

Revue de presse américaine

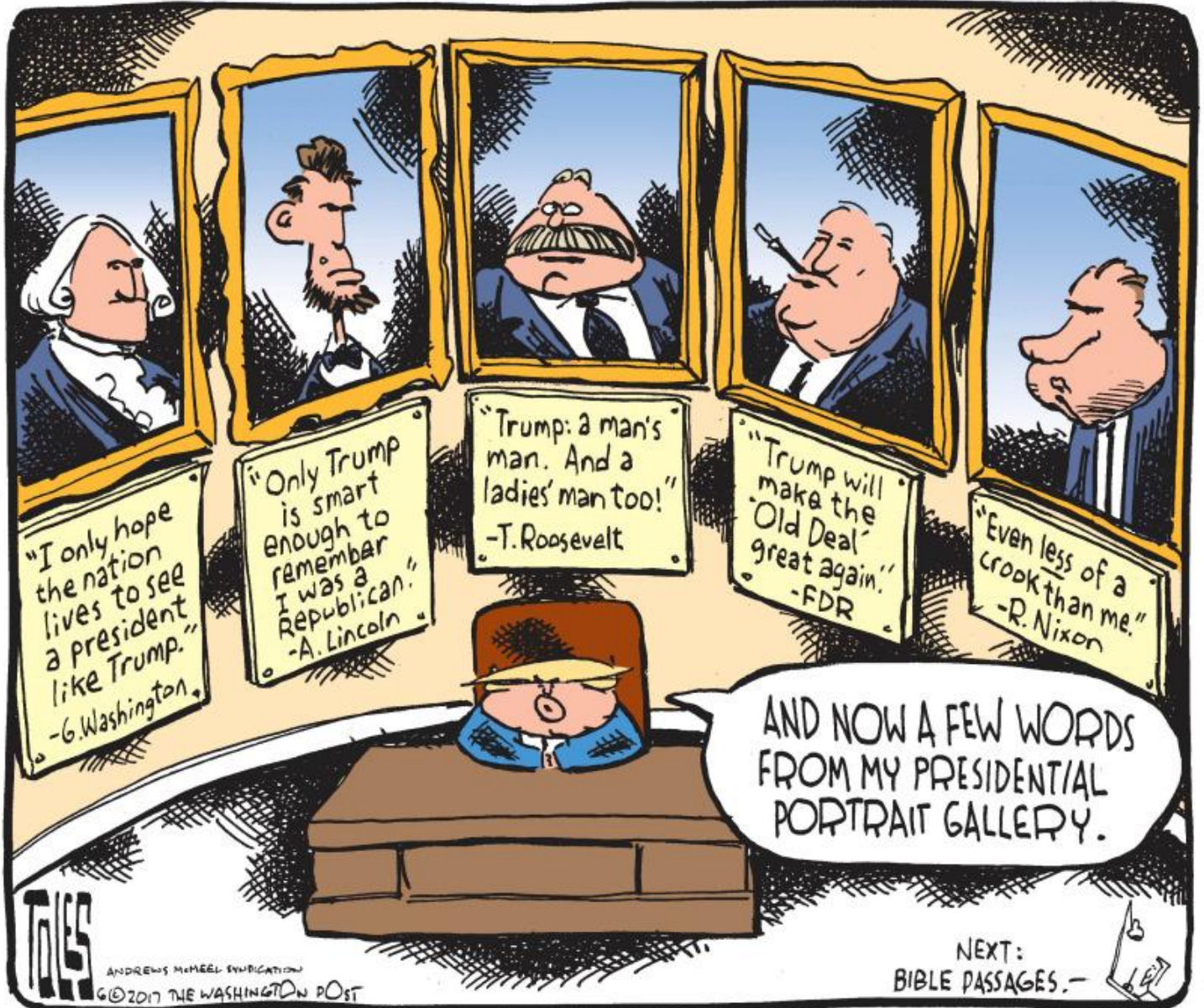
Ambassade de France aux États-Unis
Service de presse et de communication



Liberté • Égalité • Fraternité

RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

Jeudi 15 juin, réalisation : Josselin Brémaud



6-14-17

FRANCE – EUROPE	3
Macron Doctrine Looks Like Same Old France to Angry Italians	3
Gobry : Macron Won't Be Shy About Using French Power	3
Newsweek: With Emmanuel Macron Set for a Huge Majority, French Politics Has Gone Crazy	4
France's embattled justice chief unveils clean politics bill (online)	5
France's Startup Scene Gains Traction Led by State Bank, Macron Factor	5
London Apartment Tower Inferno Kills at Least 12.....	6
Grenfell Tower fire in London leaves 12 dead, dozens injured	7
Questions Mount After Fire at Grenfell Tower in London Kills at Least 12 (UNE).....	7
Brooke : London Fire Shows Why Britons Don't Trust the System.....	9
Criticism Builds as Theresa May Prepares to Form New Government.....	9
INTERNATIONAL.....	10
The Middle East's Crisis Factory	10
How Trump's Black and White World View Met Reality in the Middle East.....	11
U.S., Qatar Move Toward Arms Deal Estimated at \$12 Billion	12
How the president's style affects delicate work of diplomacy.....	13
U.S. Accuses Iranian Naval Vessel in 'Unsafe' Strait of Hormuz Encounter.....	14
U.S.-Led Airstrikes in Syria Killed Hundreds of Civilians, U.N. Panel Says.....	14
Dozens of Islamic State militants in suicide vests launch major Mosul counterattack.....	15
Saudi Arabia Tries to Ease Concerns Over Civilian Deaths in Yemen.....	16
Islamic State Sinks Its Teeth Into the Philippines.....	16
Editorial : How ISIS Grew in the Philippines.....	17
Trump Isn't Being a CEO. He's Just AWOL.	17
Lake: Trump's Afghan Push: More Troops, No Plan ...	18
Editorial : In Afghanistan, Trump has no easy choices	19
Tillerson Allows for Russia-Ukraine Peace Deal Outside of Minsk Accords	19
Senate Votes to Move Ahead on Additional Sanctions Against Russia	20
Editorial : Thousands of Russians prove they're fed up with Putin's authoritarianism.....	20

Turkish Guards Will Be Charged in Embassy Protest, Officials Say.....	21
Trump set to unveil new Cuba policy after promising to reverse Obama's 'bad deal'.....	22
Sabatini : Trump's Imminent Cuba Problem	23
ETATS-UNIS.....	23
GOP Lawmakers Targeted in Ballfield Shooting Spree (UNE).....	23
Steve Scalise Among 4 Shot at Baseball Field; Suspect Is Dead (UNE)	24
Lawmaker Steve Scalise is critically injured in GOP baseball shooting; gunman James T. Hodgkinson is killed by police (UNE).....	25
Emerging portrait of shooting suspect James T. Hodgkinson: Anti-Trump rhetoric on social media, repeat visits to YMCA near Virginia ballfield	27
Virginia Shooting Suspect Was Distraught Over Trump's Election, Brother Says	28
Editorial : America's Lethal Politics.....	29
Editorial : The shooting at a GOP baseball practice was an assault on democracy.....	30
Editorial : Their Finest Hour	30
Editorial : Steve Scalise, James Hodgkinson & Congressional Baseball Shooting -- Our Heated Political Atmosphere.....	31
Editorial : Baseball shooting and Congress.....	31
Collins: Play Ball, and Then Gunfire.....	32
Visits From Nations on Trump's Travel-Ban List Fall Sharply	32
Mueller Probe Examining Whether Donald Trump Obstructed Justice	32
Special counsel Robert Mueller is investigating Donald Trump for possible obstruction of justice, officials say (UNE).....	33
Mueller Seeks to Talk to Intelligence Officials, Hinting at Inquiry of Trump (UNE).....	34
Trump attacks reports he's under investigation as 'phony'	35
Rove: What Trump Has to Fear From Mueller	35
Senate Panel to Probe Donald Trump's Firing of Ex-FBI Director James Comey	36
5 Charged With Involuntary Manslaughter in Flint Water Crisis (UNE).....	36
California and New York just sued to protect Obama's final energy rules.....	37
Editorial : ObamaCare's 'Secret' History	38
Editorial : Daughters Will Suffer From Medicaid Cuts	38
Editorial : The Fed Moves Up.....	39
Starr: Gorsuch Gets Comfortable in Scalia's Chair	39

FRANCE – EUROPE

Macron Doctrine Looks Like Same Old France to Angry Italians



@HeleneFouquet
More stories by
Helene Fouquet
7-9 minutes

14 juin 2017 à 23:00 UTC-4

- President objects to Italy holding majority of shipyard stock
- Dealmakers watching closely to see if France is changing

Traditional parties are crumbling and the parliament is on the brink of an unprecedented sea change, stirring hopes across Europe that Emmanuel Macron may be able to make good on his promises of revolution. But the French president is still interfering in foreign takeovers.

Nineteen days after he was swept to power, Macron stood in front of a brand-new cruise liner in Saint-Nazaire on the Atlantic coast. With the champagne on the ship's hull still sparkling in the sunshine, Macron told the workers in hard hats he was unhappy with the terms of their shipyard's sale to Trieste, Italy-based rival Fincantieri SpA.

Emmanuel Macron at the STX shipyard in Saint-Nazaire.

Photographer: Jean-Sebastien Evrard/AFP via Getty Images

In a move straight out of his predecessors' dirigiste playbook, the 39-year-old president said he was ordering a review of the deal and vowed to defend what he called a "strategic industry" -- politicians' code for a protectionist power play.

The move caused consternation in Italy and Macron's finance minister, Bruno Le Maire, was dispatched to Rome on June 5 to smooth things over with his counterparts. A press officer for the president said his decision was less a direct

intervention than a nudge in the direction he'd like to see the deal go.

"The instinct in France, in the administration and among politicians, is still to support the domestic industry and maybe the new president is not immune to that instinct," said Guntram Wolff, director at the Brussels-based Bruegel think tank. "I don't expect him to be totally different from his predecessors."

Jobs Concerns

Get the latest on global politics in your inbox, every day.

Get our newsletter daily.

Macron was concerned that Fincantieri might join forces with CR Trieste to form a controlling stake in STX, potentially posing a threat to jobs in the Atlantic port town or passing on know-how to its operations in China. A month before Macron's presidential victory, Fincantieri agreed to buy 48 percent of STX from Korea's STX Offshore & Shipbuilding Co. Ltd. with about another 6 percent going to the banking foundation CR Trieste.

The broader risk though for the youngest French leader in two centuries is that he punctures the enthusiasm from European officials and international investors that greeted his election victory. He'll need the support of both those constituencies if he's to succeed with his plans to revamp the French economy. Not to mention the French companies like Vivendi SA that are looking to invest in Italy.

The chief executive of one major French company, who asked not to be named criticizing the president, said that Macron is ignoring the governance rules that apply to listed companies when it comes to managing their shareholdings. That may trigger a warning light for the investment community.

Bankers have been counting on a pickup in deal-flow from France to boost their fee revenue once Macron completes his takeover of the political power on Sunday, when his year-old party is set to win an overwhelming majority in the second round of parliamentary elections.

"Macron is going to be much more business friendly," Alasdair Warren, head of European corporate and investment banking at Deutsche Bank in London, said in an interview. "There is likely as a result to be more inbound and outbound merger activity coming from France."

Macron's Inbox

Unlike his predecessors, Macron is actually a professional deal maker.

Before entering politics he was an associate at Rothschild & Cie., helping steer Nestle SA through a \$12 billion acquisition of Pfizer Inc.'s Wyeth infant nutrition business. As President Francois Hollande's economy minister, he managed a wide range of industrial files, notably defending the French state's influence at Renault SA with a 1.2 billion-euro investment to increase its stake.

He leaned on Renault this month as part of a government push to keep loss-making auto-parts maker GM&S Industry afloat. Le Maire called the CEOs of Renault and PSA, asking them to raise their orders with GM&S after Macron promised workers he'd try to save their jobs.

Multiple other files await Macron's attention.

He inherits from the previous government a pledge to reduce the state stake in both Renault and Orange SA. State-owned Electricite de France SA has to work out how to finance the upgrade of its nuclear plants with electricity prices depressed and Volvo AB is selling Renault Trucks Defense, which

agreed to supply 3,700 tactical military vehicles to the French state in December.

Example to France

In October, the government will have to decide whether to take up its option to buy as much as 15 percent of French train-maker Alstom SA from Bouygues SA.

"Some of my predecessors believed the state has no role to play," Macron, then economy minister, said in February 2016, as he argued that the government should be a "strategist." "I believe in an industrial policy, but in a realistic, lucid and long-term way."

The STX shipyard holds a special place in Macron's economic and political vision.

A center for passenger-boat construction since the 19th century, by 2009 the yard's future was in jeopardy before unions and management struck a deal over layoffs. Now it has 2,300 employees and an order book that is full until the middle of the next decade. When he visited last month, he said that's an example that the rest of France can learn from.

To protect that operation, Macron wants the Trieste foundation out of the deal, potentially replaced by Switzerland's MSC Cruises SA and Miami-based Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd, two of the shipyard's biggest customers, people familiar with his analysis said. MSC executives are due to meet with officials from the French economy minister this week.

Italian Economic Development Minister Carlo Calenda said his government won't accept that, and it wants the foundation's stake to go to an Italian institution, in line with the deal France signed in April.

"Macron is protecting French interests," Calenda said. "We can't think he would also protect Italy's."



Gobry : Macron Won't Be Shy About Using French Power

@pegobry More stories by Pascal-

Emmanuel Gobry

6-7 minutes

Europe

France's new president has signaled he will act with or without partners.
15 juin 2017 à 04:46 UTC-4

Foreign policy president.

Photographer: CHRISTOPHE PETIT TESSON/AFP/Getty Images

French President Emmanuel Macron's astonishingly fast rise to the top means it's still hard to know how he will govern on many issues. With a background in finance and economics, many assume his focus will be on domestic policy; after all,

the new French President has essentially no record on national security issues.

Early indications are, however, the opposite -- that Macron will be more than engaged on the foreign policy front. Despite all the talk of multilateralism during his campaign, Macron looks to be a hawk, willing to use France's military power and political clout on the world stage.

Macron has signaled that he will leave most of the early steps of his domestic reform to his cabinet, led by Prime Minister Edouard Philippe. Meanwhile, he has shown great interest in the presidency's foreign policy mandate, particularly with regard to the military and the fight against terrorism.

With its historic links to the Middle East, Islamic State attacks on its

homeland, and the large numbers of French fighters in Islamic State, France is perhaps second only to the United States in countries vested in the fight against Islamic terrorism. More broadly, France remains an important player on the geopolitical stage, one of very few countries with a blue-water navy, a nuclear deterrent and a military presence on every continent (something which is not true of, say, China or Russia).

During the campaign, the pro-EU Macron struck a multilateralist note, calling for joint European defense. "We must bring forth a strategic autonomy at the European level," he said at the time. Many of his campaign promises, such as reaching NATO's 2 percent of gross domestic product threshold on defense spending, or creating a new cyber command, were either consensus views or policies that were already in the planning stage. But in his actions since, it's clear that Macron wants France in a leadership position.

It's also clear he relishes his role as commander-in-chief. His inauguration ceremony struck military tones unusual even for France. He returned the French ministry of defense to its Charles de Gaulle-era name -- *Ministère des Armées* ("Ministry of the Armies") -- a move weighted with symbolism. He has gone on multiple visits to wounded veterans and French military bases overseas. He surely remembers from his time working at the Elysee under François Hollande how the latter's hawkish military moves were the only aspect of his Presidency that was enduringly popular with the French public. With uniformed and armed military daily patrolling the streets of France in a show of force against terrorism, security issues are foremost on the minds of many French voters.

Macron is smart enough to realize that EU-level defense policy has always been a chimera, and that military action requires unilateral action, or ad hoc partnerships rather than transnational alliances, as has

been the case for France's actions in the Sahel region in Africa, where the French military is spearheading the fight against Al Qaeda-affiliated insurgents in countries like Chad and Mali. What's more, the erratic policy under Donald Trump means that "Europeans must learn to live with the fact that, in the long term, Washington will be less inclined to care about the security of our continent," as Macron put it on the campaign trail.

In office, therefore, Macron has given many more signals that he intends to be a hawkish commander-in-chief, and one that will act first and seek alliances later. Alongside trade, the first item on the agenda of his first bilateral summit with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was strengthened defense and nuclear cooperation, a move that reflects France's strategic ambitions in the Pacific (where it has a significant presence through its overseas territories) rather than its NATO or EU commitments.

Clear thinking from leading voices in business, economics, politics, foreign affairs, culture, and more.

Share the View

But the most telling sign came in a little-noticed moment during his joint press conference with Russian President Vladimir Putin after their first meeting. Asked about the use of chemical weapons in Syria, Macron responded, "there is a very clear red line on our side," a blatant dig at Barack Obama's refusal to enforce that red line. What's more, he added, "any use of chemical weapons will be met with reprisals and a counterstrike, at least from the French."

The message wasn't just intended for Moscow and Damascus, but for Washington, Brussels and Berlin as well: France will act when it must, alone if it must.

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

Newsweek: With Emmanuel Macron Set for a Huge Majority, French Politics Has Gone Crazy

By Josh Lowe On 6/14/17 at 9:12 AM

5-7 minutes

It was Charles de Gaulle, the legendary French general-turned-president, who first said of his homeland: "How can anyone govern a nation that has two hundred and forty-six different kinds of cheese?"

But France's new liberal president Emmanuel Macron is likely to be concerned less with matters fromological, and more with the question of how to govern a party and an administration stitched together from across French politics after a shock victory and subsequent surge in support.

After Macron, a 39-year-old former Economy Minister who began the presidential campaign as an outsider, took France's highest office in May, he cobbled together a government aimed at garnering the broadest possible political support while destabilizing the other parties; it drew from the left, right and center.

Subscribe to Newsweek from \$1 per week

Meanwhile, his *La République en marche* (Republic on the Move) party geared up to fight parliamentary elections. Some were skeptical an organization less than a year old could tackle a national vote so soon. In the event, it aced it; the

party took 32 percent of the vote in the first round last Sunday, and could now take over 400 of the National Assembly's 577 seats in the second round this coming Sunday.

But growing such a broad power base so swiftly is not without its complications, as new splits, shifts and feuds have begun to emerge in Paris's political scene. French President Emmanuel Macron celebrates on the stage at his victory rally near the Louvre in Paris, France, May 7. REUTERS/Christian Hartmann

Among them: the remarkable spectacle of a prime minister campaigning for two parties at once. Edouard Philippe, named as Macron's premier on May 15, comes from the center-right Republican party. His appointment was a deft means of shoring up right-wing support for Macron, who now governs from the center but whose roots are on the center-left.

But Philippe, *Le Monde* reports, has been dividing his loyalties during the campaign: the paper says the prime minister is campaigning on a "case-by-case" basis. He has stumped for the Republicans' pick for the port town of Le Havre, Maël de Calan, even though a Republic on the Move candidate was also running there. But in the rural region of Essonne, near Paris, he turned out to back Marie Guevenoux, standing for the Republic on the Move.

Elsewhere, there's a noisy feud within Macron's cabinet sparked by the behavior of François Bayrou, the justice minister and leader of Modem, an older centrist party that allied itself with Macron's party during the presidential campaign.

The Paris prosecutor on Friday launched an investigation into Modem's use of European Parliament funding, and the investigations editor of public broadcaster Radio France has said he felt "pressure" when Bayrou called him to complain about the broadcaster's coverage of the probe.

Philippe has slapped down Bayrou for his conduct, saying Tuesday that "when you are a minister, you are not simply a person driven by their passions, or their irritations, or their indignation." On Wednesday, Bayrou spoke to the broadcaster RTL. As well as denying any wrongdoing on the part of his party, he defended his right to speak freely as a minister: "I am convinced that a political team must have freedom of speech," he said.

