraid to stand up for what he believes.

"He is a hard worker and he has a strong personality, but he is a quieter type of leader" than Mr. Comey, said Joe Whitley, a former top Justice Department official. "And that might not be bad for the FBI at this time. Chris also follows the facts. He will make his own decisions based on the facts."

Norm Eisen, who served as ethics counsel in the Democratic administration of former President Barack Obama, tweeted that Mr. Wray was a "good choice," writing he was "very fair" in his work on the Justice Department's task force investigating Enron Corp. "I endorse," Mr. Eisen wrote.

One of Mr. Wray's highest-profile clients in private practice has been New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, a Republican and a Trump confidante, whom Mr. Wray represented in the 2013 George

Washington Bridge lane-closure controversy.

The final choice appeared to come down to Mr. Wray and Mr. Pistole, a longtime FBI agent and former deputy director who is now a university president in Indiana, according to administration officials.

Mr. Wray has been a longtime Republican donor. Federal Election Commission records show he gave to GOP presidential nominees John McCain and Mitt Romney in 2008 and 2012, respectively, though not to Mr. Trump in 2016. He has also backed GOP lawmakers, including Sen. David Perdue of Georgia and former Rep. Tom Price of Georgia, whom Mr. Trump has since tapped as his secretary of health and human services.

Officials at the Justice Department and Republican allies on Capitol Hill appeared to have been caught off guard by Mr. Trump's tweet. Sen. Bob Corker (R., Tenn.), who speaks to Mr. Trump often, initially said he had no reaction to Mr. Wray's selection. "I don't know him, I have no frame of reference," he said.

Later in the day, Sen. Lindsey Graham (R., S.C.) called Mr. Wray "an exceptional choice."

Sen. Chuck Grassley (R., Iowa), chairman of the Senate Judiciary

Committee, said the panel will begin considering the nomination in a couple of weeks. "Christopher Wray's legal credentials and law-enforcement background certainly make him a suitable candidate to lead the FBI," Mr. Grassley said.

Democrats were more muted. "I'm encouraged that President Trump has nominated someone with significant federal law-enforcement experience, rather than a career in partisan politics," Sen. Chris Coons (D., Conn.) said.

—Natalie Andrews and Byron Tau contributed to this article.

Corrections & Amplifications
Mr. Wray works for King & Spalding. An earlier version of this article incorrectly spelled Spalding. (June 7, 2017)

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**The
New York
Times**

Who is Christopher Wray? Trump's F.B.I. Pick Is Said to Be Low-Key and Principled (UNE)

Adam Goldman and Matt Apuzzo

6-8 minutes

WASHINGTON — Christopher A. Wray was the government's top criminal prosecutor in 2004 when the F.B.I. director, Robert S. Mueller III, and the deputy attorney general, James B. Comey, threatened to quit the Bush administration over a controversial surveillance program. He offered to join their protest.

Now, with President Trump's selection of Mr. Wray on Wednesday to be the director of the F.B.I., all three men will be central figures in the investigation of Russian meddling in the 2016 election that has rocked the Trump administration. Mr. Mueller is leading the investigation into Russian influence — and the inquiry led Mr. Trump to fire Mr. Comey.

In choosing Mr. Wray, the president is calling on a veteran Washington lawyer who is more low key and deliberative than either Mr. Mueller or Mr. Comey but will remain independent, friends and former colleagues say.

"He's not flashy. He's not showy. He's understated," said J. Michael Luttig, a former judge who hired Mr. Wray as a law clerk in 1992. Mr. Luttig, who said he counted Mr. Comey and Mr. Mueller as friends, said Mr. Wray would bring a more subtle management style to the F.B.I.

Calling Mr. Wray a "man of impeccable credentials," Mr. Trump revealed his choice in an early-morning tweet on the eve of a congressional hearing in which Mr. Comey was to testify about what he interpreted as improper attempts by Mr. Trump to pressure him.

Mr. Wray is a safe, mainstream pick from a president who at one point was considering politicians for a job that has historically been kept outside partisanship. A former assistant attorney general under President George W. Bush, Mr. Wray is likely to assuage the fears of F.B.I. agents who worried that Mr. Trump would try to weaken or politicize the agency.

Those who know Mr. Wray say his willingness to quit the Justice Department more than a decade ago as a matter of principle showed

he would brush back attempts at political interference and try to protect the bureau's independence.

Questions on that willingness are certain to come up at his Senate confirmation hearing. Mr. Trump has repeatedly interjected himself into criminal justice matters in ways that previous presidents have avoided. His dismissal of Mr. Comey has been criticized as an effort to obstruct the F.B.I.'s investigation into Mr. Trump's campaign and possible collusion with Russia.

Mr. Mueller is now acting as the Justice Department's special counsel overseeing the investigation. He and Mr. Wray respect each other, Mr. Luttig said, predicting they would work well together.

If confirmed, Mr. Wray will have to balance fighting terrorism with trying to root out public corruption and confronting Russian and Chinese espionage at the nation's top law enforcement organization, which has evolved into a major part of the national security apparatus. He would lead about 35,000 people at an agency where many are seeking

a calming presence after nearly a year of turmoil.

"He'll have a strong emphasis on creating and nurturing the trust of every F.B.I. agent," said Joe D. Whitley, a former senior Justice Department official who has known Mr. Wray for years.

Mr. Wray is a familiar figure in Washington; he took a top job with the Justice Department in the spring of 2001, playing a pivotal role in the aftermath of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks by overseeing operations.

Mr. Wray is likely to face questions at his confirmation hearing about what he knew about C.I.A. abuses in the years after the attacks and how the Justice Department responded to them.

According to government documents since made public, he was made aware in February 2004 of the death of a C.I.A. detainee in Iraq that had been ruled a homicide and whose case was referred to the Justice Department.

Months later, Mr. Wray told the Senate Judiciary Committee that he had learned about the death from media reports and was not aware of

a criminal referral from the Pentagon or the F.B.I., but did not say whether he knew of one from the C.I.A. That prompted Senator Patrick J. Leahy of Vermont, a Democrat, to accuse Mr. Wray of giving “less than a complete and truthful answer.”

Mr. Wray went on to serve as head of the criminal division from 2003 to 2005, directing efforts to deal with corporate fraud scandals and political investigations. Chris Swecker, the former head of the F.B.I. criminal investigations division, said Mr. Wray was unafraid to pursue sensitive corruption cases that included prosecutions of the disgraced former lobbyist Jack Abramoff and the former Representatives Randy Cunningham and William J. Jefferson.

After leaving for private practice at the law firm King & Spalding, Mr. Wray represented Gov. Chris Christie of New Jersey, a former Justice Department colleague, in the so-called Bridgeway scandal over a politically motivated scheme to cause traffic

jams. Two former aides to Mr. Christie, an ally of Mr. Trump, were found guilty and sentenced to prison; the governor was not charged.

That Mr. Wray's political skills were honed in the crucible of scandal gave him an edge over the other finalist, John S. Pistole, a former deputy director of the F.B.I. and head of the Transportation Security Administration, administration officials said. Mr. Wray had managed to soothe and counsel the volatile Mr. Christie.

The American Civil Liberties Union voiced concerns on Wednesday about Mr. Wray's nomination, citing his oversight role after the Sept. 11 attacks and his work for Mr. Christie, which “makes us question his ability to lead the F.B.I. with the independence, evenhanded judgment and commitment to the rule of law that the agency deserves,” the organization said in a statement.

The A.C.L.U. also called on senators to vigorously question Mr. Wray about what he knew, as the

head of the Justice Department's criminal division, about abuses of detainees in American custody in Iraq and Afghanistan and at Guantánamo Bay.

Mr. Wray graduated in 1989 from Yale University, where he met his future wife, Helen, in his freshman dormitory. Her family once owned the Atlanta Journal-Constitution. Mr. Wray rowed crew in high school and college, said Andrew C. Hruska, his law partner and friend since childhood.

“His willingness to put in a tremendous amount of effort toward a team goal really personifies Chris,” Mr. Hruska said.

He earned his law degree in 1992 from Yale Law School. After clerking for Mr. Luttig, Mr. Wray moved to Atlanta and joined the office of the United States attorney there.

While Mr. Wray does not have a reputation as a partisan operative, he has donated consistently to Republican candidates. Over the past decade, he has contributed at

least \$35,000 to Republican candidates or committees, according to Federal Election Commission data. He did not do so during the 2016 election, but he has donated to Republican presidential nominees, including \$2,300 to support Senator John McCain of Arizona in 2008 and \$7,500 to Mitt Romney in 2012.

Senator Sheldon Whitehouse of Rhode Island, a Democrat who serves on the Judiciary Committee, said he was approaching Mr. Wray's choice with caution.

“Above all, he will need to show his commitment to protecting the bureau's independence,” Mr. Whitehouse said.

Mr. Wray will not tolerate meddling, his friends say.

“He certainly understands the appropriate norms that exist between the Justice Department, F.B.I. and White House,” said John C. Richter, a fellow lawyer at King & Spalding who was a former federal prosecutor in Atlanta.



Christopher Wray, the Low-Key Nominee for the FBI's Top Post

Aruna Viswanatha and Del Quentin Wilber

6-7 minutes

June 7, 2017 5:42 p.m. ET

FBI Director nominee Christopher Wray and former Director James Comey both went to elite law schools, served as federal prosecutors, and worked at top Southern law firms before taking senior posts in the Bush Justice Department. But that might be where their similarities end.

While Mr. Comey is known as a gregarious figure—President Donald Trump has called him a “showboat”—Mr. Wray, 50 years old, is known for an under-the-radar approach.

In 2003, when Messrs. Comey and Wray, then top Justice Department officials, held a joint press conference to announce a special counsel to investigate the leak of a CIA employee's identity, Mr. Comey answered all of the 32 questions asked while Mr. Wray stood silently by his side, according to a transcript of the briefing.

That tendency to avoid the limelight may have impressed Mr. Trump. The president is now engaged in a back-and-forth with Mr. Comey over whether Mr. Trump improperly sought to influence the FBI, as Mr. Comey suggests in prepared

testimony for a much-anticipated Senate hearing Thursday. Mr. Trump has denied this.

Mr. Trump said in an early Wednesday tweet he would nominate Mr. Wray to the Federal Bureau of Investigation post, calling him a “man of impeccable credentials.” The choice came one month after Mr. Trump abruptly fired Mr. Comey amid an investigation into Russian meddling in the 2016 election and any potential ties between Russia with the Trump campaign. Mr. Trump has denied any collusion by his campaign, and Russia has said it didn't meddle in the U.S. election.

Mr. Wray, an Atlanta lawyer, has spent the past decade in private practice, representing high-profile clients including New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie and Credit Suisse AG. But he earned his reputation as a hard worker and straight-shooter early on in his career at the Justice Department. Mr. Wray declined to comment for this article.

Hailing from a liberal Manhattan family of lawyers, Mr. Wray went to Andover, Yale College and Yale Law School before moving to Atlanta and becoming a federal prosecutor there. He spent four years at the U.S. attorney's office in the Northern District of Georgia, prosecuting crimes from church arson to public corruption.

His connections to the Atlanta legal world led him to sign a letter

supporting former Atlanta U.S. Attorney Sally Yates in her nomination for deputy attorney general. That letter, signed in 2015, described Ms. Yates as “a powerful force for justice” with an “extraordinary” record of service. Mr. Trump fired Ms. Yates in his first weeks on the job after she instructed Justice Department lawyers not to defend the president's executive order on travel.

Mr. Wray moved to Washington to spend two years in the deputy attorney general's office in the aftermath of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, where he became closely involved in the Justice Department's counterterrorism efforts. In 2003, he was tapped to run the department's criminal division.

“This is a young man who is wise and mature beyond his 36 years,” his then-home state senator, Zell Miller, said in introducing Mr. Wray at his confirmation hearing. Mr. Miller was a Democrat, though he later endorsed George W. Bush for re-election.

At the time, the criminal division was responsible for both national security and criminal matters, giving Mr. Wray a wide window into both terrorist threats and corporate fraud prosecutions, the twin hallmarks of his tenure there. National security investigations were later split into a separate national security division at the Justice Department.

In announcing the special counsel appointment for the CIA leak case in 2003, Mr. Comey, who was then deputy attorney general, said he first considered having Mr. Wray oversee the investigation, but ultimately decided to keep it outside the department's normal chain of command.

“I also have complete confidence in Chris Wray's ability to be fair and impartial,” Mr. Comey said at the time. “He is a total pro and one of the people who makes this department great.”

The two appeared at multiple news conferences over the next year, including with then-FBI Director Robert Mueller—now the special counsel investigating Russian interference in the 2016 election—to provide updates on national security matters and the investigation into Enron Corp., one of the largest accounting fraud scandals to date. Mr. Wray generally stood on stage but said little, leaving the limelight to Mr. Comey and others, according to transcripts of the news conferences.

Since leaving government, Mr. Wray has led a high-profile white-collar criminal defense group at the law firm King & Spalding, where he represented Gov. Christie, a top Trump ally, in the George Washington Bridge lane-closure controversy, and Credit Suisse in its \$2.6 billion plea deal in 2014 to resolve charges that it helped

Americans evade taxes through offshore accounts.

He also represented Johnson & Johnson in a \$2.2 billion agreement in 2013 to resolve criminal and civil charges that it marketed drugs for uses not approved by regulators.

Still, Mr. Wray's confirmation



Editorial : Trump's FBI pick deserves intense scrutiny. Here's what he should be ready for.

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

5-6 minutes

Opinion A column or article in the Opinions section (in print, this is known as the Editorial Pages).