It's not just Macron who's finding the new political scene a little complex. The center-left Socialist party, which was the largest party in Parliament in 2012 and whose candidate, François Hollande, served as president from 2012-2017, has exploded into left-right factional infighting.

The party totally collapsed in the parliamentary elections' first round.

It took about 7 percent of the vote, and is projected to win 30-40 seats this coming Sunday; a nosedive from the 280 it won last time.

Everyone in the Socialist party is looking for someone to blame, and a battle between two party big beasts summarizes the tensions. On the left-hand side, you have Benoît Hamon, the party's unsuccessful candidate for the presidency, whose hard-left platform included a plan to tax robot workers and preparations for a universal basic income. Hamon is now backing a candidate for the leftist France Unchained party over Manuel Valls, a Socialist and once a rival for the party's presidential nomination, in the Essonne region.

At least Valls, a moderate who has slammed Hamon's "extreme left" campaign, can count on some support... from a Republican, Serge Dassault, who called on voters to back Valls over the leftist.

Meanwhile, readers might remember Marine Le Pen, the far-right populist who threatened to take the presidency. Her party has been crushed in the parliamentary elections and is projected to win just one to five seats on Sunday, meaning it would be unable to form a parliamentary group. Le Pen and her deputy Florian Philippot chose to make opposition to the euro currency a key plank of the party's programme. But Nicolas Bay, the party's campaign director, said this week that a drive to leave the European single currency "is among

the issues that are very dissuasive for part of our electorate."

Nothing is yet unmanageable for France's new president. But if Macron secures his majority, it could

be that some of his biggest battles are internal.



France's embattled justice chief unveils clean politics bill (online)

By Sylvie Corbet | AP

3 minutes

By Sylvie Corbet | AP June 14 at 11:26 AM

PARIS — France's government on Wednesday presented a bill on cleaning up political ethics after years of corruption scandals — even as investigations haunt members of President Emmanuel Macron's new government.

Justice Minister Francois Bayrou unveiled the draft law on "restoring trust" in politics to the Cabinet. It is the first major legislation by Macron's administration.

It's expected to easily pass parliament, where Macron's party is on track to win a crushing majority in elections Sunday.

Yet the bill, a key Macron campaign promise to "moralize" France's political life, is already clouded.

Bayrou's centrist party Modem is under investigation for possible misuse of European Parliament funds.

The minister for European affairs, Marielle de Sarnez, also a member of Modem, is among several French politicians facing a similar probe.

And the territorial cohesion minister Richard Ferrand is under investigation for his past business practices. They all deny wrongdoing.

The new bill notably would ban lawmakers and government members from hiring family members. About a hundred lawmakers — out of 577 — employed at least one family member during the last term at the National Assembly.

The presidential campaign had been deeply disturbed by an investigation of conservative candidate François Fillon. His wife, Penelope, was richly paid as a parliamentary aide, allegedly without actually working.

The bill would create a new sentence enabling judges to ban a person convicted for fraud or corruption-related crimes from running for an elected office for up to 10 years.

France's Senate and the National Assembly would have to set specific rules to prevent conflicts of interest.

Lawmakers will be asked to report their expenses — a first in the country. Until now, lawmakers get monthly allowances to cover expenses they didn't have to justify.

Today's WorldView

What's most important from where the world meets Washington

Bayrou is mired in controversy following a phone call last week to the head of the investigative team of reporters of Radio France, which was looking into alleged misuse of European funds by the Modem party.

The incident has been denounced by journalism associations as an attempt by the justice minister to put pressure on reporters.

French government spokesman Christophe Castaner said Wednesday that any attempt by government members to influence media is "harmful" to democratic practices.

Copyright 2017 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.



REUTERS

France's Startup Scene Gains Traction Led by State Bank, Macron Factor

6-8 minutes

June 15, 2017, at 3:09 a.m.

France's Startup Scene Gains Traction Led by State Bank, Macron Factor

FILE PHOTO: A general view shows the illuminated Eiffel Tower and the skyline of La Defense business district (rear) at night in Paris, France, November 28, 2016. REUTERS/Charles Platiau/File Photo Reuters

By Mathieu Rosemain and Gwénaëlle Barzic

PARIS (Reuters) - France's corporate startup scene is gaining traction against the backdrop of booming investments by venture capital funds and high expectations for a business-friendly government under new President Emmanuel Macron.

Bpifrance, the country's state investment bank, has led the effort over the past five years, acting as a catalyst for the burgeoning industry and a go-between for large cash-rich corporations and young entrepreneurs in need of funds to launch their business.

It has in effect become in the country's number one venture capital fund, having injected 191

million euros in 53 startup companies last year.

This taxpayer financing is 13 percent higher than the previous year and Bpifrance is adding 400 million euros to its so-called Large Venture fund, with individual investments of 10 million euros or more, bringing the total up to 1 billion euros (\$1.12 billion), chief executive officer Nicolas Dufourcq told Reuters.

"The tide has been turning in our favor for about year now," Dufourcq said in an interview ahead of the opening of the French capital's second technology conference, dubbed Viva Tech, on Thursday.

"It is as if the French Tech's boss had been elected as the new president," he said, referring to an initiative to promote French technology firms that Macron ran as economy minister in the previous government.

The new president, who plans a raft of other startup-boosting measures such as cuts in corporate tax and wealth tax exemptions, was due for a walkabout at the vast conference center on the edge of Paris on Thursday, followed by a speech.

Since 2012, notable investments by Bpifrance in venture capital have included biopharmaceutical company DBV Technologies, online

and mobile medical booking platform Doctolib, the developer of a wireless low-energy network for connected objects Sigfox, and the maker of high-tech audio devices Devialet.

Foreign investors began considering France as potentially lucrative new turf for disruptive companies about a year ago, Dufourcq and industry specialists say, even before independent centrist politician Macron made his candidacy official.

Generous tax incentives for companies' research and development spending, renowned engineering and mathematical schools and private initiatives, such as the upcoming mega-campus for startups, Station F in Paris, funded by billionaire Xavier Niel, are some elements that explain the trend.

"Whether it be Britain, Germany or Nordic countries, there's a clear interest for France," said Martin Mignot, a partner at Index Ventures, which invested in two of the most successful former startups, Europe's biggest car-sharing company Blablacar and Nasdaq-listed Criteo which provides web advertising services.

"All funds are starting to have one or two French or Francophile people that spend their time reviewing the French market. And that's clearly new," he said.

U.S. social media giant Facebook also gave a vote of confidence in the French tech scene earlier this year when it picked Paris as the location for its first-ever startups incubator.

PEOPLE "WON'T GET FLEECE"

Estimates differ between research companies, but all show that France is catching up with Germany and Britain, the two leading startup havens in Europe, in number of deals and total amounts invested.

Venture capitalists invested in 590 French startups in 2016, putting the country ahead of Britain (520 deals) and Germany (380), according to research firm Tech.eu.

It was a record year with a total of 874 million euros invested in the venture capital in France, up 15 percent from 2015, according to the industry lobby Afic. This remains below Germany, with investments of 937 million.

Still, over the first three months of this year, Paris saw 41 venture capital deals for a total value of 235 million euros, compared with 39 deals in Berlin totaling 210 million euros, according to PitchBook, a data provider.

The gap between the two countries highlights the relatively smaller size of investment tickets in France, underscoring the need for larger venture capital funds to help

promising startups going international, Dufourcq said.

For instance, London-based Vitruvian Partners invested 58 million euros in January in French luxury resale store Vestiaire Collective to support its growth.

Private-equity funds such as Partech, Isai have developed their own growth equity funds with larger investment tickets.

New venture capital funds were created lately in France, such as Korelya Capital, founded by former digital economy minister Fleur Pellerin, and Daphni. [L8N1JC12Q]

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

6-7 minutes

Updated June 14, 2017 7:05 p.m. ET

LONDON—The death toll from a blaze in west London rose to at least 12 in a high-rise tower that residents had complained was a fire hazard, raising questions about maintenance and safety of low-income housing.

The fire started early Wednesday and spread rapidly through the 24-story public-housing block, which residents said lacked adequate emergency exits. Witnesses said they saw people jumping from the building to escape the flames. Dozens of residents were injured, and police said they expected the death toll to rise.

Firefighters were still battling pockets of fire Wednesday evening, but had searched most of the Grenfell Tower in the otherwise upscale North Kensington neighborhood, clambering through the ruins and also using drones, authorities said. It was too early to pinpoint the cause of the blaze, police said.

The London Fire Brigade said 65 people were rescued from the building, which a structural engineer said isn't in danger of collapsing.

Residents said they heard few, if any, alarms. One man who got out described a chaotic race through a central staircase that was the only escape route.

London Fire Commissioner Dany Cotton called the blaze unprecedented, saying she hadn't seen anything like it in her 29-year career.

Over the last few years, energy companies Total and Engie as well as insurer AXA have all created their own venture vehicles.

The new French government, which polls predict will win a large majority in the final round of the parliamentary elections on Sunday, is likely to push reforms that may further support spending on startups.

Macron's manifesto included pro-business measures such as cutting corporate tax to 25 percent from 33.3 percent, shifting the wealth tax to property only, which would

exempt the ownership of company stakes, and introducing a flat 30 percent tax on capital gains, from up to 50 percent currently.

The new president also said before he won the presidency on May 7 that he wanted privatizations to help fund a 10 billion euro government drive to boost industry and innovation.

"People need to know that if they come to France, they can make a fortune and won't get fleeced," Dufourcq said.

London Apartment Tower Inferno Kills at Least 12

Wiktor Szary and Jason Douglas

Michael Paramasivan, who lived on the seventh floor, said he woke to the smell of burning plastic and heard people shouting. He, his girlfriend and their children fled down a crowded central staircase. He said he wasn't sure if there were sprinklers, but said none had activated.

"I saw three kids near the top floor, and next thing we knew, bang, it went up in flames," he said. "They must have perished. It was horrific."

"It was the towering inferno, like lighting a bonfire," said Piers Thompson, who lives in a neighboring building and said he was awakened by shouts at about 1:15 a.m. and watched fast-moving flames spread.

"I couldn't believe it. You could see people flashing" lights in an effort to attract rescuers attention, especially on high floors, he said. "Someone was waving a blanket."

A spokesman for British Prime Minister Theresa May said she was "deeply saddened" by the loss of lives.

Speaking to the British Broadcasting Corp. Wednesday evening, Mrs. May said a proper investigation into the cause of the fire would take place once the scene is secure.

"If there are any lessons to be learned, they will be, and action will be taken," she said.

Opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn of the Labour Party told LBC radio that "some very searching questions" needed to be asked, suggesting budget cuts could be to blame. "If you deny local authorities the funding they need, then there is a price that's paid by the lack of safety facilities," he said.

The government will seek to identify other high-rise buildings that could be at risk, particularly those that

might have a similar process of refurbishment, and run checks on them to reassure residents, a Home Office spokesman said Wednesday evening.

The public-housing block was built in 1974 and recently went through an £8.6 million (\$11 million) refurbishment. New exterior cladding and a new heating system were installed.

The cladding appears to have significantly contributed to the fire's spread, said Angus Law, a lecturer at the BRE Centre for Fire Safety Engineering at the University of Edinburgh.

Nick Paget-Brown, the leader of the Kensington and Chelsea council, acknowledged that the council had received complaints about the refurbishment work. "But we will need to look much more closely about how much of that corresponds to the cause of today's fire."

Rydon Group Ltd., which carried out the refurbishment, said the work met fire and health and safety requirements.

The Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organization, which manages the building for the council, said it was too early to speculate on the cause and what contributed to the fire's spread.

The Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat, a Chicago-based nonprofit group, on Wednesday said the fire would raise questions about the defend-in-place approach, in which residents are instructed to remain in their homes if there is a fire elsewhere in the building, as was the policy at Grenfell House. The group said defend in place remains the best policy for such buildings.

Residents of the block had long warned of fire risk in the building. The Grenfell Action Group, a

But tax reforms alone may not be enough for Paris to beat London on its turf.

"We shouldn't delude ourselves, London still has a considerable advantage," Mignot said, citing its cosmopolitan culture and tax credits for investing in startups.

"But this advantage was built over 15 years. There's no reason Paris can't achieve it."

(This version of the story has been refiled to correct garbled text in paragraph seven)

residents' rights group, warned on its website in November that "only a catastrophic event will expose the ineptitude and incompetence of our landlord."

"All our warnings fell on deaf ears and we predicted that a catastrophe like this was inevitable and just a matter of time," it said in a blog post early Wednesday.

Vassiliki S. Lorraine, who lives near the tower, said she heard children screaming shortly after the fire started.

"They screamed very loud, 'Save us, save us, save us' and 'Can we jump?' " she said. She said the cries stopped after about an hour.

A woman identified only as Zoe told the British Broadcasting Corp. that she had escaped from the fourth floor after someone banged on her door and told her to get out.

"When I got on the landing it was thick with smoke but the smoke alarms weren't going off, which is quite scary," she said. "Then I just ran down the stairs. You could see the fire is in one of the flats."

In July 2009, six people died after fire broke out in Lakanal House, a 14-story residential public housing block in Camberwell, south London. The local council pleaded guilty to breaching fire safety regulations and was fined £270,000. It also had to pay another £300,000 in costs.

—Michael Wright, Jenny Gross and Joanna Sugden contributed to this article.

Write to Wiktor Szary at Wiktor.Szary@wsj.com and Jason Douglas at jason.douglas@wsj.com

Appeared in the June 15, 2017, print edition as 'Deadly Blaze Ravages London High Rise.'

Grenfell Tower fire in London leaves 12 dead, dozens injured

<https://www.facebook.com/griff.witte>

8-10 minutes

LONDON — Through the night and deep into the day, the crackling fire raged, sweeping through apartments and destroying lives like an out-of-control inferno from an earlier century, or perhaps from a less-affluent part of the world.

But this was London. This was 2017. And Wednesday's fire was unlike any seen here in recent memory, a blaze that transformed a 24-story high-rise that was once home to about 500 people into a charred ruin on the city's otherwise gleaming skyline.

The fire marked a fresh trauma in a city already roiled by terrorist attacks, an unhappy and divisive political campaign, and the lingering uncertainty over Brexit, all of which seemed to endow the tragedy with an extra measure of dismay.

But it was also, residents of the Grenfell Tower public housing development bitterly said, the specific and predictable result of years of warnings that had gone unheeded, an emblem of a city that is neglecting its most vulnerable residents even as it increasingly caters to the whims of the ultra-rich.

In one of the wealthiest neighborhoods of London — a short amble from the homes of celebrities and royals — people living in one of the city's increasingly in-demand havens of affordable housing jumped from 20 floors up after being trapped by the advancing flames.

A fire tore through a 24-story apartment building on June 14 in west London, shortly before 1 a.m. A fire tore through a 24-story apartment building on June 14 in west London, shortly before 1 a.m. (Amber Ferguson, Karla Adam, Griff Witte/The Washington Post)

(Amber Ferguson, Karla Adam, Griff Witte/The Washington Post)

Children banged on closed windows as they were enveloped by the thick black smoke. A woman dropped her baby, desperately hoping someone would catch the infant in the street below.

By early evening, police said that 12 people had died and more than 70 had been injured. But with many

people still unaccounted for, authorities said the toll was almost certain to rise.

The scenes of a skyscraper engulfed in flames on a picture-perfect, blue-sky day evoked memories of New York in September 2001. But there was no reason to think terrorism was a factor, authorities said.

The investigation, they said, would take time to assess what officials hinted could amount to a series of failures that, together, amounted to what London Fire Commissioner Dany Cotton described as "an unprecedented incident."

"In my 29 years of being a firefighter, I have never ever seen anything of this scale," she said as the building continued to belch smoke that could be seen for miles around.

At least 40 fire engines responded to the scene, where 200 firefighters waged a futile battle to contain the blaze. As fiery debris rained from above, they raced into the building wearing breathing tanks and searched floor by floor for survivors even amid concerns that the structure could collapse.

Outside, residents who had survived praised the firefighters but blamed the fire on official neglect. They said they had repeatedly raised fire safety concerns, which they said included the building's inadequate escape routes, the absence of an integrated alarm system, and a renovation last year that they worried had left their building clad in panels that were shiny and new but not up to code.

"Anyone who earns below 10 million pounds a year is not human in this borough," said James Wood, a resident of an adjacent public housing development who said that he and people from Grenfell Tower had lobbied the local council to take the issue seriously, to no avail. "They don't care about fire safety."

The Web page of the Grenfell Action Group, a residents' organization, testified to the long-standing concerns, with blog entries stretching back years that warned of the dangers.

"All our warnings fell on deaf ears," the group said in a post added Wednesday morning, hours after the fire broke out. "We predicted that a catastrophe like this was inevitable and just a matter of time."

The target of the group's ire — the Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organization, which runs public housing in the area on behalf of the local council — issued a statement late in the afternoon in which it acknowledged that residents had earlier raised concerns and vowed to "co-operate fully with all the relevant authorities in order to ascertain the cause of this tragedy."

[Could the catastrophic London high-rise fire have been prevented?]

Nick Paget-Brown, who leads the borough council, also acknowledged that residents had had long-standing concerns. He did not discuss them specifically, saying, "There are always concerns about fire safety in high-rise buildings."

Paget-Brown told the BBC that there would be "a thorough investigation into why the fire started and why it spread so quickly."

Although officials would not speculate, experts said Wednesday that their focus was on the building's exterior cladding, which was supposed to be fireproof but which witnesses said had burned like paper, quickly transmitting the fire from unit to unit and from floor to floor.

"It appears that the external cladding has significantly contributed to the spread of fire at Grenfell Tower," said Angus Law, an expert with the Building Research Establishment Center for Fire Safety Engineering at the University of Edinburgh.

Law said that British regulations are intended to halt the spread of fire between units and floors in high-rise buildings, but that when that fails, "the consequences are often catastrophic."

Grenfell Tower, built in 1974, contained 120 units of publicly subsidized housing, with low-income and disabled residents given priority. It was one among a cluster of high-rises that stick out from the northern tip of leafy and stately Kensington, marking an unofficial western entry point to central London.

The first hint that something was wrong came just before 1 a.m. when, according to a fourth-floor resident interviewed by the BBC, a neighbor knocked on the door to say his "fridge had exploded."

Experts said firefighters should have had time to extinguish the blaze before it spread to other units. Instead, it leapt within minutes to other floors — but somehow never triggered any building-wide alarms.

Hundreds of residents, many of whom were asleep when the blaze broke out, were forced to flee over the coming hours down a cramped, dark and smoky stairwell — the building's only escape route.

Adeeb, who declined to give his last name, said he learned of the fire only when his daughter woke him in their ninth-floor apartment.

"She said, 'I can see fire,' and I opened the door and could see smoke," said Adeeb, who is from Syria but has lived in Britain for 16 years. "It was like a horror movie. Smoke was coming from everywhere."

Adeeb, who is on crutches, hobbled to safety with his wife and three daughters. One daughter was later hospitalized.

Others were not nearly as fortunate. Several residents said emergency responders had ordered them to stay inside, in keeping with the building's protocol for fires. But the protocol assumes that a blaze will be contained, not that it will consume the entire building.

Throughout the morning, witnesses reported harrowing scenes as residents trapped on top floors leaned out windows, flashing their cellphone lights and calling frantically for help.

Today's WorldView

What's most important from where the world meets Washington

Wood, the resident of an adjacent building who said he had lobbied the local council, said he saw a woman on about the 13th floor holding a baby out a window until all hope of a rescue had passed. "She dropped the baby," he said. "I'm hoping it was into someone's arms. But I don't think the mother made it."

The 32-year-old graphic designer also said he saw children, about 5 years old, banging on a closed window.

"And then it was black smoke. It was all up in flames," he said. "I know they didn't make it."