June 7 at 7:18 PM

PRESIDENT TRUMP on Wednesday announced he would nominate veteran government lawyer Christopher Wray to be the next FBI director. Several hours later, the public got the text of testimony that the man Mr. Wray has been tapped to replace, ousted director James B. Comey, prepared to deliver at a Senate hearing Thursday. As legislators consider Mr. Wray's nomination and await Mr. Comey's full testimony, this much is clear: Mr. Wray must get much more intense scrutiny than the typical executive nominee, because it is evident that the next FBI chief may face severe pressure from a president who is unwilling to respect the boundaries of his office.

At first glance, Mr. Wray seems to be a solid choice. Mr. Trump was reported to have considered choosing a current or former

hearing, which hasn't yet been scheduled, is likely to focus less on his legal background and more on how he might handle his relationship with Mr. Trump, according to lawmakers.

In vivid testimony released Wednesday, Mr. Comey described efforts by Mr. Trump to secure his

politician for a job that has always gone to a law enforcement official. By contrast, Mr. Wray has not been involved directly in partisan politics. He held high positions in President George W. Bush's Justice Department, rising from federal prosecutor to head the department's Criminal Division. During that time, he worked on some of the major financial fraud cases of the era. He then went into private practice representing major corporations and, notably, New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie (R) during his "Bridgewater" scandal.

Mr. Wray's work during the Bush administration deserves a careful look, as does his relationship to Mr. Christie, a close Trump ally with whom he served in the Justice Department. But the most important line of questioning will concern how Mr. Wray views the role of FBI director and the relationship he intends to have with the man who appointed him.

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According to Mr. Comey's prepared testimony, the president told the then-FBI director in a private

loyalty. How Mr. Wray would react to such requests is likely to be a central topic during his confirmation.

"Chris is straight as an arrow," said Andrew Hruska, one of his colleagues at King & Spalding and the Justice Department, who also went to grade school, college and law school with him. "He will do

January dinner, "I need loyalty, I expect loyalty." Mr. Comey declined to offer more than "honesty" and explained the importance of FBI independence. Yet, per Mr. Comey's account, the president later persisted in asking that the FBI back off its investigation into former national security adviser Michael Flynn and that Mr. Comey state publicly that Mr. Trump was not personally under investigation. The FBI complied with neither request, and the president fired Mr. Comey, citing the Russia investigation as a motivation.

Mr. Wray must be prepared to reveal whether Mr. Trump demanded his "loyalty" before nominating him to lead the FBI. He should detail his conversations with the president and in particular disclose whether the two discussed the Russia probe. If he admits to making any commitments or refuses to answer, the Senate should reject his nomination. He must explain what he would do if the president demanded that the FBI terminate an investigation involving Mr. Trump or his circle, or if other staffers from the White House or in the intelligence community pressured him to do so. This possibility is all too real: The Post reports that Mr.

everything in an absolutely professional way."

Write to Aruna Viswanatha at Aruna.Viswanatha@wsj.com and **Del Quentin Wilber** at del.wilber@wsj.com

Trump tried to persuade Director of National Intelligence Daniel Coats to influence Mr. Comey on the Russia probe. Mr. Wray should also say whether he would speak with the president one-on-one, an apparent habit of Mr. Trump's that Mr. Comey found inappropriate.

Nearly a month after firing previous director James Comey, President Trump announced that former assistant attorney general Christopher Wray is his pick for the next FBI director. The move comes a day before Comey is set to testify in Congress. President Trump announced that Christopher Wray is his pick for the next FBI director, a day before previous director James Comey testifies before Congress. (Jenny Starrs/The Washington Post)

(Jenny Starrs/The Washington Post)

Thursday's testimony from Mr. Comey may bring more troubling revelations that will add to the pressure on Mr. Wray. Never before has a nominee for FBI director borne such a high burden to show that he will put the FBI's independent application of the law above all other considerations.



Editorial : Christopher Wray is promising nominee

The Editorial Board, USA

TODAY

3-4 minutes

After considering some wildly inappropriate choices for FBI director, President Trump on Wednesday settled on Christopher Wray, a former federal prosecutor and current defense lawyer.

Given that Trump had threatened to be the first president to nominate a politician to the post, this latest move should prompt considerable sighs of relief.

After last month's abrupt firing of FBI chief James Comey, who at the time of his ouster was investigating Russia's ties to the Trump

campaign, a political appointment would have further intensified questions about whether the president was trying to obstruct a criminal inquiry.

Wray, 50, a former head of the criminal division at the Justice Department and member of the task force that prosecuted fraudulent accounting at Enron, has the type of background that equips him to become an FBI director.

Without question he is a superior pick to the many pols who had been under consideration at one time or another. These included Rep. Trey Gowdy, R-S.C., a partisan whose highly politicized inquiry into the Benghazi tragedy was a national embarrassment. Those under consideration also included more respected figures such as former

representative Mike Rogers, R-Mich., and former senator Joe Lieberman, I-Conn.

A career law enforcement official raises fewer questions while being better equipped to face the complex array of threats present in the world today, including terrorism and cyberattacks.

At first blush, Wray would appear to fit the bill. He has never run for office and has had an impressive career that checks all of the appropriate boxes.

One area, however, needs to be thoroughly explored during his confirmation hearings for the 10-year term: Wray's law firm clients, especially New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie in the so-called Bridgewater scandal.

As Christie was an early backer of Trump, once Christie's own presidential bid foundered, the Wray appointment poses the question of whether Trump sees him as a potential ally. More important, it sparks the question of how Wray sees Trump.

Given Comey's testimony that Trump sought "loyalty," it's vital that Wray view his new clients as the Constitution and the American people — not the president who chose him.

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McCaillon : Christopher Wray's law firm has ties to Russian energy companies

Kenneth F. McCaillon, Opinion contributor

5-7 minutes

Christopher Wray (Photo: King & Spalding)

On paper, Christopher Wray appears to be an excellent choice to serve as the next FBI director. He has "impeccable" academic credentials (Yale law school) and has had a decades-long distinguished career as a federal prosecutor and high-level official in the Department of Justice. As the criminal defense lawyer for New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie during the "Bridgegate" investigation, he did raise some eyebrows when it was learned that one of Christie's "missing" cellphones mysteriously ended up in Wray's possession, but this is unlikely to derail Wray's confirmation.

The most troubling issue that Wray may face is the fact that his law firm — King & Spalding — represents Rosneft and Gazprom, two of Russia's largest state-controlled oil companies.

Rosneft was prominently mentioned in the now infamous 35-page dossier prepared by former British MI6 agent Christopher Steele. The dossier claims that the CEO of Rosneft, Igor Sechin, offered candidate Donald Trump, through Trump's campaign manager Carter

Page, a 19% stake in the company in exchange for lifting U.S. sanctions on Russia. The dossier claims that the offer was made in July while Page was in Moscow.