Questions Mount After Fire at Grenfell Tower in London Kills at Least 12 (UNE)

Stephen Castle, Danny Hakim and Ceylan Yeginsu

11-14 minutes

LONDON — Adib Abbas, an observant Muslim, was preparing an early morning Ramadan meal in a ninth-floor apartment at Grenfell Tower when he suddenly smelled gas. On the same floor, Hanan Wahabi woke up and realized that something was terribly wrong. The night air had the stench of smoke and ash.

From those terrifying moments, residents found themselves in a nightmare: Their 24-story building, with 120 apartments, was gutted by flames early Wednesday, in what authorities called London's worst building fire in years.

Local residents watching the fire. Daniel Leal-Olivas/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

The high-rise, in the North Kensington section of West London, was left a charred and smoking ruin. At least 12 people were killed and 78 others were treated at six hospitals.

For a country that has endured three terrorist attacks this year, and that is in the midst of political uncertainty after national elections produced a hung Parliament, the predawn blaze was another painful tragedy, raising pointed questions about whether the building was unsafe. Residents had complained about fire safety for several years, and experts were already questioning whether the materials used on the exterior of the building might have helped spread the flames.

A police cordon near Grenfell Tower in North Kensington. "I have never, ever seen anything of this scale," said Dany Cotton, the London fire commissioner. Daniel Leal-Olivas/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

Prime Minister Theresa May convened a meeting on Wednesday to coordinate the government's response, as safety checks were ordered for other high-rise buildings. Beyond the dead and injured, firefighters rescued 65 people and announced that there were no more survivors.

Many people escaped down the staircases, but the authorities grimly predicted that the death toll would surely rise as bodies were found and identified.

The London Ambulance Service said it had taken at least 64 people to six hospitals. Andy Rain/European Pressphoto Agency

"In my 29 years of being a firefighter, I have never, ever seen anything of this scale," said Dany Cotton, the commissioner of the London Fire Brigade.

The cause remained under investigation, though several residents say it started on the fourth floor and quickly spread to the top of the building with a ferocity and speed that stunned the 250 firefighters who responded.

Forensic teams removing bodies from the scene of the fire. Leon Neal/Getty Images

Their work was complicated by an active gas pipe — a utility was asked to shut it off — and by wreckage so dense that drones were deployed to analyze some of the hardest-to-reach areas of the building. Grenfell Tower was constructed in 1974 and underwent a renovation costing 10 million pounds, or \$12.8 million, that was completed in May 2016.

Experts pointed to the insulated aluminum cladding that was installed to the building's exterior as part of the renovation as potentially problematic.

Firefighters training hoses on the building. A residents' association has regularly complained in its newsletter of fire hazards in the building and what it called inattention by the landlord. Leon Neal/Getty Images

Christopher Miers, the managing director of Probyn Miers, a forensic architecture firm that examines buildings that are defective or damaged by fire, noted that such cladding — typically consisting of aluminum sheets sandwiched over insulation — had been a factor in skyscraper blazes in the United Arab Emirates and China.

The United States and Britain have tougher regulations on the potential flammability of internal material used in cladding, but other factors — like how panels are made and installed — could come into play, Mr. Miers said.

"In my 29 years of being a firefighter, I have never, ever seen anything of this scale."

Dany Cotton, the commissioner of London's fire brigade

David King, a building engineer in Maidstone, England, said the cladding might have helped the blaze leap from floor to floor. "I've seen how the flames were coming out of the windows and going up the outside, so that's one possible explanation," he said.

While police and fire officials said the investigation had just begun, a residents' association, the Grenfell

Action Group, noted that it had warned for years about fire hazards and what it called inattention by the local council, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, which owns the building, and by the company the council hired to manage the property.

A man inside the burning building. The London Fire Brigade said the flames had spread from the second floor to the top floor. Matt Dunham/Associated Press

The group warned in 2013 that residents had "experienced a period of terrifying power surges that were subsequently found to have been caused by faulty wiring," and that "our attempts to highlight the seriousness of this event were covered up" by the management company and the council.

In November, the group warned that the management company, Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organization, had put the building at risk of "a serious fire."

More than 200 firefighters from all over London worked to extinguish the blaze. Matt Dunham/Associated Press

The council's leader, Nicholas Paget-Brown, said on Wednesday that whether the refurbishment had been done appropriately would "need to be the subject of a separate investigation."

He added, "We need a thorough inquiry into why this fire started, why it spread so quickly and whether there was anything in place to slow down its progress."

Firefighters in a children's playground covered in debris from the burning tower nearby. Neil Hall/Reuters

When the renovation was announced in 2014, the management organization said in a statement that "residents of the tower have long had to put up with a substandard heating system and poor insulation," and that a new heating system would allow them to set the temperature in their apartments.

On Wednesday, the company declined to respond to the resident association's complaints, but it said in a statement, "The fire at Grenfell Tower is devastating and the reports of injury and losses of life absolutely heartbreaking."

At least 40 fire engines were at the scene. Toby Melville/Reuters

Rydon, the construction company that carried out the renovation, said in a statement that the project had "met all required building control, fire regulation and health and safety standards."

As investigators began poring over building plans and inspection reports, the survivors of the fire had more immediate concerns: where to spend the night and how to begin rebuilding their lives. Throughout the morning, traumatized victims, some still in pajamas, showed up at reception centers for help.

"I looked out of the window, and the flames were rising up the building," Ms. Wahabi, of the ninth floor, said a few hours after she had escaped. "The flames were unbelievable. Pieces of the exterior were breaking off. Cladding was flying through the air."

Ms. Wahabi said that she had spoken by telephone with her brother, who was on the 21st floor, and urged him to leave, but that he had been told by firefighters to stay in place until he could be rescued.

She said she had not been able to contact him since, adding, "I have done a lot of crying."

The building was populated by many immigrants, from countries that included Eritrea, the Philippines, Somalia and Sudan. Many were observing Ramadan and preparing or eating suhoor, the predawn meal.

Among them was Mr. Abbas, who was visiting his cousin.

"I opened the door and everyone was shouting, 'Fire, fire, get back in,'" he recalled. "Then a neighbor called my cousin and told us to wait for the Fire Brigade. We were terrified and thought about trying to get out the window. There were people dangling out the windows trying to get out."

He added: "My cousin had his kids with him, and they started crying and screaming when the smoke started coming in. There was no way out, we were stuck, and no one was coming to help us."

"I don't know how long it took, but it felt like ages before we got out," Mr. Abbas said. "I could see people lying on the floor as we were being pulled out. I think a lot of people died. It's a nightmare."

Abdul Kadiri, who lives nearby, was reunited with a friend who lived on the 15th floor of Grenfell Tower, and who called Mr. Kadiri as flames licked the building. "I told him to grab his family and get out, and he hung up," Mr. Kadiri recalled.

Another neighborhood resident, Alison Evans, woke to the sound of sirens and helicopters and watched flames engulf the building from a nearby street. "It just kept burning and burning for hours, and for hours there were still people at the top of the building screaming for help," she said. "It was hell to watch."

Another resident, Mohammed Bouya, said he could hear people screaming for help from their windows. Firefighters told them to stay where they were, he said.

The so-called stay-put policy is not uncommon for British high-rises, but the resident association had complained about it, saying that it

**The
New York
Times**

Brooke : London Fire Shows Why Britons Don't Trust the System

Heather Brooke
6-8 minutes

Flames engulfing the Grenfell Tower apartment building in London on Wednesday. Toby Melville/Reuters

LONDON — Helicopters are not unusual in London, but the intense buzzing from the sky at 5 a.m. roused me early. From my balcony, I could see a huge plume of smoke billowing up from behind trees. It came from a blaze at Grenfell Tower, a 24-floor residential building, not far from where I live in West London. The authorities declared it a major incident as more than 200 firefighters battled the fire, with an unknown number of people trapped inside.

As the day went on, the scale of the horror became apparent. The death toll rose from six to at least 12, with scores of people needing hospital treatment and some in critical care. There were reports of people jumping from windows to escape the smoke and flames, and of a baby caught by a bystander after being dropped from high above.

It soon emerged that residents had previously raised questions about fire safety in the building, which was home to about 120 families. The Grenfell Action Group, a community organization, had published a series of blog posts about their grievances with the Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organization, the company that runs the building on behalf of the local authority, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. One post from November 2016, starkly titled “KCTMO: Playing With Fire,” chillingly suggested that “only a catastrophic event will expose the ineptitude and incompetence of our landlord.” The

would hinder escape in the event of a fire. Nonetheless, the management company had recently posted fire safety instructions — including the stay-put policy — at the building’s entrance and outside elevators on every floor.

The intensity and power of the fire led to fears that the building might

group’s complaints about fire safety go back to 2013.

Whether the borough listened to and acted on these warnings will be examined in the days to come. One thing the local government did do, reportedly, was have its in-house lawyer send a letter in 2013 to the blog’s author alleging defamation and harassment, and demanding the removal of several posts.

The regeneration of social housing using a mixture of public and private ownership began under Tony Blair’s Labour government and continues today. It is an issue fraught with strong feelings about politics and class, but in London the root of it is a city where the population is growing fast but the housing supply is not keeping pace. Added to this, the world’s superrich are choosing London real estate as a place to park their millions. Prices for private houses and apartments have skyrocketed.

While the average price of a property in Britain is £220,000 (\$281,000), in Kensington and Chelsea homes go for £1.4 million (about \$1.8 million) on average. The borough has the worst ranking in London for its rent-to-earnings ratio, according to a study by the New Policy Institute.

Yet local authorities still have an obligation to house vulnerable people, even though councils face caps on the amount they can borrow. This leaves local governments severely limited in their capacity to manage their housing stock. As a result, most councils have looked to the private sector for support.

Kensington and Chelsea is one of the most affluent boroughs of London, home to many museums, galleries and embassies. But walk to

collapse, but rescue workers and investigators were able to enter after the flames had been beaten back.

Donations of food, water, clothing, diapers and toiletries poured in to the reception centers, including the Rugby Portobello Trust, a charity, where the volume of items — including pillows and a cooling fan

Ladbroke Grove, my neighborhood, and the demographics shift noticeably. Most of the borough’s poor are concentrated in North Kensington, where Grenfell Tower and a majority of social housing stand.

The company that manages Grenfell Tower is a nonprofit that is, in theory, run by and for residents of the thousands of buildings it manages in London. But only eight of the 15 board members are residents (the other seven are council appointed or independent), while repairs and maintenance are contracted out to another private company. The council, the ultimate owner of these buildings, has a close relationship with the management company, which the Grenfell Action Group sees as an unresponsive buffer. Residents’ concerns, the group says, have consistently been ignored and suppressed.

The English system of local government is hard to navigate, and opportunities for citizens to engage meaningfully with decision makers are not plentiful. A paternalistic “we know best” attitude often prevails, and even basic information is available only through freedom-of-information requests. Until 2005, when the Freedom of Information Act came into force, it was illegal to disclose fire inspection reports to the public. Even today, those reports can be obtained only by written request under the freedom-of-information law.

In another sign of this “trust authority” mind-set, official instructions to Grenfell residents were to “stay put” in the event of a fire. Fortunately, most people ignored that and fled.

“The danger is that however much the government tries, they will not be seen to be impartial if they are locked into a parliamentary deal in Westminster with one of the Northern Ireland parties,” Mr. Major said.

And some of her own more liberal-minded Conservatives, like Ruth

— was so great that volunteers had to place them in boxes on the sidewalk to take to other locations. A gym opened its showers for displaced residents, and the Westway Sports and Fitness Center provided mattresses.

These are turbulent times in Britain, and the fire at Grenfell Tower touches on many of the issues that are riling people. Over the past decade, a series of events have demolished the trust citizens once had in officialdom: the financial crash of 2008, the scandal of parliamentary expenses and the chaos in government following the Brexit referendum.

Amid this dissatisfaction with the status quo, voters in Kensington — a constituency once staunchly Conservative — elected their first ever Labour member for Parliament last week. Today, the Grenfell disaster looks like yet another of these “trust us, we’ll look after you” promises that officialdom fails to keep.

Although digital technology, through blogs and social media, has created new ways for citizens like those of the Grenfell Action Group to represent their rights and interests, the traditional way of doing politics looks more archaic and undemocratic than ever. The question is always, Who has the right to know? Truly empowered individuals don’t have to wait passively to receive what information officials choose to give them. They can ask their own questions — and get answers.

The residents of Grenfell did not have that power. And this is what must be remedied, not just in Kensington and Chelsea but in every institution that calls itself democratic. This is the end of the “stay put” citizen.

More in Opinion

[Go to the Opinion Section »](#)

Recommended for You

[Go to All Recommendations »](#)

**The
New York
Times**

Criticism Builds as Theresa May Prepares to Form New Government

Steven Erlanger
5-7 minutes

But Mrs. May suffered something of a blow when a former Conservative prime minister, John Major, urged her to avoid any deal with the

unionists because of the potential for destabilizing Northern Ireland and harming the Good Friday agreement, the 1998 deal that brought relative peace to Northern Ireland, especially at a moment when power-sharing in Belfast has broken down.

would not be altered or held hostage because of any deal with the D.U.P.

But Mrs. May has no other options if she is to have a government that provides a semblance of stability, as she has promised, with negotiations on Britain's exit from the European Union, known as Brexit, looming as early as next week.

There was trouble building on that score, too. Her predecessor, David Cameron, who held the referendum on a British exit and quit after he lost it, used his first public comments since last Thursday's election to urge Mrs. May to consider "a softer Brexit," describing "an opportunity to consult more widely with the other parties on how we best can achieve it."

While Mrs. May was correct to remain in office, Mr. Cameron said, he warned that "over Brexit, she is going to have to talk more widely, listen to other parties" — not just the Scottish Conservatives, who are eager for an exit that allows free trade, but also the opposition Labour Party.

Arlene Foster, leader of the Democratic Unionist Party of Northern Ireland, and Nigel Dodds, deputy leader. Charles McQuillan/Getty Images

Mrs. May will not regard those comments as helpful, and she has already said that she wants an exit that will take Britain out of the European Union's single market and customs union. Only that way, she has argued, can Britain control immigration and make its own trade deals free of the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice.

But in a weakened position, she has also had to retain Philip Hammond as her chancellor of the Exchequer, and Mr. Hammond has emphasized that he wants a deal that does the most to protect British jobs and trade. He would prefer that Britain at least remain in the customs union.

But that position, which seems roughly to be that of the Labour Party, is anathema to the "leave" supporters in Mrs. May's cabinet and her own party. So here, too, she is stuck, without the obvious authority to force everyone into line.

There is a logical problem with a softer British exit, of course. To remain in the single market, Britain would have to accept freedom of movement and labor for all European Union citizens, which is exactly the issue that drove the leave campaign to victory in the referendum — to "take back control" of immigration.

The customs union is a lesser association, but it covers only free trade in goods, not services, which make up nearly 80 percent of the British economy. And even the customs union does not allow Britain to make its own trade deals with other countries in the world, as the Brexit supporters demand — it has to follow European Union trade arrangements.

What drives the other European Union member states slightly crazy is this continuing delay by Britain, which, after all, initiated the process of leaving. The referendum was a year ago. The official notice of leaving was given on March 29, meaning that Britain will be out, deal or no deal, on March 29, 2019.

The clock is ticking, but given Mrs. May's humiliating loss of her parliamentary majority, will Britain be thrown into another national debate about what kind of exit it wants?

On Tuesday evening, Mrs. May traveled to Paris to meet Europe's triumphant new president, Emmanuel Macron of France. The meeting centered on antiterrorism policies and concluded with both leaders watching a France-England soccer match, which England gracefully lost, 3-2.

But the real issue, of course, is Britain's exit from the bloc. France wants to get on with it and restore its cooperative relationship with Germany as the essential dual motor of the European Union. Brexit, then, is a distraction, and while both France and Germany want to preserve good economic and military relations with Britain, the cohesion of the bloc is paramount for them.

Mrs. May said there was "a unity of purpose" in Britain on Brexit. Mr. Macron did not even raise his eyebrows. But asked in English whether there would be "open doors" in Brussels should Britain change its mind on leaving, he answered carefully and deliberately in French.

Until the negotiations end, he said, "of course there is always the possibility to reopen the door." But once they begin — and they are scheduled to start next week — "we all should be well aware that it is much more difficult to turn back."

INTERNATIONAL

The Middle East's Crisis Factory

Paul McLeary | 1 hour ago

9-11 minutes

Tensions in the Middle East have hit new heights in the weeks following U.S. President Donald Trump's visit to Riyadh. During that trip, Saudi Arabia's rulers seemingly succeeded in getting Trump on their side in their own "war on terror" against their Sunni Arab opponents and Iran's regime. Energized by Trump's support, the Saudi and Emirati regimes led a "coalition of the willing" to force back in line the Qatari leadership, which had followed a foreign policy that is independent of and at times in opposition to theirs.

Saudi Arabia and its allies accused Qatar, in official statements, of "meddling in the internal affairs of other countries," supporting a list of terrorist groups — including the Islamic State, al Qaeda, Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Houthis — and of being

sympathetic to the Islamic Republic of Iran. Confusingly enough, Qatar also hosts U.S. Central Command's forward headquarters, where more than 10,000 American soldiers are stationed — and had been a member of the anti-Houthi and anti-Islamic State coalitions.

Iran is also being dragged into a larger conflagration in the Gulf. As the Gulf states' war of words escalated into a blockade of Qatar, an unprecedented terrorist attack struck the key symbols of the regime in Tehran, leaving at least 17 dead and more injured. The Islamic State claimed the attack, but Iran's regime, not missing a beat, accused the Saudis of the crime, referencing comments made during Trump's visit to Riyadh, as well as earlier comments by the Saudi foreign minister about taking the battle to Iranian soil.

Like Europe in 1914, the Middle East stands precariously at the edge of conflict. The history of the dictatorship-plagued region has shown that there is no such thing as a short and decisive war. The Yemeni and Syrian conflicts

adequately demonstrate that, though both conflicts have been more or less geographically contained. If the current posturing transforms into an open regional war, the conflict will be neither brief nor conclusive. And the explosion of instability in the heart of the world's most energy-rich region will send global economies into shock, create more opportunities for terrorists, necessitate further foreign interventions, spark new waves of refugees, and make the entire world less safe, less stable, and less prosperous.

Origins of the chaos

The origins of the current round of chaos can be found in former President Barack Obama's decision to disengage the United States from the Middle East — just as the region was undergoing a wave of pro-democracy mass protests. In the power vacuum created by the U.S. disengagement, various players saw both the space and the necessity to pursue their own independent, competing agendas — and in the ensuing melee, the

voices of the Middle East's people were brutally suppressed.

Obama's push for a deal with Iran's regime threw further confusion into the mix — leading to more destruction in Syria and ultimately opening the door to an overwhelming and brutal Russian intervention. Furthermore, to balance American alliances, Obama supported the Saudi leadership's war on Yemen, adding more fuel to an already burning region.

Despite this, it is wrong to assume that Obama's policies were the root cause of this mess. If anything, the U.S. decision to no longer police the region only exposed a deep-seated instability that has always existed. What we are witnessing is the consequence of a regional order dominated by dictatorships, coupled with outside powers' reliance on an expired foreign-policy paradigm that focuses on short-term gain rather than long-term stability. It is time to realize that partnering with dictatorships for the sake of stability and security is unsustainable, myopic, and potentially disastrous.



None of the actors in the current conflict is blameless. Each stands accused of enabling terrorism, spreading extremist ideology, bankrolling coups, supporting militant groups, interfering and intervening in other countries, or committing gross human rights violations. Unsurprisingly, all are dictatorships. Among them are no innocent parties or reliable partners for peace and stability.

Left to themselves, they seem to choose escalation — and this is what makes mediation efforts so important.

Left to themselves, they seem to choose escalation — and this is what makes mediation efforts so important.

Resisting de-escalation

There are efforts underway to de-escalate the crisis in the Gulf, with Kuwait's emir shuttling between capitals in efforts to strike a compromise. The U.S. State Department has urged de-escalation, and — despite repeated public statements by Trump endorsing the Saudi-Emirati position — Secretary of State Rex Tillerson still seems to be working to craft a compromise.