Rosneft is also the company that had a \$500 billion oil drilling joint-venture with Exxon in 2012, when Secretary of State Rex Tillerson was Exxon's CEO. However, the deal was nixed by President Obama in 2014, when he imposed the sanctions that crippled Russia's ability to do business with U.S. companies. The lifting of sanctions by the Trump administration would enable Exxon to renew its joint venture agreement with Rosneft, and the law firm of King & Spalding could end up in the middle of the contract negotiations between those two companies.

The law firm's representation of Gazprom raises even more serious conflict issues for Wray. Gazprom was a partner in RosUkrEnerg AG ("RUE"), which is controlled by Ukrainian oligarch Dmitry Firtash. He is under federal indictment in Chicago for racketeering charges, has had numerous financial dealings with former Trump campaign manager Paul Manafort, and is generally considered to be a member of Russian President Vladimir Putin's inner circle.

Though there is no indication that Wray personally worked on any of the Rosneft or Gazprom legal matters handled by his law firm, he

might well have an ethical and legal conflict of interest that would prevent him from any involvement of the FBI's Russian probe. When a law firm such as King & Spalding represents clients, then all of the partners in that law firm have an actual or potential conflict of interest, preventing them from undertaking any representation of any other client that has interests clearly adverse to those of these two Russian companies. These conflict rules continue to apply even after a lawyer leaves the law firm, so Wray could be ethically barred from involving himself in a federal investigation that includes within its scope a probe of Rosneft, Gazprom and affiliated companies. The public appearance of conflict of interest and impropriety might require him to recuse himself from the investigation.

If Wray was confirmed as the FBI director, and then had to recuse himself with regard to some or all of the Russia-related aspects of the critical investigation being conducted by the FBI and special counsel Robert Mueller, the potential damage to the investigation could be significant. If Wray refused to recuse himself from the Russia-Trump investigation — or at least acknowledge the potential conflict issue, a serious cloud could be cast over the FBI's level of commitment to the investigation.

POLICING THE USA: A look at race, justice, media

One of several reasons why former senator Joe Lieberman was generally considered to be unqualified for the FBI director's job was that his law firm — Kasowitz Benson Torres — has represented Trump for many years, thus creating the appearance of possible favoritism to Trump.

Similarly, the nomination of Wray as FBI director raises serious questions as to whether Wray — given his law firm's affiliation with Rosneft and Gazprom — would be perceived as an attempt by Trump to install a "Russia-friendly" director at the helm of the FBI.

The Senate must, therefore, proceed cautiously with Wray's confirmation hearing, and demand that any potential conflicts be fully disclosed — and hopefully resolved — before he is allowed to assume the title of FBI director.

Kenneth F. McCaillon is a former federal prosecutor with the Department of Justice and senior partner in the law firm of McCaillon & Associates. He is also an adjunct professor at Cardozo Law School in New York, and the author of The Essential Guide to Donald Trump.



The U.S. Can't Leave the Paris Climate Deal Just Yet

Brad Plumer

6-7 minutes

Last week, President Trump announced that the United States would withdraw from the Paris climate agreement. But it will take more than one speech to pull out: Under the rules of the deal, which the White House says it will follow, the earliest any country can leave is Nov. 4, 2020. That means the United States will remain a party to the accord for nearly all of Mr. Trump's current term, and it could still try to influence the climate talks during that span.

So the next four years will be a busy time for climate policy. Mr. Trump's aides plan to keep working to dismantle domestic climate

programs like the Clean Power Plan. And the world's nations will meet regularly to hash out details of the Paris agreement, even as the United States' exit looms. Here is what comes next.

November 2017

Negotiators for 195 nations will meet in Bonn, Germany, to discuss how to carry out the Paris agreement. Every country has already submitted an initial pledge for curbing greenhouse gas emissions. But officials now have to write rules for monitoring and verifying those pledges.

Technically, the United States is still the co-chair of a key committee on transparency measures. In the past, American officials have taken a keen interest in this topic, pushing for robust oversight of emissions.

By contrast, countries like China have argued for looser scrutiny for developing nations.

Mr. Trump has offered to "renegotiate" the Paris deal, because he says other countries are "laughing at us" while they renege on their pledges. While countries like France and Germany have ruled out a broad renegotiation of the agreement, the United States could nonetheless try to shape the rules from within.

"The question is whether the Trump administration still shows up for those discussions," said Andrew Light, a senior climate change adviser at the State Department under President Barack Obama. "If they really are pushing to 'renegotiate' the deal, as they say, I don't see why they wouldn't go."

Another thing to watch this fall: a growing coalition of states, cities and companies that are pledging to do as much as they can to meet the United States' climate goals on their own. They will probably send a delegation to Bonn to reassure other countries that the United States is not completely out of the game.

November 2018

Everyone agrees that current pledges under the Paris agreement are nowhere near sufficient to keep total global warming well below 2 degrees Celsius, the threshold widely deemed unacceptably risky.

So, starting in 2018, countries have agreed to meet every five years to take stock of their emissions-cutting efforts to date, compare them with what is needed to stay below 2

degrees of warming, and then figure out how to ratchet up their ambitions. As part of this effort, countries will urge one another to make their existing pledges on emissions stronger. The Paris deal was meant to work through peer pressure, and experts say this "global stocktake" exercise is crucial for that.

The United States is also free to join these discussions, but it seems unlikely that the Trump administration will submit a stronger pledge. Some experts also fear that the United States could play a spoiler role in these discussions, in much the way that major oil producers like Saudi Arabia or Russia have done in the past.

Nov. 4, 2019

This is the earliest date that the United States can submit a written notice to the United Nations that it is withdrawing from the Paris deal — exactly three years after it came into force. As soon as that happens, the United States can leave the accord in exactly one year. (The Trump administration could also change its mind at any point beforehand and decide to stay in.)

Nov. 4, 2020



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

9-12 minutes

The event Wednesday on an airport tarmac in Cincinnati was just the latest opportunity for the White House to disparage and undercut a law it officially must carry out.

Standing in front of Air Force One along with two small-business owners, President Trump recounted how they "have had their lives completely upended by the disaster known as Obamacare."

One saw her choice of doctors shrink while her premiums and out-of-pocket costs rose, he said. The other has curtailed new investments in his company to maintain employees' health benefits.

"The coverage is horrendous," the president declared, ticking off insurers' recent decisions to pull out of federal marketplaces in Ohio, Kentucky and elsewhere. "Obamacare is in a total death spiral. The problems will only get worse if Congress fails to act."

Both the gathering and Trump's remarks represent officials' strategy to convince Americans that the

This is the earliest that the United States could officially withdraw from the climate accord. By coincidence, it would happen one day after the next presidential election.

Also by 2020, other countries are scheduled to offer new or updated commitments for how they plan to tackle climate change under the Paris deal. One question is whether the American exit might make these plans weaker than they otherwise would be. "My biggest worry is the corrosive effect on global ambitions," said Elliot Diringer, executive vice president of the Center for Climate and Energy Solutions.