But don't expect this conflict to be resolved so easily. The key players — especially the Saudi and Emirati leaderships — seem to be resisting Tillerson's mediation. Someone in the anti-Qatar camp, meanwhile, seems to have launched a major cyberattack on Qatar's Al Jazeera news network,

which is at the center of this crisis. Meanwhile, the mood in Doha is tense but resilient: Qatar downplayed reports that its military was placed on high alert, even as the Turkish government approved sending fresh troops to its military base in Qatar.

The United States also finds itself slipping closer to an open conflict with Iran. Hours after Iran's foreign minister called Trump's response to the Tehran terrorist attack "repugnant," an Iranian-made drone opened fire on American soldiers in southern Syria.

With the stakes so high, it may seem puzzling that these players are all pushing for more escalation. But the key to understanding this is to realize that the main audience of the regimes, and their fear, is domestic. A narrative of conflict that employs sectarianism and nationalism enhances their hold on power.

Already, the conflict is being used to suppress civil society, push for more executions, and shut down space for free speech and solidarity. Egypt has blocked 64 websites, and the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain have used the opportunity to control the social media space even further. The mood among many of the region's civil society activists is dismal; they have to bend to allow the current storm to pass but fear they won't be able to stand back up after it.

Despite their open rivalry, the regional players' relationship with

each other is actually symbiotic. Each of these regimes promotes a narrative of "fighting terrorism," "ensuring stability," and "resisting foreign encroachment." Terrorist groups on the other hand promote a narrative of "resistance to dictatorship" or "resistance to foreign intervention." The narratives interlock to create a vicious cycle of increasing conflict and polarization.

From noise to solutions

The Middle East seems to be unraveling even further, toward fresh levels of instability. Is there a way out of this spiral? The potential for catastrophe necessitates a focus on immediate solutions — but in the rush to defuse the current crisis, we shouldn't lose sight of the longer term. After all, short-term thinking is what got us here.

The authors of this article are an Iranian and an Arab analyst. As such, we are more aware than most about the geopolitical implications of the conflict. But even as we understand and are alarmed by them, we realize that they are distractions from the root causes of instability. Dictatorships are not responsible global partners and, if given the chance, will only create more instability.

De-escalation in the short term is of course needed — but a counternarrative is also needed that shifts the conversation toward how to build a sustainable peace and emphasizes societies over states, solidarity over hatred, integration over sectarianism, human rights

over illusory "stability," and hope over despair. We cannot solve this problem by empowering the very actors that created it. We cannot afford to keep doing the same thing over and over and expect different outcomes.

The way forward — and the cornerstone of any long-term strategy — necessitates a disbelief in the sustainability of Middle Eastern dictatorships. While engagement with these governments is necessary, they should not be treated as responsible or trustworthy partners and should be seen as part of the problem more than the solution. This needs to be coupled with a recommitment to Middle Eastern societies, represented by their social entrepreneurs, civil society activists, free thinkers, and native reformers. The space within which they operate is severely threatened and needs both protection and investment.

Finally, the people of open societies also need to be a part of the potential solution — to understand the role and importance of human rights for stability and to push their governments to put human rights at the top of the foreign-policy agenda. The delusion that partnering with dictatorships can bring stability, and that peace and prosperity can somehow be attained while ignoring human rights, needs to finally come crashing down.

STRINGER/AFP/Getty Images



How Trump's Black and White World View Met Reality in the Middle East

Paul McLeary | 1 hour ago

11-14 minutes

It was only three weeks ago that President Donald Trump, in Riyadh, proclaimed that he had secured unprecedented unity amongst Sunni governments to fight the two scourges all the assembled 55 governments agreed were destabilizing the Middle East — Islamist extremism and Iran. That unity lasted mere days, however, as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the UAE, and Bahrain cut off relations with Qatar and essentially imposed a blockade on the country, which imports 40 percent of its food across its land border with Saudi Arabia.

The fierce eruption of this intra-Arab split threatens to undermine key American goals in the Middle East, at a particularly delicate moment. Trump's swift embrace of the Saudi side in this family argument

exacerbates the danger and undermines his own declared goals. The administration's current approach has launched the United States into the middle of a slew of regional rivalries and may well exacerbate the geopolitical conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia — one with significant religious and sectarian undercurrents.

Trump and his senior foreign-policy advisers seem to agree on a fundamental approach in the Middle East: after years in which, in their view, President Barack Obama ceded ground in the region to Iran and Russia, they seek a revision of the regional power balance back in favor of the United States and its Sunni allies. But it appears likely that the president's visit to Riyadh and his unconditional support for the Saudi view of the roots of regional instability has instead exacerbated that instability, and made the achievement of U.S. goals in the region even harder.

Even as Trump's interagency was still determining how they would respond to the (renewed) breakdown amongst Gulf Cooperation Council states, the president tweeted his support for the Saudi-led squeeze on Qatar, and took credit for the action. Regardless of whether his boasting was well-founded, there is no question the tweets undercut Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Secretary of Defense James Mattis, who were both working the phones trying to bring the parties together. In subsequent days, the "adults" managed to get Trump on the phone with the four Arab leaders most involved in the dispute, and issued readouts emphasizing to each of them that unity was important to "preserve regional stability." But on June 9, just an hour after Tillerson sought to move the parties forward by calling on Saudi Arabia to ease its blockade of Qatar, Trump publicly blasted Qatar

as a funder of terrorism in a Rose Garden press conference.

Far from jumping into the midst of intra-GCC squabbles, the United States has traditionally played a moderating role. It is true that Qatar's independent-minded foreign policy has often irked American officials, just as it has Doha's regional neighbors. Key tensions have revolved around Qatar's support for the Muslim Brotherhood, arming extremist groups in Syria, and a more agnostic approach towards the threat posed by Iran. Qatar has been slower than some of the other Gulf states to tackle terrorist financing, and its hosting of both Hamas leaders and Taliban figures has been a particular irritant (except when U.S. officials need to send messages to those groups). On the terror-funding issue, Qatar has now joined the rest of the Gulf in tightly regulating its banking sector and local charities, and has even prosecuted some egregious

fundes. The biggest remaining terror-funding problem all across the Gulf is that of private money flowing through informal *hawalas* and the cash economy. But the United States also relies on the Qatari-built and maintained al-Udeid Air Base for operations over Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan, and has approximately 11,000 troops deployed to Qatar, which serves as a forward base for U.S. Central Command.

Three deficits

The split within the Gulf Cooperation Council is deeply damaging to U.S. interests, in three ways. First, the divides within the Arab world actually give Russia and Iran more room to meddle in Arab politics and to insert themselves into regional affairs — as is evident from Moscow's assertive diplomacy with Doha and Tehran's offer to airlift food into Qatar to compensate for the Saudi blockade. The intra-Arab split just further reduces American influence. Indeed, in recent days we've seen numerous regional actors taking sides. Turkey has weighed in on Qatar's behalf. Iraq has found itself awkwardly stuck in the middle. Iran has taken advantage of the division and aligned itself with Qatar in an attempt to draw it closer. And Moscow is clearly pleased to see this division among American partners. There are even reports that Russian hackers helped fuel the crisis by penetrating Qatari state media and placing false stories about a provocative speech given by the Qatari emir. They would not do this unless they knew it was helpful to their interests and harmful to those of the United States.

Qatar's continued open door to Tehran provokes suspicion among its Arab neighbors, but it is also inescapable, since the two countries share the world's largest natural gas field, with the world's lowest extraction rates. The way to constrain Iranian interference while managing the necessities of geographic coexistence is through close GCC dialogue, facilitated by Trump's clarion call on the Iranian threat and supported by U.S. military and intelligence cooperation.

Intra-Arab unity is even more crucial to pursuing America's top national-security priority in the Middle East, as declared by Trump in his Riyadh speech — the defeat of the Islamic State and like-minded violent extremist groups. While Saudi Arabia and the Emirates insist that there's no difference between the Islamic State and the Muslim Brotherhood (backed by Qatar and its omnipresent Al Jazeera satellite network), that wide a scope for a new war on terror is not supported by the empirical record nor by American interests.

It is hard to square an "America First" approach to counterterrorism with a passive acquiescence by President Trump to slay whatever dragons are identified by regional allies, especially when they do not all agree that these are dragons at all.

It is hard to square an "America First" approach to counterterrorism with a passive acquiescence by President Trump to slay whatever dragons are identified by regional allies, especially when they do not all agree that these are dragons at all.

Complicating matters for Israel

Finally, the intra-GCC argument threatens another declared priority for Trump's Middle East policy — advancing Israeli-Arab rapprochement in the context of a renewed regional peace process. In past iterations of Arab-Israeli diplomacy, smaller Gulf states were more able to advance relations with Israel while Saudi Arabia, because of its cherished identity as the leader of the Muslim world, will tend to lag in engagement with the Jewish state.

And even while Israeli officials continue to strongly oppose Qatar's relationship with Hamas, they also acknowledge that the Qataris have played a constructive role in flowing aid to Gaza. If the Gulf blockade on Qatar causes that support to dry up, it could exacerbate an already dire humanitarian situation. Hamas would be under increasing political pressure and may respond, as in the past, by escalating tensions and sparking a renewed military conflict with Israel. This would serve as an

attention-grabber, but at a great cost for all involved. In that scenario, it would be impossible for Trump to make any progress in securing what he calls the "ultimate deal" between Israelis and Palestinians.

In this overall regional context, the Trump administration's response to the Islamic State attacks in Tehran that killed 12 people was not merely maladroit, but self-defeating. This was a seminal moment for Iran — the first major terrorist attacks on home soil in years. We've seen Islamic State terror attacks focus the minds of other regional leaders and strengthen their resolve to work with the United States in countering the threat — as Kuwait did in launching its own terror-financing crackdown after a mosque bombing in 2015. While direct U.S.-Iranian cooperation against the Islamic State is unrealistic and perhaps even undesirable, there's no question that Iran's influence over Iraqi Shiite parties will prove crucial to securing a lasting victory against the Islamic State in Iraq. It's no surprise that Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps responded quickly by accusing Saudi Arabia of being behind the attacks — further escalating regional tensions. In responding to the attacks, the United States had an opportunity to mitigate Iran-Saudi tensions and to push Iran toward a more constructive role vis-à-vis the Islamic State. Instead, the Trump administration again chose to dive deeper into the regional morass and add fuel to the fire by issuing a statement that condemned the attack, but suggested that Iran had it coming because of its own support for terrorism.

You don't have to share, but don't fight

President Obama's famous statement that Iran and Saudi Arabia learn how to "share" the region tilted too far towards indifference in a regional struggle for influence in which America has and should have a clear preference. The United States should be closer to our traditional friends than our adversaries; those friends are so in part because they help advance regional stability against Iranian

subversion. Trump's uncritical embrace of Saudi Arabia's regional approach, however, is not advancing American interests — it is escalating regional tensions and instability, and providing more room for America's adversaries to gain influence.

A better approach would be to offer Saudi Arabia a clear quid pro-quo: the United States will recognize Riyadh's leadership in the region and will do more to counter Iranian influence, if the kingdom will do more get its own house in order by setting aside intra-Arab disputes, mitigating the fierce polarization (mostly over Islamism) within and between Arab societies, and focusing Arab efforts directly on Iran and the Islamic State — the threats both agree are top priorities. The United States can take real and meaningful steps to push back on Iran's destabilizing activities, and not just by exposing their bad behavior. We have already seen three strikes on Iranian-supported Shiite militias in Eastern Syria in recent weeks, which have likely sent some signals to Tehran. In Yemen, the United States can step up its efforts to deter greater Iranian interference and provide some support for the Saudi-Emirati coalition, while also pushing for a swift political solution and restraining actions that violate our own rules and norms regarding use of force. (Congress may weigh in on this point this week by voting against replenishing Saudi's precision-guided missiles.) In Iraq, the United States is using helping to oust the Islamic State from Mosul, and should simultaneously press the Gulf States to provide more political and financial support to help pull the Iraqi central government away from Tehran.

President Trump prides himself on being a dealmaker who never gives something for nothing — which made his fulsome embrace of Saudi Arabia's regional approach uncharacteristic, as well as unseemly. The quid pro quo we propose here for the Gulf should be a natural for him.

Photo credit: MANDEL NGAN/AFP/Getty Images



U.S., Qatar Move Toward Arms Deal Estimated at \$12 Billion

Jay Solomon and Doug Cameron

5-6 minutes

Updated June 14, 2017 7:53 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON—The U.S. and Qatar signed a preliminary

agreement for the sale of dozens of Boeing Co. F-15 jet fighters to the Persian Gulf monarchy, in a transaction that risks further ensnaring the Trump administration in an escalating dispute between leading Arab countries.

Qatar's Defense Ministry valued the contract at \$12 billion and said it would create 60,000 American jobs.

The preliminary deal was signed at the Pentagon on Wednesday by U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and his Qatari counterpart, Khalid al-Attiyah, said U.S. and Qatari officials.

"This agreement underscores the longstanding commitment of the State of Qatar in jointly working with our friends and allies in the United

States in advancing our military cooperation," Qatar's Defense Ministry said in a statement.

Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and other Arab countries severed diplomatic relations with Qatar last week, and sealed their air and land borders, after charging the gas-rich emirate of financing

terrorism and promoting extremist ideologies.

Qatar is home to the Al Udeid air base, the largest U.S. military facility in the Middle East. American energy and defense companies have major investments in the country.

The dispute between U.S. allies has placed the Trump administration in a diplomatic bind and resulted in conflicting statements coming out of Washington.

President Donald Trump has appeared in recent days to side with Saudi Arabia and the U.A.E., publicly accusing Qatar of financing terrorism at the "highest levels." At the same time, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has called for easing of the Arab states' economic squeeze on Qatar and offered to mediate the dispute.

In private, U.S. officials have said the Trump administration is trying to take an evenhanded approach.

A senior administration official on Wednesday said the Boeing sale has been in the works for a long

period of time and officials realized a White House move to block the deal, or slow its progress, would have appeared as an attempt to undermine Doha.

"We want to try and reintegrate Qatar amongst its neighbors," said the U.S. official. "Obviously, blocking it would have made the opposite statement."

The Obama administration last year first approved the possible sale of 72 F-15s for an estimated \$21.1 billion, a deal which would keep the Boeing production line in St. Louis moving into the next decade after a previous dearth of new deals had threatened its closure. Mr. Trump has prioritized generating American jobs as part of his foreign-policy approach.

A completed deal had come into question following the sanctions imposed against Qatar last week, said people involved in the process.

Boeing claimed it had secured \$50 billion in potential sales of jets, helicopters, munitions and other equipment to Saudi Arabia during

Mr. Trump's recent state visit to the kingdom. The U.A.E., another big Boeing customer, backs Qatar's isolation.

Qatar didn't detail Wednesday how many planes were involved in the current negotiations, though analysts had expected them to acquire an initial 36, with a potential follow-on deal for another 36.

The proposed deal is a government-to-government negotiation, and a letter of agreement would entail the start of Pentagon talks with Boeing to facilitate a sale.

Boeing declined to comment.

Tensions between Qatar and its neighbors have shown little sign of easing in recent days.

Saudi and Emirati officials said they are considering more sanctions against Doha. And they have so far rebuffed Mr. Tillerson's calls to soften their approach.

The U. A.E.'s ambassador to Washington, Yousef Al Otaiba, on Tuesday suggested that the U.S. consider moving its operations out

of Qatar. He said the facility provides the country's ruling family leverage against the U.S. and its other allies.

Saudi Arabia and the U.A.E. have charged Qatar of providing funds to al Qaeda-linked groups fighting in Syria and Libya. They also accuse Qatar's Al Jazeera television network of promoting radical ideologies across the Mideast. Qatar and Al Jazeera have denied those charges.

"Maybe someone in Congress should have a hearing and just say, you know, 'Should we consider moving it?'" Mr. Otaiba said of Al Udeid. "And maybe not moving the entire base. Maybe just distribute to various countries so you don't have all your eggs in one basket."

Write to Jay Solomon at jay.solomon@wsj.com and Doug Cameron at doug.cameron@wsj.com

Appeared in the June 15, 2017, print edition as 'U.S., Qatar Sign F-15 Agreement.'



How the president's style affects delicate work of diplomacy

Does disruption work in foreign policy? The Monitor's Howard LaFranchi looks at the case of Qatar.

The 30 Sec. ReadWhen Saudi Arabia and its allies broke off ties with Qatar, citing its support of "extremists" and Iran, it created a diplomatic crisis in a sensitive region. It was also a concern for the United States, which bases its Fifth Fleet, overseeing Gulf security, in Qatar. President Trump's top foreign-policy advisers quickly made it known that the United States would press for a rapid diplomatic resolution. But that appeared to be contradicted by Mr. Trump, who accused Qatar of "high level" sponsorship of terrorism and suggested his recent trip to Saudi Arabia had prompted the get-tough move. It's not uncommon for presidents and their advisers to disagree, and that can serve a purpose. Think "good cop-bad cop." But most foreign-policy experts say it can also cause unnecessary confusion and setbacks for US interests. Duke University's Peter Feaver says the problem with such dissonance in the foreign-policy arena is that it has consequences. If you don't take that into consideration, he adds, "you can get into trouble."

When President Trump chose a Rose Garden press conference to blast away at Qatar as the guilty party in the Gulf Arab states'

sudden falling-out last week, it was a fresh example of the shoot-from-the-hip and mixed-messaging diplomacy that Americans – and the world – may have to accept as the new normal.

There may have been nothing unique about Mr. Trump taking a decidedly tougher and less diplomatic approach to Qatar than his top diplomat, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson. Administrations use ambiguity and contradictions – carrots and sticks, good cop–bad cop – all the time to address complex crises and advance US goals.

Nor would it have been the first time a president used a foreign-policy matter to distract the public from the domestic news of the day, experts say, noting that the big news at home as the president skewered Qatar over terrorism financing was the congressional testimony of former FBI Director James Comey.

What stands out about Trump's foreign-policy commentaries – whether of the Rose Garden variety or like the recent presidential tweets on missiles and trade that upended relations with South Korea – is how public, off-the-cuff, and seemingly disconnected from the consensus of the administration's foreign-policy team those pronouncements are.

And while some degree of dissonance – some may call it "disruption," others disarray – can

serve a purpose, most foreign-policy experts say it can also cause unnecessary confusion and setbacks for US interests.

"What's especially different here is how President Trump uses social media, in his case Twitter, to change the subject," says Peter Feaver, an international relations expert specializing in civilian-military affairs at Duke University in Durham, N.C.

"The problem when you do that as president and in the foreign-policy arena [is that] it has real-world consequences that have to be dealt with. If you're doing it merely for short-term news impact, without contemplation of the secondary and tertiary foreign-policy effects," he adds, "you can get into trouble."

For others, the principal drawback of the "unique" pattern Trump is setting on foreign-policy making is how the president's – the boss's – stark and unvarnished pronouncements supersede the more nuanced and diplomatic approach of the administration's foreign-policy team.

"I've never seen anything like this, where three or four different people, and one of them the president, say different things about the same issue," says Aaron David Miller, a Middle East expert at the Wilson Center in Washington who has worked in both Republican and Democratic administrations. "It can't

be just that it's a new administration. I've witnessed six or seven administrations," he adds. "This is unique in the way the foreign-policy apparatus and messaging are structured."

A short diplomatic bench

Another factor some see undermining the administration's foreign-policy clarity is the fact that the "apparatus" Dr. Miller speaks of is still bare-bones more than four months into the Trump presidency.

"What's unusual here is that the Trump team is facing this significant diplomatic challenge before they've got their roster on board," Dr. Feaver says. "It's like attempting to do a difficult synchronized swimming maneuver, with half the team not yet in their bathing suits and others not even named to the team yet."