President Barack Obama on Dec. 12, 2015, the day representatives from 195 nations approved the Paris climate accord. Pool photo by Dennis Brack

The Obama administration originally pledged that the United States' greenhouse gas emissions would fall roughly 17 percent below 2005 levels by 2020. Emissions are currently about 12 percent below 2005 levels, and it remains uncertain how much further they will fall. The Trump administration is scrapping federal climate policies like the Clean Power Plan, but

many states are pushing to expand renewable energy and shift away from coal power. If the United States comes close to its 2020 target, experts say, that may help persuade other countries in Paris not to scale back their own efforts.

January 2021

If a new president enters the White House on Jan. 20, 2021, he or she could easily submit a written notice to the United Nations that the United States would like to rejoin the Paris accord. Within 30 days, the United States could re-enter the agreement and submit a new pledge for how the country plans to tackle climate change.

If the United States does rejoin Paris, however, it could take time to regain the credibility it once had within climate discussions. "Other countries are certainly going to wonder if the American political system is just too volatile to be relied on for consistency on this issue," Mr. Light said.

November 2023

Negotiators will meet again in 2023 to see how their second round of pledges and actions stack up against the 2-degree goal. The idea is that they will continually increase

their ambitions and meet every five years to adjust accordingly.

2025

The Obama administration vowed to cut greenhouse gas emissions 26 to 28 percent below 2005 levels by 2025 as part of the Paris deal. Even before Mr. Trump came into office, that target would have been difficult to reach without new policies, and it may prove unattainable now.

Other countries will be watching how close the United States may come. A recent analysis by the Rhodium Group estimated that United States emissions will now most likely fall 15 to 19 percent below 2005 levels by 2025, when taking into account both the effects of Mr. Trump's policies and initiatives that states are pursuing.

But emissions could fall further if technologies like electric cars or solar power proliferate faster than expected, or if Congress or a new administration enacts additional policies, like a price on carbon. All of those factors could influence what actions other countries decide to take on climate change.

White House touts the ACA's demise even as insurers seek help in stabilizing its marketplace (UNE)

collapse of the Affordable Care Act is inevitable and to bolster public and congressional support for a GOP overhaul. Since the day he was inaugurated, Trump has taken steps to erode the law, including instructing his deputies to ease up on ACA regulations and curtailing consumer outreach during the final days of health plan enrollment for 2017.

How Trump is rolling back Obama's legacy

"The best thing politically is to let Obamacare explode," he told The Washington Post in March. On Wednesday, he declared it "dead."

But behind the scenes, the increasing fragility of the law's insurance marketplaces has created an increasingly difficult predicament for the president's top advisers.

The issue is whether to take steps to allay the concerns of skittish insurers, some of which are either increasing rates or pulling out altogether, or let things deteriorate further — even at the risk of being blamed. The advisers are split, according to several people briefed on the deliberations: Vice President Pence and Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney have argued against intervention,

while Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price backs providing federal support if a conservative health-care bill fails to pass this summer.

For the moment, the administration has defaulted to a position of doing little to try to soothe the health insurance industry, even as many insurers warn that federal action — or inaction — could aggravate the situation. Some suggest that the White House's relentless naysaying is not reflecting marketplace problems as much as driving them.

"We're in this very strange situation where the agency in charge of stewarding the law is very openly working to undermine that law," said Caitlin Morris, director of affordability initiatives at Families USA, a pro-ACA consumer group.

"Sabotage is the operative word," Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.) said last month.

The biggest source of industry anxiety right now is whether the administration and Congress will continue to fund cost-sharing subsidies that help 7 million Americans with ACA plans afford deductibles and copays. House Republicans challenged the legality of the \$7 billion in subsidies when

Barack Obama was president, and the case is still on appeal.

"Absent that funding, I don't know if we're going to have much participation in the exchange market in 2018," said Tennessee insurance commissioner Julie Mix McPeak, a Republican who also serves as president-elect of the National Association of Insurance Commissioners.

[At Trump's urging, states move Medicaid in a conservative direction]

The uncertainty is one of the top reasons insurers have cited when explaining why they are posting higher rates for the next year or withdrawing from markets outright. Two weeks ago, Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina filed a rate increase of 22.9 percent that it said would have been 8.8 percent if the administration had committed to paying cost-sharing subsidies. Last week, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Nebraska announced that it would not offer ACA-compliant bronze and catastrophic plans next year, leaving the state with just one insurer on the exchange there.

And on Tuesday, Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield announced that it was pulling out of the federal

exchange in Ohio, meaning that at least 20 of the state's 88 counties will lack an insurer.

"We have to take a snapshot in time, which is right now," Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina chief executive Brad Wilson said in an interview. A "lack of action" by the administration, he added, "yields a result we are currently seeing — higher premiums rather than lower premiums."

State insurance commissioners, Democrats and Republicans alike, are searching for ways to help companies cope with the unpredictability so that they stay put for 2018. Their anxiety is especially acute this spring, since the administration's drumbeat coincides with the time frame in which insurers must make their decisions.

While the White House tries to prod the Senate into speedy passage of health-care legislation, it simultaneously is using each new revelation about the law's marketplaces — through which more than 12 million Americans signed up for health coverage this year — to amplify its negative message.

Late last month, HHS issued a study finding that average individual market premiums have more than doubled since 2013. On Friday, a department news release declared, "Today's front page of the Omaha World Herald spells out the latest bad news for Obamacare."

Anthem's withdrawal announcement was immediately highlighted, with White House press secretary Sean Spicer saying it would leave "19,000 Ohioans without any options" — though the state said the move would affect 10,500 consumers.

A short time later, HHS spokeswoman Alleigh Marré called the insurer's decision "a stark reminder that Obamacare is collapsing." Less than an hour later, HHS sent a news release touting the request by Minuteman Health in New Hampshire to raise premiums 30 percent next year for its ACA customers.

The vice president has held at least three events since the weekend to spotlight the law's flaws. On Wednesday, he met on Air Force Two with cancer survivor Traci Lewis, a Houston resident who said that her out-of-pocket costs had become unaffordable under Obamacare.

Administrative actions have been weakening the law for months. Trump signed an executive order within hours of taking office that directed federal agencies to ease regulatory burdens created by the ACA; later, the Internal Revenue Service said it was going to send taxpayers their refunds even if they failed to send proof that they were insured.

Such diminished enforcement, predicted CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield as it filed its rates in Maryland last month, "will have the same impact as repeal" and lead to fewer healthier people enrolling in coverage. "Based on industry and government estimates as well as actuarial judgment, we have projected that this will cause morbidity to increase by an additional 20 percent," the insurer said.

Washington state's insurance commissioner, Mike Kreidler, a Democrat and former state legislator, called the move "the shot across the bow."

[Trump moves to weaken ACA's birth control coverage requirement]

Experts note that many consumers on the independent insurance market had struggled to find affordable plans long before Trump took office.

Robert Laszewski, president and chief executive of the consulting firm Health Policy and Strategy Associates, said that even the cheapest unsubsidized plan on North Carolina's exchange costs a family of four in Charlotte \$1,414 a month, plus a \$14,300 annual deductible.

"The question is, was Obamacare unstable in the first place and is Trump in the process of wrecking it?" Laszewski asked. "And the answer is yes."

White House legislative affairs director Marc Short said in an interview that while no final decision has been made on the cost-sharing subsidies, the president "has been clear that in many cases, he views this as a bailout to insurers."

Some Republicans are urging caution. Rep. Tom Cole (R-Okla.), who chairs the House Appropriations Committee's subcommittee on labor, health and human services, education and related agencies, said Monday that the administration should continue to provide the subsidies until a new law is in place and there has been sufficient time for a transition.

"I don't see how you justify making things worse for people in the system, based on some philosophical argument," said Cole, who has talked with officials on both sides of the debate. Cutting off the

cost-sharing subsidies "would totally destroy the market."

A recent Washington Post-ABC News poll found that more than three-quarters of Americans say Trump should try to make the existing law work as well as possible. Just 13 percent, by contrast, say the president should try to make it fail as soon as possible.

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Though Trump has been vocal in his support for the House GOP's American Health Care Act, which would rewrite key parts of the ACA, his recent tweets have been more difficult to decipher.

In one, he claimed to have suggested "that we add more dollars to Healthcare" to make it "the best anywhere," a statement at odds with his administration's budget proposal for big spending cuts.

A health policy expert close to the administration, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations, said the president and his aides were still working out how to proceed.

"There isn't even a strategy that they're failing to follow up on," the expert said. "There just isn't a strategy."

Amy Goldstein contributed to this report.

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL.**

Andrews

7-9 minutes

Trump Air-Traffic Plan Faces Turbulence

Andy Pasztor
and Natalie

towers at small airports operated by contractors will be protected from cutbacks under the proposed system. "I'm very concerned about access for rural America," she told the Senate Commerce Committee, but said those areas are "most hurt by the status quo."

Reflecting the extent of opposition in the Senate, GOP Sen. Roger Wicker of Mississippi said "this is a tough sell" for rural lawmakers. Sen. Bill Nelson of Florida, the panel's top Democrat, said reviving the debate over traffic control privatization "distracts from legitimate matters that must be addressed," including additional consumer protections for passengers.

But passage of an air-traffic control revamp would require a dramatic

pullback by political forces arrayed against it, according to lawmakers, congressional staffers and industry officials.

The proposal's prospects are further clouded by Congress's present focus on health-care reform—and lawmakers' uncertainty about why President Donald Trump opted to put air-traffic control atop his infrastructure agenda.

"I don't know what the theory was in this becoming such a significant component of the infrastructure plan," Sen. Jerry Moran (R., Kansas) said. A member of the Commerce Committee, which oversees the Federal Aviation Administration, Mr. Moran said that except for the largest urban areas, stripping traffic control from the FAA would "significantly diminish the

opportunity for air service to most communities across the country."

Many Republican lawmakers dismissed the privatization issue as premature, since there isn't any specific White House plan on the table. Cory Gardner (R., Colo.), another member of the Commerce Committee, said "we've got a long ways to go in this process" before he can take a position.

Similar legislation was approved on a partisan vote by the House Transportation Committee last year, though it died before reaching the House floor and was never seriously considered by the Senate. Sen. John Thune, the South Dakota Republican who chairs the Commerce Committee, intends again this year to move an FAA reauthorization bill without an air-

traffic revamp, according to one person familiar with the details.

Unlike in 2016, this year there is an administration putting its political capital behind the idea. Proponents argue that shifting traffic-control responsibilities to a private, nonprofit corporation run by a board representing a broad variety of stakeholders would lead to faster and more efficient modernization. The proposed entity would be funded by user fees and could raise capital in the bond market—rather than relying on the political vagaries of Capitol Hill.

Rising impatience with the FAA's uncertain finances and the slow, troubled modernization has prompted most major U.S. carriers and the Business Roundtable, a group of chief executives, to support the White House proposal. Also on board are several unions representing airline pilots and a traveler-advocacy group. The union representing some 10,500 controllers, stung by a staffing crisis due in part to erratic FAA appropriations, said it shares the administration's commitment to modernization and will review the legislation to see whether it protects its members.

By contrast, groups representing operators of business aircraft, along with associations representing private pilots and manufacturers of small planes, have come out strongly against the concept, concerned that the plan would give commercial airlines too much power, unduly raise user fees and isolate small and rural communities, whose airports could get less funding for improvements under a private system.

Lawmakers from the left have signaled an eagerness to work with President Trump on a broad, bipartisan infrastructure bill. The White House's opening gambit, however, was slammed Tuesday by Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D., N.Y.), who said it would raise costs for travelers.

A day earlier, Marc Short, the White House director of legislative affairs, told reporters that the administration wants to craft an infrastructure plan by year-end. Congress may also need to pass a tax-reform bill to fund the infrastructure projects, but progress is stalled because lawmakers first want to overhaul the nation's health system.

"Not a single major player has shifted position on the air-traffic-

control debate since last year," according to the person familiar with the legislative details. Without industry consensus, this person added, it is unlikely the Senate will be able to hammer out a compromise privatization measure by the September deadline for renewing the FAA's authority.

Responding to bipartisan criticism of privatization, Secretary Chao opened the door to cooperating with lawmakers over fees, governance structure and other details of the proposal. She said that over the past nearly three decades, traffic control modernization has lagged due to outdated procurement practices. Since serving as the department's No. 2 appointed official in the late 1980s, she told lawmakers, she is now "hearing the same arguments, the same description of the problem."

But a number of committee members stressed that enhancing consumer protections for passengers should be a higher priority for the Transportation Department. Democratic Sen. Edward Markey of Massachusetts said he anticipates extended congressional debate over further passenger safeguards, including proposals to limit baggage fees,

cancellation fees and other airline charges to "what is fair, what is reasonable (and) what is proportionate."

Hours after Secretary Chao's appearance, House Democrats released an alternative bill calling for "targeted reforms" at the FAA intended to provide stable funding, personnel reforms and a streamlined acquisition process for air-traffic modernization. Rep. Peter DeFazio of Oregon, the top Democrat on the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, said the legislation offers "real, achievable modernization" options, instead of GOP proposal that he contends will end up "jeopardizing the safety and security of our aviation system."

Rep. DeFazio and other Democrats proposed similar changes last year, but they were opposed by Republicans, who control both chambers of Congress.

—Susan Carey contributed to this article.

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Heninger: Can Trump Govern?

Daniel Heninger
6-7 minutes

ghost story. On Sunday, Sen. Mark Warner, Democratic vice chairman of the intelligence committee, said, "There is a lot of smoke," but there is "no smoking gun at this point."