The impact a short bench can have on keeping the diplomatic cogs turning was particularly salient to some analysts who noted that Mr. Tillerson was experiencing the effects of an incomplete "team roster" even as he was testifying to Congress this week (a House committee Tuesday, a Senate committee Wednesday) on his plans to reorganize the State Department – and eliminate as many as 2,300 positions.

But in a cacophony of voices, of course it's the president's that will be most heeded. The problem Miller

sees is that in the case of the Gulf-Qatar rupture, it's the president's unnuanced position that is the least helpful to resolving a rift among key US allies.

Trump's comments on the crisis "reflect a far too black-and-white vision of the region," he says, "and there are real risks to American credibility and policy in going down that road."

Qatar has been an outlier among the Gulf Arab states for decades. In response to Saudi Arabia, which treats it as little more than a Saudi province, its foreign policy seeks to get along with most everyone in the region. That includes the Iranians as well as the Americans, who base the critical Fifth Fleet overseeing Gulf security in Qatar.

But Qatar has also served as a base for extremist Islamist political groups such as Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood, while wealthy Qataris have funded Islamist opposition groups in Syria, including some thought to maintain ties to Al Qaeda. Qatar is also home to the Al Jazeera news network, a particular *bête noire* for the Saudi regime.

On June 5, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Egypt broke off diplomatic ties with Qatar, citing its support

of "extremists" and Iran. The group imposed a de facto blockade on the tiny desert nation, which depends heavily on imports.

The 'MMT' team

Tillerson, Defense Secretary James Mattis, and the national security adviser, H.R. McMaster, quickly made it known that the United States would press for a rapid diplomatic resolution of the rupture – with State Department officials in particular noting that the US wished to avoid a scenario that pushed Qatar closer to Iran.

But that approach appeared to be contradicted by Trump, who accused Qatar of "high level" sponsorship of terrorism and also suggested that his recent trip to Saudi Arabia had prompted the get-tough move against Qatar.

So, says the Wilson Center's Miller, while Trump's team was developing a nuanced approach to the crisis that would serve America's varied interests in the region, the president was drowning out those efforts with a single-minded strategy based on Saudi Arabia. Not coincidentally, he adds, the Saudis had just given Trump the warmest reception of his recent five-country overseas trip.

"What we're seeing is that whatever the 'MMT' team may be recommending and promoting," says Miller, referring to General McMaster, Mr. Mattis, and Tillerson, "the fact is that so far it's the president's view that has prevailed."

What the Qatar crisis demonstrates is how US Middle East policy is becoming linked ever closer to Saudi Arabia. "Policy is now driven by the president's need to hang the American hat on the Saudi hook," Miller says. "But there are numerous reasons why that would be an ill-advised regional strategy."

And while the Qatar crisis may be the stand-out of the day, experts say it's not alone in illustrating Trump's impulsive foreign-policy approach.

Advice versus intuition

Another example, Duke's Feaver says, is how a Trump tweet threw off the careful diplomacy the administration was beginning to fashion with South Korea for dealing with the North Korea crisis.

"The administration did have a first-order strategy on North Korea that involved reassurance and compellence across the region and included the deployment of THAAD in South Korea," he says, referring

to the anti-missile batteries the US has committed to deploying.

"But then the president sets off a dispute with the South Koreans by way of a tweet that mixed together who would pay what part of the THAAD deployment ... and the unrelated question of renegotiation of the Korean Free Trade Agreement," Feaver says. "The result was that the president dominated the news cycle that day – but everyone else [on the foreign-policy team] is still dealing with the fallout from that one Twitter blast."

What's new, Feaver says, is not that when the president speaks, people listen. Rather, it's that Trump seems to disregard the counsel of his top foreign policy aides in favor of his own intuition.

"Every president has always had a huge megaphone, of one form or another," he says. "What's striking here is the degree to which Trump appears to be his own communications director – and how quickly an idea that occurs to him turns into a tweet, without the normal collaboration across the team to ascertain that it's really what the administration wants to say."

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

U.S. Accuses Iranian Naval Vessel in 'Unsafe' Strait of Hormuz Encounter

Gordon Lubold

3-4 minutes

June 14, 2017 6:28 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON—An Iranian Navy vessel confronted three U.S. ships and pointed a laser at a Marine Corps helicopter over the Strait of Hormuz Wednesday, U.S. military officials said, another in a series of incidents the military considers dangerous and unprofessional.

An Iranian Navy vessel encountered the three American ships traveling through international waters in the Strait of Hormuz on Wednesday, U.S. military officials said. The Iranian boat shined a spotlight on two of the ships, the USS Bataan, an amphibious assault ship, and the guided-missile destroyer the USS Cole, said Cmdr. Bill Urban, a spokesman for the U.S. Fifth Fleet in Bahrain, in a statement.

The dry cargo ship the USNS Washington Chambers also was part of the formation of American ships. The Iranian vessel came to within about 800 yards of the small flotilla, Cmdr. Urban said.

More worrisome, he said, was the use of a laser that members of the crew of the Iranian vessel pointed at a Marine Corps helicopter accompanying the ship formation in the area.

"Naval Forces Central Command assesses this interaction as unsafe and unprofessional due to the Iranian vessel shining a laser on one of the formation's helicopters," Cmdr. Urban said in the statement. "Illuminating helicopters with lasers at night is dangerous as it creates a navigational hazard that can impair vision and can be disorienting to pilots using night vision goggles."

U.S. military officials frequently report such kinds of harassment from small Iranian vessels, some from the Republican Guard. The

ship in Wednesday's incident is a 127-foot Houdong missile boat, according to a U.S. official. The ship was armed, but the weaponry aboard was covered up, according to the official.

A spokesman for Iran's office at the United Nations didn't immediately respond to questions.

There were 35 incidents considered unsafe or unprofessional during 2016, according to military officials. Most were incidents on the water, while some were considered threatening to aircraft, said one of the officials. So far this year, there have been fewer such incidents, but it is not clear what has contributed to the decline, according to the official.

On Capitol Hill, Sen. Bob Corker (R., Tenn.) spoke Wednesday on Capitol Hill in support of a bill he wrote to hold Iran accountable to its actions, according to a statement released by the lawmaker's office.

The Countering Iran's Destabilizing Activities Act of 2017, a bipartisan bill expected to pass this week, Mr. Corker's office said, would expand sanctions for Iranian ballistic missile development, the country's support for terrorism, the transfer of conventional weapons to or from Iran and human-rights violations.

"We see destabilizing act after destabilizing act," Mr. Corker said in a statement, "from missile launches, to arms transfers to terrorist training to illicit financial activities to targeting Navy ships and detaining American citizens—the list goes on and on."

Write to Gordon Lubold at Gordon.Lubold@wsj.com

Appeared in the June 15, 2017, print edition as 'Iran Navy Vessel Confronts U.S. Ships, Helicopter.'

The New York Times

U.S.-Led Airstrikes in Syria Killed Hundreds of Civilians, U.N. Panel Says

Nick Cumming-Bruce

5-6 minutes

GENEVA — Airstrikes by the American-led coalition against Islamic State targets have killed hundreds of civilians around Raqqa, the militant group's last Syrian stronghold, and left 160,000 people displaced, a United Nations panel said on Wednesday.

The findings of the panel, which has been documenting the war in Syria with periodic reports almost since the conflict began more than six years ago, reinforced fears by humanitarian groups over the heavy loss of civilian life that would result from the American-led coalition's airstrikes.

Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, the Brazilian diplomat who leads the panel, said the airstrikes had escalated as an American-backed militia known as the Syrian Democratic Forces moved recently to retake Raqqa, which Islamic State fighters seized in 2014 and made their de facto capital.

"We note in particular that the intensification of airstrikes, which have paved the ground for an S.D.F. advance in Raqqa, has resulted not only in staggering loss of civilian life, but has also led to 160,000 civilians fleeing their homes," Mr. Pinheiro said in a report, presented to the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva.

It was the first time Mr. Pinheiro's panel had focused on American military conduct that has led to heavy civilian casualties and other suffering.

The panel's investigators found that 300 civilians had been killed in the airstrikes since March 21, panel member Karen Abuzayd told reporters in Geneva later. They included 200 civilians killed in a single incident in March when an airstrike hit a school in the town of Mansoura, she said.

The attack on Mansoura, shortly after midnight on March 21, hit a school building housing families that had fled the fighting around Palmyra and other towns, investigators said. Initial reports said up to 40 people had died in the bombing, but rescue workers and other witnesses interviewed by the panel said that as operations to clear the rubble progressed the death toll had climbed to around 200. The United States military has said it is aware of the reports of higher casualty figures in Mansoura and is investigating.

The Mansoura attack came on a day that the American-led coalition conducted 19 airstrikes on targets in the vicinity of Raqqa and a week after 49 people reportedly died when coalition aircraft struck the village of Al Jinah in western Aleppo

Province. In that strike, residents said coalition aircraft had hit a mosque but American officials said they had hit a meeting of Al Qaeda operatives, producing satellite images which showed the mosque was still standing.

The recapture of Raqqa would be a significant step in the drive to eliminate the Islamic State's hold on Syrian territory, and in the wider battle between President Bashar al-Assad's government, backed by Russia and Iran, and rebel forces supported by the United States and Arab regional powers to decide the future of Syria.

Mr. Pinheiro's panel, officially known as the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, has been chronicling evidence of war crimes and other atrocities in exhaustive detail.

Success in purging Raqqa of the Islamic State, also known as ISIS or ISIL, would free thousands of civilians from the group's rule, Mr. Pinheiro said, including women from Iraq's Yazidi minority who have been held as sex slaves for almost three years. But "the imperative to fight terrorism must not, however, be undertaken at the expense of civilians who unwillingly find themselves living in areas where ISIL is present," Mr. Pinheiro said.

Its report echoed deepening fears among humanitarian agencies over the toll in civilian lives exacted by American and coalition forces in the campaign to eliminate the Islamic State in both Iraq and Syria.

Airwars, a nonprofit group monitoring reports of civilian deaths in Iraq and Syria, has estimated that at least 3,100 civilians were killed in coalition airstrikes since the onset of the war against Islamic State in August 2014 up to March 2017, more than eight times the 352 civilian casualties acknowledged by the United States military.

The number of civilians killed in coalition attacks has raised questions among human rights organizations over whether the greater autonomy the Trump administration has allowed military commanders on the battlefield has diverted attention from protection of civilians. Those concerns were further underscored by reports last week that coalition forces attacking Islamic State positions around Raqqa had used munitions containing white phosphorus, a weapon banned in populated areas under international law. United States officials said last week that the weapons were not being used against people.



Dozens of Islamic State militants in suicide vests launch major Mosul counterattack

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

6-7 minutes

IRBIL, Iraq — Dozens of Islamic State militants wearing suicide vests penetrated Iraqi police lines in Mosul on Wednesday, officers said, setting fire to houses to obscure the area from U.S.-led airstrikes in a large-scale counterattack that sent terrified residents fleeing.

Starting around 3 a.m., the militants launched seven car bombs at the front lines south of the Old City, their last foothold, a federal police colonel said. Simultaneously, 25 fighters wearing suicide vests attacked police from behind their lines. Another police commander put the number of suicide attackers at 50.

The militants had sneaked down the Tigris River and attacked with the assistance of "sleepers cells," which provided vehicles for them, according to the police colonel, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the situation.

"They attacked our forces from behind while they were fighting against the car bombs," he said, adding that the militants were lashing out in their "dying breath."

After eight months of battle, Islamic State fighters have been penned into the narrow streets and alleyways of Mosul's historic city center, as well as a small area around a hospital just to the north.

Iraqi and U.S. military officials estimate that up to 1,000 fighters may remain in the area of just over a square mile. Trapped in their former stronghold, they apparently see little choice but to fight to the death.

[Mosul battles converge on last Islamic State stronghold]

The colonel said the militants took over areas of the Dawasa and Dendan neighborhoods, setting fire to houses to protect themselves from airstrikes by the U.S.-led coalition. Photographs of the city showed thick clouds of black smoke hanging in the air.

Police forces managed to retake most of those areas by midmorning,

while suffering casualties, he said, without giving a figure.

In a statement circulated online, the Islamic State claimed to have killed 40 in the attack, including a colonel, and destroyed eight vehicles. The Associated Press said 11 police officers and four civilians died.

Saeed Hassan, 41, said his family was eating a pre-dawn meal before their daily fast during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan in their home in Dendan when they heard a large explosion.

As the explosions grew louder and closer, the family realized that the militants had entered the neighborhood and hid under the stairs. Hassan's house is next to a police base, and he said officers were fighting from his doorstep and the roof of the house next door.

After an hour of clashes, the militants reached his mosque, and police forces decided to retreat. Hassan had been providing food for their forces, and he feared he would be killed by the militants if he stayed.

"When I heard them yelling, 'Let's retreat,' I told them, 'I'm going to start my car and go with you,'" he said. "It was a very scary scene outside — dark and fire around us."

He followed the police Humvees as they withdrew to the airport, on the edge of the city. He said that seeing them rush to their vehicles and withdraw gave him "flashbacks" to 2014, when security forces abandoned the city to Islamic State militants with little fight.

According to neighbors hiding in their houses, police forces have not returned to the streets, and it was unclear whether the militants have withdrawn, Hassan said. He said he will not return home until the Islamic State has been expelled from all of western Mosul.

Today's WorldView

What's most important from where the world meets Washington

Brig. Gen. Faris Radhi, director of the operations room at the federal police headquarters south of Mosul, said the Islamic State attack involved 50 suicide bombers, but he

denied that his forces had lost ground.

"Clashes are ongoing," he said. Iraqi forces and the U.S.-led coalition are "hunting them one by one," he said. "The enemy has used

the last card in this attack, which means this is the best they can do."

Col. Ryan Dillon, a spokesman for the U.S. military in Baghdad, said the coalition was supporting Iraqi forces to fight off the counterattack. "No ground has been

lost," he said. Iraq's Joint Operations Command confirmed that Islamic State fighters infiltrated at dawn along the river. Police forces "surrounded the area" and have begun clearing it, a statement said.

The federal police commander, Lt. Gen. Raed Shaker Jawdat, further played down the incident. He described it as a "tactical operation" by police forces aimed at drawing militants out of the Old City and into the secured area of Dendan so that they could be killed.

**The
New York
Times**

Saudi Arabia Tries to Ease Concerns Over Civilian Deaths in Yemen

Eric Schmitt
5-6 minutes

But senior American officials who have worked closely with the Saudis in recent years to help them improve targeting procedures said that while the additional training was important, it would be effective only if Defense and State Department officials monitor the program closely.

"This training package sets an important precedent to focus on preventing civilian casualties," said Larry L. Lewis, a former senior official at the State Department who visited Saudi Arabia five times in 2015 and 2016 to help the country's air force improve its targeting procedures and investigations. "But the follow-through is critical. Those things are necessary but not sufficient to help them solve their problems."

Saudi Arabia has faced mounting international pressure to find a face-saving way to justify a two-year campaign in Yemen that has damaged its image abroad as military errors have exposed shortcomings in the Saudi armed forces.

In addition to the thousands of people who have been killed, many Yemenis have been pushed toward famine while extremist groups like Al Qaeda and the Islamic State

have taken advantage of the chaos to step up their operations in the country.

In October, the coalition bombed a funeral reception in Sana, the capital, killing more than 100 people. The coalition later said the attack had been based on false information. That debacle prompted the Obama administration to block a transfer of precision munitions to the kingdom because of concerns about civilian casualties that administration officials attributed to poor targeting.

The Trump administration reversed that decision, arguing that the Saudis needed the precision-guided munitions to help avoid hitting civilians. The Saudis finalized a long-discussed training package and gave Mr. Tillerson the assurances he needed to help defend the sale on Capitol Hill.

Indeed, some supporters of the sale cited the training and assurances from the Saudis.

"I am aware of the concerns with Saudi Arabia's engagement in Yemen, including in operations that have led to civilian casualties," said Senator Mark Warner of Virginia, one of five Democrats to join most Republicans in Tuesday's 53-47 Senate vote supporting the sale. "I share these concerns and believe that the Saudis have a responsibility to conduct their operations carefully

— including engaging with the U.S. on increased training."

This training for the Royal Saudi Air Force and other Saudi forces, which American officials said has started, includes subjects like human rights, flight training and how to avoid civilian casualties.

In addition, Mr. Jubeir promised in his letter, which was viewed by The New York Times, that Saudi Arabia would adhere to the international Law of Armed Conflict and expand the list of targets in Yemen that are off-limits to airstrikes to about 33,000.

Two senior American officials said that in many Saudi strikes supporting troops under fire and targeting so-called pop-up targets, or militants on the move, Saudi military planners were not regularly consulting the no-strike list, which includes sites like mosques and marketplaces.

The Saudis also agreed to observe stricter rules of engagement and consider in their targeting procedures specific estimates about potential harm to civilians and civilian buildings — a practice not fully integrated in the Saudi-led air campaign, American officials said.

Finally, the Saudis will allow American military advisers to sit in the Saudi air operations control center in Riyadh; previously, a tiny American military team was

permitted to operate only from another office to coordinate the limited American logistical assistance to the campaign.

"We feel we have truly reset the relationship as a result of his visit," Timothy A. Lenderking, a deputy assistant secretary of state focusing on the region, said in an interview.

Congressional opponents of the arms sales strongly disagreed. In a speech on the Senate floor before Tuesday's vote, Senator Chuck Schumer of New York, the Democratic leader, said Riyadh's support for Wahhabism, a strict Muslim sect that adheres closely to the Quran, was responsible for much of the radicalization of Muslim youths in the Middle East.

"Furthermore, the administration has not sufficiently ensured the Congress that these weapons won't fall into the wrong hands," Mr. Schumer said.

Human rights and humanitarian groups also criticized the sale — with the conditions — as ignoring even larger problems looming over Yemen.

"The steps that Saudi Arabia has reportedly agreed to take are irrelevant because they will not keep seven million people in Yemen from tipping into famine or stem the tide of cholera," said Scott Paul, the senior humanitarian policy adviser for Oxfam America.

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL**

Islamic State Sinks Its Teeth Into the Philippines

James Hookway
6-7 minutes

June 14, 2017 5:30 a.m. ET

The signs are mounting that the Philippines is now a primary target for Islamic State.

The southern reaches of the mostly Roman Catholic country have long been home to Muslim insurgents seeking to carve out an independent state. Until now, counterterrorism officials and experts have largely viewed local declarations of loyalty to Islamic State founder Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi

as little more than pleas for attention. That is changing.

One of the newest insurgent groups shocked the country three weeks ago by marching into Marawi City and waving black Islamic State flags; they are still holding around 20% of the town along with hundreds of hostages. The standoff with the Philippine military so far has claimed the lives of at least 58 security forces, nearly 200 rebels, and dozens of civilians.

Since the May 23 attack, Islamic State has taken a stronger interest in the Philippines, profiling some of the militants in its propaganda magazine Rumiya and falsely claiming responsibility for the

burning of a Manila casino that left 37 people dead; police say it was in fact a botched robbery by a heavily indebted gambler.

On Sunday, Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte said "it appears that al-Baghdadi himself, the leader of ISIS, has specifically ordered terrorist activities here in the Philippines." Mr. Duterte didn't say how he knew about Mr. Baghdadi's instructions.

Islamic State's spokesman, in an audio recording circulated on Tuesday, appeared to single out the Philippines for further attacks and praised the assault on Marawi.

The battle for Marawi is being waged by one of the region's most

powerful militias, and its aftermath could determine whether Islamic State can lay down a marker in the Philippines.

Some intelligence officials now worry that the Philippines' growing profile in jihadist circles could bring more foreign fighters to its shores as Islamic State loses ground in Syria and Iraq. Amid the losses in the Middle East, Islamic State has said it was behind an array of attacks around the world, in a bid to sustain its power.

Governments across Southeast Asia and Australia already are watching the Philippines with concern as militants from Indonesia, Malaysia, Yemen and Saudi Arabia

join the fight. The U.S. is getting involved: U.S. Special Operations Forces are providing support for the Philippine military in Marawi.

The danger, said an intelligence official in the Philippines, is that "the southern Philippines is becoming a cause célèbre again."

The potential for recruiting the Philippines' Muslim minority, whose lands were gradually taken over by waves of settlers under Spanish then American colonizers, has long drawn the interest of foreign jihadists.

Osama bin Laden was in regular contact with the late Muslim separatist leader Hashim Salamat, while the architect of the September 11 attacks on the U.S., Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, planned an attempt on the life of Pope John Paul II in Manila in the 1990s and railed against the U.S.'s support for the Philippine government in a letter to then-President Barack Obama in 2015 from detention at Guantanamo Bay.

The Philippines' porous borders and lax immigration

control also make it an attractive destination for foreign extremists, according to Sidney Jones, a terrorism expert at the Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict in Jakarta. Fighters are also attracted, in part, because some of the combatants have extensive networks, Ms. Jones said.

"They're really quite sophisticated and have a lot of resources to draw on, and that's attractive," she said.

The Islamic State's emir in the Philippines is Isnlon Hapilon, a 51-year-old commander with the Abu Sayyaf terrorist group, which was seeded in the 1990s with help from al Qaeda. He swore loyalty to Islamic State in 2014, and since then has built an alliance with the Maute family, an aristocratic landowning clan who are able to command hundreds of followers.

Ms. Jones said the Mautes are likely the brains behind the Marawi operation, particularly 37-year-old Omarkhayam Maute.

Once the captain of the school baseball team in Marawi City, Omar, as he is known, studied

Islam in Egypt and later married the daughter of an influential conservative cleric in Indonesia and has strong ties there. Indonesian armed forces chief Gen. Gatot Nurmantyo told reporters Monday that there were Islamic State sleeper cells in nearly every province of the country.

Omar returned to the southern Philippines where he and his brother Abdullah Maute took the reins of the family's local militia. The militia had been used to help settle local political scores, but in 2015, the brothers publicly aligned it with Islamic State.

Their ultimate goal, senior Philippine officials said, was to take control of Marawi, the Philippines' largest Muslim-majority city.

Militants had initially planned to take over two or three towns in all, according to foreign-affairs secretary Allan Peter Cayetano, and declare a province of the Islamic State caliphate among the rugged mountains and forests around Lake Lanao on the island of Mindanao.

Armed forces chief Gen. Eduardo Año said the military caught a break when soldiers inadvertently interrupted the planning for the operation by raiding a safe house in Marawi where they believed Mr. Hapilon was holed up. That forced the Maute group to take up arms prematurely to help him escape.

"They were not able to fully deploy all their forces," Gen. Año told reporters.

Military officials said they are trying to determine whether the Maute brothers are among several guerrillas killed in a battle with troops on Saturday. Their parents have been arrested as troops continue trying to clear militants from Marawi.

Mr. Duterte has already declared martial law in the area. "I did not expect it to be that bad," he said.

Write to James Hookway at james.hookway@wsj.com

The New York Times Editorial Board

3-4 minutes

Soldiers in Marawi City, Philippines, in May. Jes Aznar/Getty Images

While President Rodrigo Duterte of the Philippines was bragging about his brutal war on drugs, the Islamic State was consolidating its sway over Islamist rebel groups on the island of Mindanao. The extent to which ISIS has succeeded is now alarmingly evident, as a pitched battle between Philippine troops and Islamist militants for control of the largely Muslim city of Marawi enters its fourth week.

With the presence of foreign fighters, including Malaysians and Indonesians, who are working alongside militant leaders with strong ties to

Editorial : How ISIS Grew in the Philippines

ISIS, Mr. Duterte has a serious problem on his hands that threatens the security of the entire region.

The news on Wednesday that, in addition to American military advisers and intelligence assistance, United States troops are now on the ground in Marawi raises the stakes. Mr. Duterte, who has threatened to eject American forces from his country, said Sunday that he was unaware of the presence of military assistance in Marawi. In fact, the Pentagon has no permanent presence in the Philippines, but for years has kept 50 to 100 Special Forces troops in the south of the country on rotational exercises. Despite Mr. Duterte's hostility to America, his army has close ties to the Pentagon, values its help against the extremists and has resisted Mr. Duterte's efforts to expel the Americans.

Mr. Duterte's braggadocio is partly to blame for the escalation of the conflict. Last year, he rejected a cease-fire offer from the Maute group, which is leading the fight in Marawi. He said in December that when the group pledged to "go down upon Marawi to burn the place," he responded, "Go ahead, do it." The battle raging now began when Maute militants, who have joined forces with the Abu Sayyaf Islamist group, strongly resisted an attempt on May 23 by Philippine security forces to capture Isnlon Hapilon, Abu Sayyaf's leader. Mr. Hapilon is on the F.B.I.'s list of most-wanted terrorists.

The Philippine military is pummeling Marawi with daily bombing runs, presumably with targeting assistance from Americans. More than 200 people have been killed and some 2,000 civilians are believed to be trapped.

President Trump has supported Mr. Duterte, including his use of extrajudicial killings to fight the drug trade, and he has intensified the fight against ISIS in Syria and Iraq. But strongman tactics — like Mr. Duterte's recent threat to declare martial law over the entire country — and a widening military show of brute force aided by the United States will not address the fundamental problems that have fueled militant movements on Mindanao since the 1970s: grinding poverty; lawless zones, where criminal gangs reign; and overcrowded prisons, which are a boon to Islamist recruiters.

The most urgent need now is to ratchet down the fight in Marawi and press Mr. Duterte to restart negotiations with militant groups.



Trump Isn't Being a CEO. He's Just AWOL.

Paul McLeary | 1 hour ago

7-9 minutes

Presidents often say that the hardest thing they have to do, and their most sacred responsibility, is to decide to send troops into harm's way. Presidential candidate Donald Trump declared two months before the 2016 U.S. election that this is

"the most difficult decision you can possibly ever make" and that "there is no greater burden that anybody could have." Apparently, the decision is so difficult and burdensome that President Trump has now opted to avoid it altogether.

On Tuesday it was widely reported that Trump had given Secretary of Defense James Mattis the power to determine U.S. force levels in Afghanistan. This revelation comes

after reports in April that the Defense Department had been similarly authorized to determine force levels in Iraq and Syria. During that time — and to further hide the reality of war from Americans — the Trump administration inexplicably stopped disclosing major conventional troop deployments to Iraq and Syria, a practice generally upheld by the past three presidents. Today, the U.S. military each quarter reveals

the number of Pentagon contractors (including those who are U.S. citizens) in Iraq but, absurdly, not the number of actual service members.

This latest transfer of commander-in-chief-like powers from the White House to the Pentagon is unprecedented for such a consequential decision, and it establishes a dismal model for the remainder of the Trump presidency

and for future presidents as well. Trump is not simply further delegating authority in line with his boasts of giving military commanders "total authorization." Rather, the president is dispersing his own responsibility to an extremely popular and colorful retired Marine general. The buck for war and peace no longer stops in the White House Oval Office but in the Pentagon E-Ring.

It cannot be overstated how abnormal this new White House-Pentagon dynamic is.

It cannot be overstated how abnormal this new White House-Pentagon dynamic is. This is not merely a change in the rules of engagement, as in 1986, when Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger altered the rules of engagement for the 5th Fleet to allow it to use force against any Iranian ships laying naval mines in the Persian Gulf. In that case, the updated rules of engagement adhered to broad strategic guidance that had been promulgated by the White House, so President Ronald Reagan's lower-level input was unneeded.

Nor is this a tactical decision that defense secretaries are routinely empowered to authorize, like the early 2005 special operations "snatch and grab" raid into Pakistan against al Qaeda senior officer Ayman al-Zawahiri that Donald Rumsfeld personally decided to call off at the last moment. Here, it was impractical for President George W. Bush to be intimately involved overseeing such a small and time-sensitive decision.

A change in the strategy and campaign plan for America's longest war, however, is a far more geopolitically significant situation, which until now has been understood to require a formal presidential decision. Trump's decision to dodge accountability is especially wrong given Mattis's own publicly stated discomfort with America's basic strategy in Afghanistan in ways that are beyond his capacity to alter. On Monday night, during a House Armed Services Committee hearing, he declared, "I think we've got to do things differently, sir. And it has got to be looked at as across-the-board whole of government, not just military efforts," adding, "We have got to come up with a more regional strategy." The State Department and U.S. Agency for International Development could theoretically help round out such a strategy, but they are intentionally understaffed at present and not under the Pentagon's authority in the first place. With Trump washing his hands of the expanded military mission, who will be helping Mattis achieve his strategic vision? What's clear is that, on his own, he won't be able to establish new interagency points of contact within the U.S. government or task U.S. diplomats with establishing greater regional cooperation where there has been little for the previous decade and a half.

In that period, nearly 2,350 U.S. troops have been killed while serving in the Afghanistan war; the grim yearly total of civilian casualties (most of whom were killed by the Taliban) has increased from 7,120 (in 2010) to 11,418 (in

2016); and the number of jihadi groups has grown exponentially, all while the Taliban have expanded their control and influence over more territory than at any other point since 9/11.

President Trump alone, and not his secretary of defense whom he calls "general," should make a public speech that addresses both why all previous military efforts have failed to achieve their intended objectives and why the subsequent courses of action will be any different. If a few more thousand troops — joining the 9,000 already in country (plus some 25,000 military contractors, 9,522 of whom are U.S. citizens) — are going to make a meaningful and enduring difference, Americans deserve to hear how this will plausibly happen.

On Tuesday, Secretary Mattis acknowledged before the Senate Armed Services Committee that Congress could expect to hear in detail about a new Afghanistan strategy by mid-July. He also declared, "We are not winning in Afghanistan, right now, and we will correct this as soon as possible," a step beyond the February pronouncement of Gen. John Nicholson, the commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan, that the war was at a "stalemate." When Sen. Roger Wicker asked Mattis to define what winning looks like, the Pentagon chief offered a meandering reply: "The Afghan government with international help will be able to handle the violence" and "drive it down" to some acceptable threshold. He also promised "an era of frequent skirmishing, and it's going to require

a change in our approach from the last several years."

Those are not clear objectives but amorphous aspirations. Like previous senior civilian and military officials, Mattis did not offer metrics that could be measured, evaluated, and falsified — the only basis on which to evaluate policy. Yet he has vowed to somehow do things differently, without offering any indication precisely what that would consist of, besides an indefinite presence of U.S. forces. To quote retired Marine Corps Commandant P.X. Kelly, "The mission of presence — that's not a military mission. You will never find it in a military dictionary."

As a presidential candidate, Trump declared: "I will never send our finest into battle unless necessary, and I mean absolutely necessary, and will only do so if we have a plan for victory with a capital V." Now, as president, he will allow his stand-in commander in chief to likely send a few thousand more of our finest into Afghanistan without a clear strategy or defined objectives. Given that Mattis is such a careful and thoughtful scholar of civil-military relations, it is puzzling why he would endorse and participate in such an extraordinary relationship with President Trump. There has been nothing like this in the 70 years since the defense secretary position was established. The best we can hope for is that James Mattis addresses this honestly in a memoir someday.

Photo credit: JONATHAN ERNST/Pool/Getty Images



Lake: Trump's Afghan Push: More Troops, No Plan

by Eli Lake
@EliLake More

stories by Eli Lake

6-8 minutes

War

The president campaigned against nation-building. But he hasn't decided what to do instead.

15 juin 2017 à 06:00 UTC-4

The Afghan military relies on U.S. support.

Photographer: Hoshang Hashimi/AFP/Getty Images

Usually when a president agrees to send more troops to a war zone, it's part of a broader strategy. George W. Bush approved the surge of forces to Iraq as part of a population-centric counterinsurgency war plan. Barack Obama did the same in his first year

when it came to Afghanistan, though he eventually regretted the decision, and spent most of his presidency trying to end that war.

For Donald Trump it's different. On Tuesday, he agreed in principle to send more troops to Afghanistan, but he has yet to agree to the broader strategy for winning America's longest war.

That strategy is still technically in development, but its broad outlines -- an increase in special operations forces to train, advise and assist Afghan forces; a more robust plan to go after elements in Pakistan that aid the Taliban; the deployment of more air power and artillery; and a political commitment to the survival of the current government in Kabul - have been in place since April.

Indeed, National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster has been pressing the case for the strategy with cabinet secretaries and the

president. Initially he had hoped to get the president to agree to the strategy before last month's NATO summit.

Nonetheless, Trump has yet to sign off on it. Administration officials tell me he has been wary of getting sucked into a quagmire. Other cabinet members, like Attorney General Jeff Sessions, are wary of making a long-term commitment to the government in Afghanistan, given the track record of the last two American administrations in navigating such relationships. Trump conveyed these concerns to the national security cabinet as recently as Monday.

In a meeting of the National Security Council, according to two administration officials, Trump declined to make a decision to lift the so-called force management levels, the caps on U.S. forces in Afghanistan set by Obama. Today there are approximately 8,500 U.S.

forces in the country, along with many contractors who provide logistical support for U.S. war fighters.

On Tuesday Trump relented. In a meeting in the Oval Office with McMaster, Secretary of Defense James Mattis and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, Trump agreed to lift the caps on troop levels in Afghanistan and allow Mattis to determine how many forces to send to the war there.

The New York Times first reported the policy decision, and Mattis confirmed this on Wednesday.

In the private meeting with the president on Tuesday, according to administration officials, Mattis, McMaster and Tillerson made the case that U.S. commanders needed flexibility to send more forces to Afghanistan now in order to prevent a disaster. The Afghan government has been slowly losing the fight with

the Taliban since 2015. More recently, U.S. military leaders have testified before Congress that the U.S. is losing the war. The dire situation was brought home over the weekend when the Taliban claimed credit for infiltrating an Afghan unit and killing three U.S. soldiers in Nangarhar province.

Clear thinking from leading voices in business, economics, politics, foreign affairs, culture, and more.

Share the View

It's also important because U.S. officials tell me that removing the limits on U.S. forces in Afghanistan was the key



The Editorial Board, USA TODAY

4-5 minutes

President Trump and Defense Secretary James Mattis. (Photo: Pablo Martinez Monsivais, AP)

Defense Secretary James Mattis offered a disturbing assessment Tuesday of U.S. involvement in Afghanistan, its longest running war. "We have entered a strategy-free time," he told Congress, sobering words given the 8,400 U.S. troops at risk there and Mattis' further acknowledgement that the U.S. and its Afghan and coalition allies are "not winning."

Mattis said a fully formed strategy should be ready by mid-July, and every indication is that it will involve adding at least a few thousand more U.S. troops. Under any other administration, this would be the commander in chief's decision to make. But President Trump has given Mattis authority on troop levels.

Whether that is a wise delegation of authority, or merely setting up

stumbling block for the president to accept the broader regional strategy and war plan for Afghanistan. While no number for a troop increase has been agreed, the fact that Trump has accepted that he will be sending more U.S. forces to the country represents a change for the president, who campaigned against nation-building.

That strategy is expected to be ready for the president's decision sometime next month. Mattis said as much on Tuesday at a hearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee.

a retired four-star general to take the fall should the new strategy fail, is debatable. But there's no question that 16 years after the 9/11 attacks were plotted in Afghanistan, the war is a stalemate teetering toward loss.

A gruesome illustration occurred on May 31, when a sewage tanker-truck filled with explosives was detonated outside a diplomatic compound in Kabul, killing 90 and leaving hundreds wounded.

In the absence of a focused and coherent strategy, coupled with a determination to carry it through without an artificial withdrawal deadline, the Trump administration might just as well cut American losses, save tens of billions of dollars per year and pull out.

OPPOSING VIEW

To do that, however, would put national security at risk by allowing Afghanistan to again become a launching pad for attacks by Islamist extremists. There is a long, arduous way forward in Afghanistan that offers the last best chance of salvaging success, or at least stability.

Some lawmakers are growing impatient. On Tuesday, Senator John McCain, the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, told Mattis: "It makes it hard for us to support you when we don't have a strategy. We know what the strategy was for the last eight years -- don't lose. That hasn't worked."

Mattis replied that a strategy was being put together now, and that "there are actions being taken to make certain we don't pay a price for the delay." He added, "We recognize the need for urgency, and your criticism is fair, sir."

Military leaders have discussed some of the outlines. It would mean adding 3,000 to 5,000 more U.S. troops as trainers and advisers. They'd filter down into Afghan security forces to assist with combat operations and logistical support, and help regain the initiative against the Taliban. The message must be clear: America is steadfast in its resolve and open-ended in its commitment, much like the longstanding U.S. engagement in South Korea.

This would have a twofold effect. It would admonish the largest insurgent group, the deposed Taliban leadership based across the border in Quetta, Pakistan, that it can no longer wait out a U.S. withdrawal and cannot win.

The strategy would also require negotiating with neighboring countries and the more moderate, regionally oriented elements of the Taliban, along with significant anti-corruption reform by Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, who would have to demonstrate measurable success in improving the courts and government services. Afghanistan scores nearly at rock bottom on Transparency

What Mattis didn't say is why McCain has yet to see Trump's Afghanistan strategy: because Trump hasn't agreed to the one his top advisers prepared more than two months ago.

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

To contact the author of this story: Eli Lake at elake1@bloomberg.net

To contact the editor responsible for this story: Philip Gray at philipgray@bloomberg.net

Editorial : In Afghanistan, Trump has no easy choices

The Editorial Board, USA TODAY

a retired four-star general to take the fall should the new strategy fail, is debatable. But there's no question that 16 years after the 9/11 attacks were plotted in Afghanistan, the war is a stalemate teetering toward loss.

A gruesome illustration occurred on May 31, when a sewage tanker-truck filled with explosives was detonated outside a diplomatic compound in Kabul, killing 90 and leaving hundreds wounded.

In the absence of a focused and coherent strategy, coupled with a determination to carry it through without an artificial withdrawal deadline, the Trump administration might just as well cut American losses, save tens of billions of dollars per year and pull out.

OPPOSING VIEW

To do that, however, would put national security at risk by allowing Afghanistan to again become a launching pad for attacks by Islamist extremists. There is a long, arduous way forward in Afghanistan that offers the last best chance of salvaging success, or at least stability.

Military leaders have discussed some of the outlines. It would mean adding 3,000 to 5,000 more U.S. troops as trainers and advisers. They'd filter down into Afghan security forces to assist with combat operations and logistical support, and help regain the initiative against the Taliban. The message must be clear: America is steadfast in its resolve and open-ended in its commitment, much like the longstanding U.S. engagement in South Korea.

This would have a twofold effect. It would admonish the largest insurgent group, the deposed Taliban leadership based across the border in Quetta, Pakistan, that it can no longer wait out a U.S. withdrawal and cannot win.

The strategy would also require negotiating with neighboring countries and the more moderate, regionally oriented elements of the Taliban, along with significant anti-corruption reform by Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, who would have to demonstrate measurable success in improving the courts and government services. Afghanistan scores nearly at rock bottom on Transparency

International's worldwide corruption scale, though it has demonstrated improvement in recent years.

Afghanistan forces the Trump administration to choose between conflicting goals: fighting international terrorism abroad and focusing on nation-building at home. Intelligence agencies are convinced that al-Qaeda, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, and a rogue's gallery of deadly others would flourish under a Taliban regime. That's a risk the U.S. can't afford.

USA TODAY's editorial opinions are decided by its Editorial Board, separate from the news staff. Most editorials are coupled with an opposing view — a unique USA TODAY feature.

To read more editorials, go to the Opinion front page or sign up for the daily Opinion email newsletter. To respond to this editorial, submit a comment to letters@usatoday.com.