None of that diminishes the political threat evident in the appearance of former FBI Director James Comey before the Senate Intelligence Committee.

It is a familiar spectacle, in which a president is subjected to Washington's version of the ancient trials by ordeal. It did it to Richard Nixon—and Lyndon Johnson, who descended into political madness from watching the evening news report his troubles on three televisions in the Oval Office.

In the Trump trial, James Comey is playing the role of John Dean, the earnest lawyer who presented himself to the Watergate Committee as the last honest man in the Nixon White House. The media's dramaturges love to fashion political saints, thus the elevation of Jim Comey.

The dangers to the viability of the Trump presidency's agenda at this pivotal moment should not be underestimated. Successful governing means putting multiple players in motion toward a common goal—White House staff, Congress and its staffs, and the

administration's political appointees, whose job is to push presidential policy through the bureaucratic swamps. That effort goes forward on the shoulders of a skeleton crew.

We are into the sixth month of the Trump presidency, and of 558 key positions requiring Senate confirmation, 427 have no nominee, according to the tabulation by the Partnership for Public Service. The permanent bureaucracy is running much of State, Defense, Justice and Education.

At the State Department, virtually every position below Secretary Rex Tillerson and his deputy John Sullivan has no nominee, including assistant secretaries for every region of the world.

For why this matters, look to Asia, where North Korea's nuclear threat occupies everyone's waking hours. Mr. Trump has met with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, and Mr. Tillerson and Defense Secretary Jim Mattis all have visited the region to address North Korea.

But if you ask Asian governments about the status of the follow-up, they will tell you they don't know what's next because the U.S. has no assistant secretary for East Asian and Pacific affairs and therefore no daily liaison executing Mr. Trump's policy goals. Much of

the Trump government is close to becalmed.

The appointee holdup at State is due, in part, to the Trump White House's virtual ban on anyone in the foreign-policy community who publicly opposed Mr. Trump's candidacy. Presumably this is about loyalty. After this week, though, the White House's fastidiousness may be irrelevant.

Three things happened that bear on the administration's ability to recruit or retain good people: Attorney General Sessions's reported offer to resign over the president's unhappiness with his recusal from the Russia investigation; Mr. Trump's tweet repudiating his Justice Department lawyers' handling of the travel-ban case; and his tweet taking personal credit for Saudi Arabia breaking relations with Qatar. That required a stabilizing intervention from Secretary Tillerson because the U.S. has 11,000 troops based in Qatar. Welcome to team Trump.

One relevant footnote is George Conway's unexpected decision to withdraw last week as Mr. Trump's nominee to lead the Justice Department's civil division, followed by his Twitter statement supporting the department's handling of the

Updated June 7, 2017 7:37 p.m. ET

The answer to the question—can President Trump govern?—is yes, but the window is closing.

In recent days, events outside and inside the White House have combined to produce an environment toxic to governing. The Comey circus, the internal tensions created by Mr. Trump's tweets on the travel ban and Qatar, and Attorney General Jeff Sessions's reported offer to resign: All this turbulence is pounding a ship of state that needs calmer waters if it's going to get home in one piece.

This column raised the question in February of whether the Russia story was becoming Mr. Trump's Watergate. Forever Trumpers objected to the analogy, arguing correctly that the legal particulars of the two events were not the same. The point, however, was not about the law or facts but about politics, which respects neither. A president's blood is in the water, and a feeding frenzy is on.

The idea that the Trump campaign colluded with Russia to defeat Hillary Clinton by now looks like a

travel-ban litigation. Who needs "House of Cards"?

One simply cannot duck the corollary question to these events: What top lawyer or professional at this juncture will join an administration whose ability to calm

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Rove : Political Death by 1,000 Tweets

Karl Rove

5-6 minutes

June 7, 2017 6:39 p.m. ET

Donald Trump's early-Monday-morning quadruple tweet blitz has damaged the legal case for his executive order temporarily halting travel from six Muslim-majority nations. Justice Department lawyers had avoided using the words "travel ban" in hope of separating Candidate Trump's rhetoric from President Trump's action.

That strategy lies in tatters after Mr. Trump tweeted: "The lawyers and the courts can call it whatever they want, but I am calling it what we need and what it is, a TRAVEL BAN!"

A few minutes later Mr. Trump added: "The Justice Dept. should have stayed with the original Travel Ban, not the watered down, politically correct version they submitted." What other president does he think withdrew his original ban and substituted the "watered down" one? In case he has forgotten, both orders bear Mr. Trump's signature.

He also demanded on Twitter that the Justice Department "ask for an expedited hearing" of the immigration order and "seek much

the political storms, execute policy or support its own people is in doubt?

On Fox News Tuesday evening Sen. Lindsey Graham offered the president some wise counsel: "Mr. President: Your words matter now,

tougher version." But those goals conflict, since changing the terms of the order now would simply restart the long march through the courts.

The next message, missed by most commentators, was an even more hazardous IET (improvised explosive tweet). "We are EXTREME VETTING people coming into the U.S.," the president wrote.

But wait! The second executive order says its rationale for suspending visas for 90 days was that conditions in the six nations "present heightened threats." The Department of Homeland Security was given 20 days to "conduct a worldwide review" and determine what "additional information will be needed" to vet visitors properly. Those countries would then have 50 days to "begin providing" the requested information. If any refused, no visas would be issued for their citizens to enter the U.S.

That 90-day timeline expired on Monday, and Mr. Trump insists that "extreme vetting" is already taking place. So why is his administration still seeking judicial approval to halt visas temporarily for these six countries? If what Mr. Trump tweeted is true, government lawyers and federal judges are wasting their time wrangling over a visa pause that's no longer needed. The president's new vetting standards

you're no longer a candidate for office. You're the president of the United States and a lot of us want to help you. Help us help you."

Normalcy is the oxygen of good governance. The Trump White House has arrived at a binary

are already in place, according to him.

On the other hand, it's possible someone is confused. On May 8, a federal appeals court asked a Justice Department lawyer if the administration was drafting new vetting standards. He responded: "We've put our pens down." Mr. Trump seems to think the pens are down because the new vetting standards are written. Meantime, his lawyers say the government hasn't started working on them.

Mr. Trump has figured out how to tweet his way around the mainstream media. Yet by disregarding basic fact checking, he is deepening the already considerable doubts Americans have about his competence and trustworthiness.

That was not the president's only messaging failure over the past week. Last Thursday Mr. Trump wisely withdrew America from the Paris Agreement on climate change. But his announcement was meandering, thin and dour.

The president led off by saying the agreement "disadvantages the United States to the exclusive benefit of other countries." The goal of other countries, he added, was to saddle America with a "very, very big economic disadvantage." Why question the motives of international

choice: Choose chaos or choose success.

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partners? The U.S. needs their cooperation on other issues, such as the fight against Islamic State. Mr. Trump instead should have heralded America's success in reducing greenhouse-gas emissions.