Read or Share this story: <https://usat.ly/2spQQmq>



Felicia Schwartz

5-6 minutes

Updated June 14, 2017 4:08 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON—Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said the U.S. would support efforts by Russia and Ukraine to resolve a yearslong conflict outside of an internationally backed agreement signed by both countries, the implementation of which has long been a U.S.

condition for lifting sanctions against Moscow.

Mr. Tillerson made his comments on Wednesday in testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee. They appeared to mark a departure from longstanding U.S. policy and a potential break from other world powers, including Germany and France, which brokered and have supported the cease-fire and peace accords reached in Minsk, Belarus, in 2014 and 2015.

"I think it's important we be given sufficient flexibility to achieve the Minsk objectives," Mr. Tillerson said, adding, "It's possible that the government of Ukraine and the government of Russia could come to a satisfactory resolution through some structure other than Minsk, but would achieve the objectives of Minsk, which we're committed to."

The Minsk agreements call for local elections in Ukraine's breakaway Donbas region, the withdrawal of foreign-armed troops, and returning

the border with Russia to Ukrainian control, among other points.

Pursuing an agreement outside the Minsk accords could allow the two sides to go back to the drawing board and negotiate a pact acceptable to both, possibly without meeting benchmarks set in Minsk. It isn't clear if such efforts are already under way.

Mr. Tillerson has said—including in an April phone call with Ukraine's president Petro Poroshenko—that the U.S. would maintain sanctions against Russia until the Minsk

agreements are fully implemented. Washington and European allies have long been united in that demand.

Mr. Tillerson most recently reiterated that position to Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in a May 10 meeting in Washington, according to an account of the meeting by State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert.

"On Ukraine, Secretary Tillerson stressed the need for progress toward full implementation of the Minsk agreements. Sanctions on Russia will remain in place until Moscow reverses the actions that triggered them," Ms. Nauert said then.

A day later, after meeting separately with Mr. Lavrov and Ukraine's foreign minister, Pavlo Klimkin, President Donald Trump called for the parties to make peace, casting

the U.S. as something of a neutral arbiter. The Obama administration had presented the U.S. as an advocate for Ukraine's sovereignty and demanded that Russia cease its occupation of Crimea and its support for armed rebels in eastern Ukraine.

U.S. and European officials often have voiced dismay over the absence of progress on implementing the specific points of the Minsk accords. But Mr. Tillerson's comments Wednesday were the first time the U.S. has suggested the possibility of brokering an entirely new peace deal.

Supporters of the accords say they at least managed to largely freeze the conflict and keep Ukraine's borders in place. Any move that appears to scrap it could risk a return to full-scale violence, they say.

"The danger is political—it's clear that none of us are satisfied with the degree to which Minsk has been implemented, but we have been consistent now for nearly three years in holding all the signatories to Minsk accountable for implementing it," said Daniel Baer, who was the U.S. ambassador to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe during the Obama administration. "We want to be very careful about giving up one tool especially if we don't have another in place."

Meanwhile, the Senate on Wednesday approved tougher Russia sanctions that also would require the president to seek congressional permission to relax any part of the current sanctions regime on Russia.

Mr. Tillerson told members of the House committee the administration needs flexibility to "turn up the heat

when we need to, but also to insure that we have the ability to maintain a constructive dialogue."

He said he worried about tying U.S. sanctions to Minsk, as the Trump and Obama administrations have said they would.

"My caution is I wouldn't want to have ourselves handcuffed to Minsk if it turns out the parties decide to settle this through another, a different agreement," Mr. Tillerson said.

—Paul Sonne contributed to this article.

Write to Felicia Schwartz at Felicia.Schwartz@wsj.com

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Senate Votes to Move Ahead on Additional Sanctions Against Russia

Byron Tau

4-5 minutes

Updated June 14, 2017 5:45 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON—The Senate on Wednesday overwhelmingly backed a package of additional sanctions on Russia, in part to punish Moscow for alleged interference in the 2016 elections.

The package would impose new restrictions on Russian actors linked to human-rights abuses, arms sales to the Syrian government or malicious cyberattacks on behalf of the Russian government. It also would require President Donald Trump to seek congressional permission to relax the current regime of sanctions against Russia, possibly limiting his leeway to improve relations between Washington and Moscow.

The 97-2 vote by the GOP-led Senate came as a rebuke to a Republican president's policy on

Russia, limiting his power to act on sanctions without congressional approval. Mr. Trump repeatedly has said he would like to pursue better relations with Russia after years of frosty relations and geopolitical rivalry over issues in the Middle East, Europe and beyond.

The White House hasn't said whether Mr. Trump would sign a bill that contains new Russia sanctions and limits his power to act. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson told the House Foreign Affairs Committee before the Senate vote that while he agrees Russia should be held accountable for interfering in the 2016 elections, he wanted to ensure that legislation gives the executive branch room to maneuver.

"I would urge Congress to ensure any legislation allows the president to have the flexibility to adjust sanctions to meet the needs of what is always an evolving diplomatic situation," Mr. Tillerson said. "Essentially, we would ask for the flexibility to turn the heat up when we need to, but also to ensure that

we have the ability to maintain a constructive dialogue."

The Senate vote was on a procedural motion to attach the Russian sanctions provisions to a larger package of Iran sanctions that also has bipartisan support. The final Senate vote on the overall bill is expected in the coming days. The House of Representatives also must pass the measure for it to become law. Officials at the Russian embassy in Washington didn't immediately respond to questions.

The bipartisan group of senators who negotiated the deal said the aggressive sanctions came in response to Russian military aggression in Ukraine and Syria as well as ongoing attempts to interfere in Western democratic elections.

"Today, the Senate has finally confronted Russia for interfering in our elections," said Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, a New Hampshire Democrat who helped negotiate the sanctions package. "This bipartisan amendment is the sanctions regime

that the Kremlin deserves for its actions."

Sean C. Kane, counsel at Hughes, Hubbard and Reed and the former deputy assistant director for policy at the U.S. Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control, said the legislation shows how Congress is trying to assert more control over the codification of U.S. sanctions.

He said that is particularly the case when it comes to Russia sanctions due to concern in both parties of Congress that the administration hasn't taken a hard enough stand on Russia in the wake of Moscow's alleged interference in the 2016 presidential campaign.

Mr. Kane said it is far from certain that the White House would accept such limits on its flexibility to apply or lift sanctions. "I think any administration would be reluctant to give up their flexibility in that regard," Mr. Kane said.

Write to Byron Tau at byron.tau@wsj.com

The Washington Post

Editorial : Thousands of Russians prove they're fed up with Putin's authoritarianism

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

4-5 minutes

The Post's View

Opinion

Opinion A column or article in the Opinions section (in print, this is known as the Editorial Pages).

By Editorial Board

The Post's View

Opinion

Opinion A column or article in the Opinions section (in print, this is known as the Editorial Pages).

June 14 at 7:29 PM

PROTESTS IN Russia on Monday confirmed a trend that was seen in demonstrations in March — the appearance of a large number of angry young people, including teenagers. Most of them have grown up in a Russia ruled by only one person, President Vladimir Putin, and his placeholder pal, Dmitry Medvedev, who have

together been in power 17 years. The youthful demonstrators said they were fed up with the stagnant authoritarianism that Mr. Putin has come to represent. Nikita Orlov, 18, told the New York Times, "I came here because we have no democracy, our Parliament is not real, our politicians are not real and our mass media is not real."

Mr. Putin likes to paint a picture of stability. He has squeezed out all serious competition to his rule and is frequently presented to the public as the embodiment of the Russian state and a leader of unchallenged popularity.

That is precisely why the demonstrations matter. Thousands turned out in Moscow, St. Petersburg and dozens of other Russian cities, summoned to the streets by the anti-corruption blogger Alexei Navalny, who was promptly detained and sentenced to 30 days in jail. More than 1,000 people were also arrested in Moscow and St. Petersburg. While many came out to support Mr. Navalny's campaign against corruption, in Moscow they were also protesting the city's demolition of old apartment blocks, among other things. The crowds are a reminder that, despite Mr. Putin's

authoritarianism, some Russians want a more democratic and open system and are willing to stand up for their beliefs.

Post Most newsletter

Most popular stories, in your inbox daily.

Mr. Putin has little use for democracy anywhere — either at home or abroad. In his mind, the West has long interfered in Russia's affairs by preaching the values of freedom and liberty. He appears to have relished a chance at payback in 2016 through interference with the U.S. election. Of course, he is wrong: In Russia, the West sought to support best practices of democracy and institution-building, not put a thumb on the scale.

Multiple investigations are already probing Mr. Putin's meddling, including the attempt to harm Hillary

Clinton's campaign through malicious hacking. This week, Bloomberg News reported that Russia's cyberattack on the U.S. electoral system "was far more widespread than has been publicly revealed" and included probes into voter databases and software systems in nearly twice as many states as was previously reported.

President Barack Obama imposed sanctions on Russia in December in response to the electoral intrusions, and a bipartisan group of senators are pressing ahead with new legislation that would give Congress a stronger hand in keeping sanctions in place and would expand them. Sanctions are in general a crude instrument, but this legislation, which the Senate voted Wednesday to advance, promises to send a message to Mr. Putin that such interference in the U.S. election is intolerable. It could also

deter the Trump administration from lifting sanctions too quickly or in the absence of reciprocal concessions by Moscow.

If Mr. Putin is really so sure about his popularity, he should release Mr. Navalny from prison and permit a free and open presidential campaign leading up to the scheduled vote in 2018 in which Mr. Navalny is allowed to run. Russians shouldn't have to risk arrest and worse in the streets in order to support a political change.

The Daily 202 newsletter

PowerPost's must-read morning briefing for decision-makers.

Success! Check your inbox for details.

Please enter a valid email address

See all newsletters

The New York Times

Turkish Guards Will Be Charged in Embassy Protest, Officials Say

Nicholas Fandos
5-6 minutes

expected to release details on Thursday.

ambassador's residence in Washington.

American citizens who had gathered to greet the president and who responded in self-defense. The statement did not mention the security forces.

WASHINGTON — Law enforcement officials plan to announce charges Thursday against a dozen members of the Turkish president's security detail for their involvement in a brutal attack on protesters outside the Turkish ambassador's residence here last month, two American officials said on Wednesday.

Coming almost a month after the episode, the charges are the most significant retaliatory step taken to date by American authorities, who have fumed privately and publicly over what they see as a highly offensive attack on free speech — not to mention American law enforcement.

By VOA TURKISH on June 14, 2017. Photo by VOA Turkish.

The run-in was not the first time Mr. Erdogan's bodyguards have become violent while visiting the United States. In 2011, they took part in a fight at the United Nations that sent at least one security officer to the hospital. And last year, the police and members of Mr. Erdogan's security team clashed with demonstrators outside the Brookings Institution in Washington.

The authorities have already charged several others, including two Americans and two Canadians, with taking part in the violent skirmish.

Lawmakers from both parties on Capitol Hill, as well as a smattering of advocacy groups, have clamored that those responsible for the assault be prosecuted. Last week, the House unanimously passed a resolution condemning the attack and calling for charges against the security forces.

And then there was the added wrinkle that the entire security detail for President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey had left the country with him just hours after the attack. Members of the security team face several felony and misdemeanor counts, the American officials said.

But the latest case, which played out in broad daylight along Washington's genteel Embassy Row, has brought a much higher level of attention. Videos that were streamed live from the scene (and later spread across social media) showed armed guards storming a small group of peaceful, anti-Erdogan protesters in plain sight of federal and local law enforcement officers.

The Washington police have been investigating the May 16 attack along with the State Department and the Secret Service. The police planned to announce the charges at a news conference on Thursday morning, according to the two officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the charges before they were made public.

One of those lawmakers, Representative Edward R. Royce, the chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, welcomed news of the charges, urging the State Department on Wednesday to "double down" on its efforts to "bring these individuals to justice."

It is highly unlikely that Turkey would extradite the men to the United States to face the charges, but they do face the possibility of arrest should they ever try to re-enter the country.

A chaotic and bloody scene followed in which the guards, the protesters, pro-Erdogan civilians and American law enforcement tangled on the street and in a nearby park. Nine people were hospitalized, some with serious injuries.

Washington police officials confirmed that the two Americans are Sinan Narin, of Virginia, and Eyup Yildirim, of New Jersey. Mr. Narin was charged with felony and misdemeanor assault. Mr. Yildirim, who can be seen on video repeatedly kicking a protester, was charged with two felony counts and one misdemeanor assault count. The two did not immediately return calls on Wednesday requesting comment.

In calibrating its response, though, the Trump administration has had to tread carefully, navigating a web of diplomatic and military concerns with a key NATO ally. The episode appears to have already stalled a proposed \$1.2 million small-arms sale to Turkish security forces that was moving toward approval by the State Department last month.

The State Department said in a statement on Wednesday that it would weigh additional action against those who have been charged, "as appropriate under relevant laws and regulations."

Sinan Narin Kicks Protester

Sinan Narin, a Virginia resident, was charged with felony assault in connection with a brawl on May 16 outside the Turkish ambassador's residence in Washington.

June 14, 2017.

"Any further steps will be responsive and proportional to the charges," the department said.

The police declined to comment on others facing charges, but were

Eyup Yildirim Kicks Protesters

Eyup Yildirim, a New Jersey resident, was charged with felony assault in connection with a brawl on May 16 outside the Turkish

The Turkish Embassy here did not immediately respond to requests for comment. In a statement in the days after the attack, the embassy said that anti-Erdogan protesters had caused the violence by "aggressively provoking" Turkish-

parked a few yards away. His role in the clash, if any, is unclear.

Diplomatic security officers protecting the delegation also temporarily detained two members

of the Turkish forces who had assaulted them, before it was

determined that the guards had diplomatic status and were freed.

The
Washington
Post

Trump set to unveil new Cuba policy after promising to reverse Obama's 'bad deal'

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

7-9 minutes

As President Trump's national security team worked over the past several weeks on a promised new Cuba policy designed to roll back the Obama administration's diplomatic and economic openings to the island, a steady stream of lawmakers, business leaders and Cuba experts rushed to offer guidance to the White House.

With few exceptions, their advice was: Don't do it.

Farm state Republicans have appealed to Trump to help them expand Cuban markets rather than close them. A newly introduced Senate bill to lift remaining travel restrictions has attracted 54 co-sponsors, including 10 Republicans. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce and National Association of Manufacturers have called for expanding relations with the island. Major travel and agricultural companies and associations have publicly warned that a reversal would cost American jobs.

U.S. and international human rights organizations, while condemning ongoing Cuban government repression, say that tightening the screws will only bolster government hard-liners, putting even more pressure on the island's nascent civil society and private sector.

The Commerce and Treasury departments, which administer many Cuba regulations regarding travel and commercial activity, have explained the difficulty of a rollback after two years of business expansion and contracts. Trump's agriculture secretary, Sonny Perdue, told Congress last month he favored opening U.S. credit markets for Cuban agricultural imports, barred by U.S. law.

On Friday, Trump plans to travel to Miami to announce a decision that senior administration officials said as recently as Wednesday had not yet been finalized. According to the Miami Herald, his speech will be delivered at the Manuel Artime Theater in Little Havana, a highly symbolic venue named after a leader of the Bay of Pigs exile invasion of Cuba in 1961, a failed U.S.-backed attempt to overthrow

the revolutionary government of Fidel Castro.

Trump's rhetoric will probably be "very, very tough," said Mark Feierstein, the senior director for Western Hemisphere affairs in former president Barack Obama's National Security Council, who helped negotiate the December 2014 Obama opening that Trump has called a "bad deal."

But the administration's changes are likely to leave in place the basic components of the Obama opening — diplomatic relations, along with conditioned trade and travel — while tightening each in ways that will complicate but not undo them, according to senior administration officials and several people who have lobbied them from Capitol Hill and the U.S. business community, all of whom spoke on condition of anonymity about the emerging policy.

The U.S. Embassy in Havana is expected to remain open but will continue without an ambassador. Existing restrictions on business dealings with the Cuban government, and especially its economically powerful military, will be made more legally explicit, and at least some planned expansions of commercial activity will be frozen.

Some restrictions on American travel may be reimposed, along with limits on how often Cuban Americans can travel and send money.

"We are supportive of continued economic development, as long as it is done in full compliance with our existing statutes not to provide financial support to the regime," Secretary of State Rex Tillerson told Congress on Tuesday.

"The general approach," Tillerson said, "is to allow as much of this continued commercial and engagement activity to go on as possible, because we do see the sunny side" of "benefits to the Cuban people."

The main supporters of an extensive reversal have been Cuban Americans in Congress, led by Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), and Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart (R-Fla.), both of whom are expected to be with Trump in Miami. Rubio, a onetime presidential candidate who clashed repeatedly with Trump during the campaign, was

noticeably helpful to the White House during last week's Senate Intelligence Committee testimony by former FBI director James B. Comey.

After a long line of questions about Trump's private conversations with Comey, Rubio quickly changed the subject to the problem of leaks to the media.

In an interview this week with TV Martí, the U.S. government-funded broadcaster to Cuba, Diaz-Balart said he was sure Trump would announce "a real change" in relations. The Cuban government headed by Raúl Castro, the late Castro's brother, he said, "is a narco-terrorist tyranny, and we know President Trump understands this."

The government in Havana has remained quiet about the possible changes, although a high-ranking Cuban official told CNN this week that Raúl Castro is willing to negotiate a new deal with Trump.

At the core of the Cuba policy debate is a clash over the most effective way to hasten a transition to democracy on the island.

Obama argued that five decades of U.S. trade sanctions had failed to achieve that goal or dislodge the Castros from power. By normalizing relations and facilitating trade and travel between Americans and Cubans, he asserted, the United States would spread democratic ideals on the island, while American diplomats could nudge the government toward greater openness in a post-Castro era.

The results have been uneven. Cuba's authoritarian one-party system remains largely unchanged, and dissidents say government repression has increased over the past two years.

Jose Daniel Ferrer, leader of the Patriotic Union of Cuba (UNPACU), the island's largest dissident group, called this month in a letter to Trump for "maximum reversal of some policies that only benefit the Castro regime."

But supporters of engagement say it's unrealistic to expect liberal democracy to bloom in just two years, especially with the larger U.S. trade embargo still in force. The strategy needs more time, they argue, and policymakers should

trust in the power of markets and free information to deliver desired change.

Cuban authorities have acceded to some American conditions, including allowing a dramatic expansion of Internet access on the island that has shattered the information monopoly once enjoyed by Cuba's state-run media.

An increase in tourism and hotel construction has been one of the few bright spots in the Cuban economy. The number of U.S. visitors who are non-Cuban American increased by 74 percent in 2016, facilitated by the restoration of commercial flights between the two countries. Among more than 4 million visitors last year, a record, 615,000 came from the United States, more than half of them Cuban Americans.

More than a quarter of the Cuban labor force no longer works for the communist government, from software programmers to nail salon owners, private taxi drivers and restaurant owners. Those Cubans would take a direct hit from a policy reversal.

Checkpoint newsletter

Military, defense and security at home and abroad.

"More than half my customers are Americans . . . the best tippers," said Dionys Diaz, 33, waiting for tourists outside Havana's iconic Hotel Nacional in a pink 1954 Chevy convertible.

Diaz and his relatives — including a brother-in-law in Florida — had pooled their money to buy the vehicle and restore it, and he charges tourists \$25 for rides along the Malecon esplanade.

Any reversal of the opening could backfire politically, said Carlos Alzugaray, a retired Cuban diplomat in Havana, who favors U.S. engagement. "The hard-liners are going to have a field day."

A major rollback, he said, "would take us back to the idea that if you punish the Cuban people, they will overthrow the government, and that's not going to happen."

Miroff reported from Havana.

Sabatini : Trump's Imminent Cuba Problem

Christopher Sabatini

6-7 minutes

Tyler Comrie

Soon — maybe as early as Friday — President Donald Trump, with Senator Marco Rubio of Florida, is expected to announce a presidential initiative that will roll back the Obama-era efforts that loosened the 56-year-old United States embargo on Cuba. How far will the president go?