Between 2000 and 2014, the U.S. reduced emissions by nearly 6%, according to data from the Energy Information Administration. All this while America's per capita gross domestic product increased by nearly 13%, after adjusting for inflation. The president should have made the case for following the U.S. example—an argument worth presenting far beyond a single weekday afternoon speech.

Increasingly it appears Mr. Trump lacks the focus or self-discipline to do the basic work required of a president. His chronic impulsiveness is apparently unstoppable and clearly self-defeating. Mr. Trump may have mastered the modes of communication, but not the substance, thereby sabotaging his own agenda.

Mr. Rove helped organize the political-action committee American Crossroads and is the author of "The Triumph of William McKinley" (Simon & Schuster, 2015).

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Shelton : Trump as a Democracy Promoter

Judy Shelton

6-7 minutes

June 7, 2017 7:24 p.m. ET

Much has been made of President Trump's supposed lack of interest in human rights and the promotion of American ideals. Stepping back from his rhetoric and looking at his actions suggests an alternative conclusion.

If it were an easy task to set up a flourishing democracy, the entire world would be experiencing peace and prosperity. But it has never been simple. Many people around the world understand that liberty, opportunity and fairness flow from democratic institutions. But establishing such systems takes time, and progress is uneven. The

growing pains of warring internal factions and harsh retributions meted out by ruthless authoritarians slow the march toward democracy.

President Reagan sought to address the issue in a speech before the British Parliament on June 8, 1982. He affirmed it was a mistake to ignore the rise of tyrants: Britain had paid a terrible price in World War II after allowing dictators to underestimate its resolve. He further maintained that democratic nations needed to resist as a matter of self-expression. Reagan said we must think of ourselves as "free people, worthy of freedom and determined not only to remain so but to help others gain their freedom as well."

The 40th president proposed countering totalitarianism and its terrible inhumanity by actively

promoting freedom and democratic ideals throughout the world. He envisioned the creation of a bipartisan U.S. political foundation that would assist democratic development by openly providing support to those seeking equality and liberty for their countrymen. Building the infrastructure of democracy—free elections, free markets, free speech and rule of law—would empower people to choose their own way to reconcile their own differences through peaceful means. "Democracy is not a fragile flower," Reagan observed. "Still, it needs cultivating."

The National Endowment for Democracy, launched as a result of that speech, remains faithful to its founding mission: to help others achieve a system that protects the inalienable rights of individuals and

guarantees the people's freedom to determine their own destiny. The endowment provides modest grants to democracy activists around the world, but its greater gift is the imprimatur of moral support from the American people. Brave individuals on the front lines of the struggle for democracy in their own countries draw strength from that connection.

The efforts of five endowment grantees battling government corruption were applauded during a Capitol Hill ceremony on Wednesday, with remarks delivered by House Speaker Paul Ryan and Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi. Yet some argue that endorsing the spread of the American idea beyond the U.S. no longer aligns with the preferences of American voters. The most cynical voices claim Mr.

Trump neither accepts nor comprehends the profound influence of America's moral authority in the world.

That simplistic narrative is wrong. Consider Secretary of State Rex Tillerson's remarks to his department's employees last month. He adjured them to "remember that guiding all of our foreign-policy actions are our fundamental values," which include "freedom, human dignity, the way people are treated." As Mr. Tillerson explained, the objectives of the administration's America First approach—encouraging economic prosperity and maintaining military readiness—are crucial if the U.S. is to promote its values abroad.

Mr. Trump's decisions ultimately make the difference. "I see in the president somebody who said a lot of things in the

campaign," former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice noted in a recent Journal interview. "But when he was sitting in that chair and watched Syrian babies choking on chemical gas said, 'I can't let that stand.'"

What Mr. Trump apparently felt at a gut level is entirely in keeping with that uniquely American quality of being unable to ignore injustice—that inability to stand idly by while the rights of others are cruelly violated by despots. Does he appreciate that America's own hard-fought path to democracy and equal rights means we never retreat from leadership or abstain from righteousness in a world prone to malevolence?

One notable event may provide a telling indication. In February, Mr. Trump met in the Oval Office with Lilian Tintori, wife of jailed

Venezuelan opposition leader Leopoldo Lopez. Afterward the president tweeted a thumbs-up photo of himself, together with Vice President Mike Pence and Florida Sen. Marco Rubio, standing beside Ms. Tintori. "Venezuela should allow Leopoldo Lopez, a political prisoner & husband of @liliantintori (just met w/@marcorubio) out of prison immediately," read his accompanying message.

"Here in Venezuela, jaws dropped," wrote Emiliana Duarte, managing editor of the English-language blog Caracas Chronicles, in the Atlantic. "For Venezuelans accustomed to living in fear of their dictatorial government, the sight of the president of the United States siding publicly with the most fearless champion of Venezuelan democracy was powerful."

As someone who has thought deeply about democracy promotion, I take this as evidence that America's leader—an admirer of Reagan—has the head and the heart to act with fundamental decency. American decency is born of gratitude for what this nation's founders had the courage and vision to establish. It is what compels Americans to stand for the rights and liberties of those who can't stand for those rights and liberties themselves. It is what drives the aspiration to share the American values that have made the U.S. not only successful but honorable.

Ms. Shelton is chairman of the National Endowment for Democracy. She served on the Trump transition team.

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THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Editorial : The Death of Obama's Slush Funds

June 7, 2017
7:32 p.m. ET 90

COMMENTS

2-3 minutes

Despite the tweets and Comey maelstrom, some good things are happening in the executive branch. An important example is Attorney General Jeff Sessions's Monday order ending a program to treat legal settlements like political appropriations.

The misuse of settlement slush funds was one of the Obama Administration's worst practices,

which it used to end run Congress's constitutional spending power. After the GOP took the House and tried to cut spending for liberal interest groups, the Obama Justice Department began to force corporate defendants to allocate a chunk of their financial penalties to those same groups.

Banks were made to fund left-wing activists such as NeighborWorks—though these groups were neither victims nor parties to lawsuits. In 2015 JP Morgan was required to pay \$7.5 million to the American Bankruptcy Institute's endowment for financial education. In 2016 Volkswagen was required to invest

\$2 billion in zero-emissions technology and promote zero-emissions cars. Government enforcement became an income redistribution mechanism without having to go through Congress.

Mr. Sessions's brief memo instructs Justice's 94 U.S. Attorneys to immediately halt the practice. It correctly notes that financial penalties are designed to punish and provide relief to victims—not to generate political payola. Save for limited exceptions—such as payments expressly authorized by statute—the memo instructs that future settlement money will go

directly to victims or to the U.S. Treasury.

Credit in particular goes to Virginia Republican Bob Goodlatte, who introduced legislation in 2016 to stop the practice. Mr. Goodlatte has more recently called on Justice to claw back an estimated \$380 million the Agriculture Department paid to special interests to settle a discrimination class action—which is worth investigating. But at least this abuse of enforcement power is over for now.

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