More important than the actual content of the executive changes, though, will be how the United States Congress, businesses and other interested groups react to Mr. Trump's reversal of policies that, according to Pew Research Center, 75 percent of Americans support.

Key, too, will be the reaction of the Cuban government. For the past half-century, the gerontocratic Cuban regime has survived because the embargo has not just isolated the Cuban people from their closest neighbor of more than 300 million — including close to two million fellow Cubans — but also provided a convenient excuse for the regime's economic failure.

Despite the assertions of its advocates, the embargo's harshness has never correlated with improvements in human rights. The worst crackdown in modern Cuban history was in April 2003, when the Cuban government rounded up 75

human rights activists and independent journalists and sentenced them to an average of 20 years in prison. That was precisely when the embargo was at its tightest, under George W. Bush's administration, when even Cuban-Americans were restricted in how often they could travel to the island to visit relatives or send them money. (Most political prisoners were released in 2010-11 through a deal brokered by the Vatican.)

What the United States lacked then but has now is leverage. Since President Barack Obama announced the first in a series of dramatic reforms on Dec. 17, 2014, to normalize relations, the United States and Cuba have collaborated on fighting narcotics trafficking and money laundering, cooperated on improving port and airport security, and managed to secure visits from officials like the United Nations special rapporteur on human trafficking.

The changes have also helped generate jobs and income for the United States economy. Since President Obama loosened restrictions on travel, tourism has boomed. Last year, an estimated four million visitors went to the island, including more than 600,000 from the United States — a 34 percent increase from 2015. Those trips have helped fuel the hospitality industry on both sides of the Florida Straits, with Delta, American, JetBlue and others flying to at least six Cuban cities daily and Carnival cruise lines taking American citizens

to port in Havana. Airbnb also now lists hundreds of privately owned houses where open-minded Americans can stay and interact with locals, and last week it said its connections have helped place \$40 million in the pockets of Cuban owners of private bed-and-breakfasts. All told, the group Engage Cuba estimates (in a report that I took part in) that restricting the rights of United States citizens to travel and invest in Cuba would cost the American economy \$6.6 billion and affect 12,295 American jobs.

The Castro government gains monetary benefit from the increased flow of tourism to the island, but it has resisted the opening that comes with it. It no longer incarcerates political prisoners at the same rate as it did before. Instead, its new tactic is temporarily detaining activists. But the dam has broken. When I was in Cuba last year, the differences in people's willingness to speak out, the growing prosperity of a new class of independent entrepreneurs and — as the Committee to Protect Journalists has also reported — the growth of new space for independent, investigative online journalism was undeniable compared with the situation four years earlier. It's for this reason that international human rights advocates support loosening the embargo.

Before heading to Miami, President Trump will need to weigh his options carefully. He wasn't elected by a small sliver of the Cuban-American population in Florida, and

his actions would allow the government in Havana to use the rollback as an excuse to stay stuck in the Cold War.

Yes, the embargo remains law, and Mr. Trump can wipe away the Obama-era changes with a stroke of the pen. But Congress isn't powerless in this. Last month, a bipartisan group of 55 senators signed an act to end restrictions on United States travel to Cuba. Should Mr. Trump dramatically roll back the initiatives, the universities that have enjoyed the academic freedom of exchange, businesses and their workers, and the millions of citizens who have traveled to the island and connected with Cuban communities need to speak up. They need to demand that existing policy serves America's long-term interests and promotes the values of openness and confidence in freedom and change — and thus ultimately serves human rights.

The Cuban government will need to avoid overreacting to the overheated rhetoric and denunciations that will accompany the changes. But it is not likely to be able to resist. If history is any measure, the Cuban government will respond by taking advantage of the newfound antagonism — as it did in 2003 — by clamping down on the pockets of independence and information that have taken seed in the past four years. After all, what autocrat can resist being a victim and blaming outsiders for political and economic failures?

ETATS-UNIS

GOP Lawmakers Targeted in Ballfield Shooting Spree (UNE)

Peter Nicholas, Kristina Peterson and Gordon Lubold

9-11 minutes

Updated June 14, 2017 11:59 p.m. ET

ALEXANDRIA, Va.—A gunman with a history of criticizing President Donald Trump and GOP policies opened fire on Republican congressmen gathered at a baseball practice Wednesday morning, shooting four people in an attack that stunned the capital and prompted both parties to set aside partisan differences.

Rep. Steve Scalise of Louisiana, who is the House majority whip, was shot once in the left hip and was in critical condition after multiple surgical procedures, a Washington hospital said. A congressional aide, a lobbyist and a Capitol Police officer were also shot, officials said. Another Capitol Police officer and another congressman sustained minor injuries during the ambush.

Officials identified the suspected gunman as James T. Hodgkinson, a 66-year-old home inspector who had run-ins with neighbors in an Illinois suburb of St. Louis. Mr. Hodgkinson, who had one handgun and one rifle, was killed by police,

FBI Special Agent in Charge Timothy Slater said.

While the officials didn't ascribe a motive, letters and online posts in Mr. Hodgkinson's name were critical of the Republican president. Mr. Hodgkinson was taken to a hospital and died from multiple gunshot wounds to his torso, Mr. Slater said.

The extent of Mr. Scalise's wound only became apparent late Wednesday, when MedStar Washington Hospital Center said in a statement that the bullet caused extensive internal damage and that he had undergone two surgical procedures and was expected to undergo more.

The shooting, which pierced a quiet suburban neighborhood outside Washington just after 7 a.m., was the first time in more than 60 years that multiple U.S. lawmakers had been targeted in the same attack. It came six years after the attempted assassination of then-Rep. Gabrielle Giffords (D., Ariz.), an attack that left six dead and 13 wounded, including two congressional aides. Ms. Giffords was shot in the head and survived.

In the wake of the shooting, leaders from both parties called for unity and the calming of Washington's tense partisanship.

House Speaker Paul Ryan (R., Wis.) declared from the House floor that "an attack on one of us is an

attack on all of us.” Rep. Nancy Pelosi of California, the House Democratic leader, told members: “We are not one caucus or the other in this House today.”

At the White House, Mr. Trump said, “We may have our differences, but we do well in times like these to remember that everyone who serves in our nation’s capital is here because, above all, they love our country.”

Later in the evening, Mr. Trump, first lady Melania Trump and the White House physician traveled to the hospital, where they met with Mr. Scalise’s wife and medical team. White House physician Ronny Jackson, who had also cared for Mr. Trump’s predecessor, Barack Obama, earlier visited the hospital to learn about Mr. Scalise’s condition, the White House said.

Mr. Trump sent a tweet after leaving, saying that Mr. Scalise was “in very tough shape -- but he is a fighter. Pray for Steve!”

It was a more sober message than his assurance earlier Wednesday on Twitter that Mr. Scalise “would fully recover.”

Witnesses described seeing a gunman with a rifle open fire near the third-base dugout at Eugene Simpson Stadium Park in Alexandria. Dozens of shots rang out as about 22 lawmakers practiced batting and fielding and local residents walked their dogs in the muggy heat.

The Republican team was being guarded by officers with the Capitol Police on a detail protecting Mr. Scalise, 51. Police immediately opened fire on the gunman, police and witnesses said.

Mr. Scalise was shot as he stood by second base, and he dragged himself into the outfield in a bid to reach safety, witnesses said.

Sen. Rand Paul (R., Ky.), who was in the batting cage at the time of the shootings, said he heard a single shot followed rapidly by a string of

about 10 shots. He said he then heard more rounds of gunfire.

“I probably heard 50, 60 shots,” Mr. Paul said on MSNBC. “Everybody probably would have died except for the fact that the Capitol Police was there,” which was only due to Mr. Scalise’s presence, he said.

The lawmakers and aides had been practicing for Thursday evening’s annual charity congressional baseball game, to be held at the home of Major League Baseball’s Washington Nationals. The game, a bipartisan social event, is intensely competitive. Republicans have been practicing each morning since April, eager to build on last year’s win over the Democratic team, which snapped a yearslong losing streak for the GOP.

Mr. Ryan told lawmakers in a briefing Wednesday that the game would go on as scheduled, drawing a standing ovation, lawmakers said. Mr. Trump wants to attend to support the lawmakers, White House press secretary Sean Spicer said, but won’t because “he has been advised that there is not enough time to follow Secret Service protocols.”

Also wounded were Zach Barth, a staff member of Rep. Roger Williams (R., Texas), Mr. Williams’s office said, and Matt Mika, a lobbyist for Tyson Foods Inc., the company said. Mr. Williams, a former professional ballplayer, has been a coach of the GOP baseball team since 2013; he injured his ankle during the chaos.

Mr. Barth was released from the hospital on Wednesday afternoon, Mr. Williams said.

Capitol Police Special Agent Crystal Griner was shot in the ankle, while the department’s Special Agent David Bailey sustained an unspecified injury during the attack. Ms. Griner was also being treated at MedStar Washington Hospital Center, the White House said, and the president met with her and her wife there when he visited Mr. Scalise.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation was taking the lead on the investigation because it involves a member of Congress, police said. The FBI said it had found no indication the shooting had links to international terrorism.

Mr. Slater said Mr. Hodgkinson left his Illinois home and had been in Alexandria since March. He had been living out of his car, a white cargo van, on East Monroe Avenue, near the baseball field where the shooting took place, he said. Mr. Hodgkinson didn’t appear to have a job, he said.

On a Facebook page that appeared to belong to Mr. Hodgkinson, he wrote on March 22 that “Trump is a Traitor. Trump has destroyed our democracy. It’s time to destroy Trump & Co.”

On the same day, he signed a petition calling for the “legal removal” of the president and vice president.

He also appears to have written several letters to the Belleville News-Democrat, his hometown newspaper, according to an article on the paper’s website.

One neighbor in Belleville, Ill., said Mr. Hodgkinson had recently been taking target practice in his yard. He had a valid firearms identification card, according to the police report.

In another incident, more than a decade ago, a neighbor called police after Mr. Hodgkinson allegedly broke into her house and damaged property.

Rep. Jeff Duncan (R., S.C.) said in an interview that he and Rep. Ron DeSantis (R., Fla.) left practice early and were stopped by a man asking if the team practicing was the Republicans or Democrats.

“I said ‘Republicans’ and he said ‘thanks’ and walked off,” Mr. Duncan said. He said he believed the man was the shooter.

The Alexandria police contacted Mr. Duncan and asked him to give a statement about the interaction.

The shooting took place in a quiet part of Alexandria known as Del Ray, considered by residents to be a Mayberry-like community with small bungalows, restaurants and bike shops, where people know one another by name.

Holly Jackson, who lives in Alexandria, was in the dog park next to the baseball field when the shooting took place. She and others in the dog park got down on the ground and dogs “started running around, terrified.”

“They were playing baseball. I was like, ‘Wow, some guy just hit a really hard shot.’ And then I was like, ‘That is not a baseball,’” she said. “And then several more rang out. People started scattering.”

After the shooting, members of the Republican baseball team returned to the Capitol on a bus sent by the Capitol Police. Many roamed the building still in practice gear, giving interviews and consoling their colleagues. Rubbing his arm, which he injured diving into the dugout to take cover from gunfire, Rep. Chuck Fleischmann (R., Tenn.) said he was in shock after the incident.

Mr. Scalise has been the Republicans’ House whip since June 2014. He succeeded Rep. Kevin McCarthy in that role when Mr. McCarthy was elevated to House majority leader following the surprising primary defeat of then-Rep. Eric Cantor of Virginia.

—Louise Radnofsky, Del Quentin Wilber, Douglas Belkin, Shibani Mahtani and Natalie Andrews contributed to this article.

Write to Peter Nicholas at peter.nicholas@wsj.com, Kristina Peterson at kristina.peterson@wsj.com and Gordon Lubold at Gordon.Lubold@wsj.com

Appeared in the June 15, 2017, print edition as ‘GOP Lawmakers Targeted In Ballfield Shooting Spree.’



Steve Scalise Among 4 Shot at Baseball Field; Suspect Is Dead (UNE)

Michael D. Shear, Adam Trump and Senator Bernie Sanders made statements.

Goldman and Emily Cochrane

By BARBARA MARCOLINI, MALACHY BROWNE and SARAH STEIN KERR on June 14, 2017. Photo by Al Drago/The New York Times. Watch in Times Video »

The Virginia Shooting: The Scene and Reaction

Witnesses describe the scene of the shooting that injured Representative Steve Scalise and others Wednesday morning. President

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — A lone gunman who was said to be distraught over President Trump’s election opened fire on members of the Republican congressional baseball team at a practice field in

this Washington suburb on Wednesday, using a rifle to shower the field with bullets that struck four people, including Steve Scalise, the majority whip of the House of Representatives.

Mr. Trump, in a televised statement from the White House, condemned the “very, very brutal assault” and said the gunman had died after a shootout with the police. Law enforcement authorities identified him as James T. Hodgkinson, 66,

from Belleville, Ill., a suburb of St. Louis.

Two members of Mr. Scalise’s Capitol Police security detail were wounded as they exchanged fire with the gunman in what lawmakers described as several chaotic, terror-filled minutes that turned the baseball practice into an early-morning nightmare. One was wounded by gunfire, and one suffered other, minor injuries.

The tragedy united Republicans and Democrats in shock and anguish. "For all the noise and all the fury, we are one family," Speaker Paul D. Ryan said Wednesday afternoon.

Mr. Bishop said the gunman had seemed to be firing a series of two shots at a time, a firearms technique known as "double-tapping," sending off bullets that kicked up the gravel on the baseball field as they struck the ground. "There was so much gunfire, you couldn't get up and run," Mr. Bishop said. "Pop, pop, pop, pop — it's a sound I'll never forget."

Senator Rand Paul of Kentucky, who was among the lawmakers practicing for the annual charity baseball game, which is still scheduled to take place on Thursday, told CNN that "the field was basically a killing field — it's really sick and very sad."

Representative Jeff Duncan of South Carolina, who left the practice just before the shooting, said afterward that he had encountered a man in the parking lot — later identified as the gunman — who "asked me if the team practicing was a Democrat or a Republican team."

"I told him they were Republicans," the lawmaker recalled. "He said, 'O.K., thanks,' turned around."

'He was hunting us at that point. There was so much gunfire, you couldn't get up and run.'

Congressman Mike Bishop of Michigan

The shooting stunned the capital as it began its workday. Out of caution, Capitol Police officials said they quickly put in place a "robust police presence throughout the Capitol complex," and the Secret Service added security around the White House.

Mr. Ryan addressed his colleagues in the House chamber shortly after noon. "We do not shed our humanity when we enter this chamber," Mr. Ryan said, his voice seeming to nearly break at times.

As the magnitude of the episode became apparent, House leaders canceled the day's votes, and Mr. Trump and Vice President Mike Pence canceled speeches.

"We may have our differences, but we do well in times like these to remember that everyone who

serves in our nation's capital is here because, above all, they love our country," Mr. Trump said at the White House shortly after the shooting.

James T. Hodgkinson via Associated Press

Mr. Hodgkinson seemed to be a fervent opponent of Mr. Trump. He signed an online petition calling for the president to be impeached, posting it on Facebook with a chilling comment: "It's time to destroy Trump & co."

His brother, Michael Hodgkinson, said Mr. Hodgkinson traveled in recent weeks to Washington to protest. "I know he wasn't happy with the way things were going, the election results and stuff," Mr. Hodgkinson said in an interview shortly after he received the news on Wednesday. He said that he had not been close to his brother and that he had not been aware of why he remained in Washington.

The F.B.I. said it appeared that Mr. Hodgkinson arrived in the area in March and had been living out of a white van near the field.

Mr. Hodgkinson also appeared to have been a fervent fan of Senator Bernie Sanders, according to a Facebook page with references to the Vermont senator. A LinkedIn page for James Hodgkinson had a profile photo showing Mr. Sanders's famous hair and glasses and the words, "The Dawn of a New Democracy."

'Our lives were saved by Capitol Police. Had they not been there, I think it would have been a massacre.'

Senator Rand Paul of Kentucky

In a statement Wednesday morning, Mr. Sanders said he had been told the suspect had volunteered for his presidential campaign. He offered his "hopes and prayers" for the shooting victims.

"I am sickened by this despicable act," Mr. Sanders said. "Let me be as clear as I can be. Violence of any kind is unacceptable in our society, and I condemn this action in the strongest possible terms. Real change can only come about through nonviolent action."

Others who were wounded included Zachary Barth, a member of Representative Roger Williams's staff, who was struck in the leg by a bullet, and Matt Mika, a former congressional staff member and the

director of government relations for the Washington office of Tyson Foods, who was shot twice in the chest.

He was in serious condition. Mr. Barth was treated at a hospital and later released.

Two of those who suffered injuries were Capitol Police officers assigned to protect Mr. Scalise, the third-ranking member of the House Republican leadership team. Officials identified the two officers as Crystal Griner and David Bailey, both 32. Officials said Ms. Griner was shot in the ankle, while Mr. Bailey suffered other minor injuries and was treated and released.

Mr. Williams, of Texas, praised the two officers as "heroes," saying that their split-second decision to confront the gunman saved many lives.

"We saw two people risk their lives to save others; we saw courage in the face of death," Mr. Williams said in a news conference Wednesday evening. "There could have easily been 25 deaths or more today."

Members of the baseball team began arriving early Wednesday morning at Eugene Simpson Stadium Park, which is nestled among a neighborhood dog park, the local Y.M.C.A., a coffee shop and a grocery store.

It was the last practice before the big game on Thursday — a friendly, partisan competition that has been played to raise money for charity during most years since 1909.

By 7:09 a.m., when the first shots rang out, several dozen lawmakers, members of their staffs and a handful of others — many wearing red shirts with "Republicans" on the front — had been practicing hitting, pitching and catching for more than a half-hour.

Then bedlam erupted.

With the sound of loud bangs, one after another, people dived for cover, crouching down by the concrete wall of the dugout. Marty Lavor, an Alexandria-based photographer and former House staff member, fell on top of a lawmaker as someone shouted: "Stay down, stay down. Get closer to the wall!"

Mr. Lavor later found a bullet hole in his car.

Standing along the first-base sideline, Senator Jeff Flake of

Arizona crouched near the ground and then helped Representative Mo Brooks of Alabama treat Mr. Barth, the congressional aide, who had been shot in the leg while in center field and had managed to stumble into the dugout. Mr. Brooks said he had used his belt as a tourniquet to help stop the bleeding.

"It seemed like it went forever," said Mr. Williams, who injured his foot as he jumped into the dugout.

Standing near second base, Mr. Scalise had nowhere to hide.

Several lawmakers said they saw him go down and then try to pull himself toward the dugout with his hands. Failing to get very far, Mr. Scalise remained in the field while the barrage of bullets continued, according to several lawmakers who said they had been forced to wait until the shooting stopped to reach him.

"If not for the detail who stepped up with basic revolvers, we would've all been dead," Representative Bishop said.

At a second news conference on Wednesday, Mr. Slater, the F.B.I. official, said the gunman was shot multiple times in the torso. It is not clear whether Mr. Hodgkinson was shot by Capitol Police officers or those from the Alexandria Police Department.

"It was a combat situation," said Michael L. Brown, the Alexandria police chief.

When the hail of bullets stopped, Mr. Flake and Mr. Brooks made their way to Mr. Scalise, bringing water for him to drink. Mr. Flake told CNN that he had put pressure on Mr. Scalise's gunshot wound. He said Mr. Scalise never lost consciousness.

The gunshots shattered the quiet morning in the residential neighborhood.

David Miller, 50, was finishing his coffee when he heard the "pop, pop." He thought it was from nearby construction until he opened the door of the building and saw people looking for shelter and heard gunfire. "I started hollering for them to come into the building," he said.

Five or six people came inside, at least two people in baseball uniforms and one with a baseball bat. "They were disheveled," Mr. Miller said, "emotionally shaken, covered in dirt."

<http://www.facebook.com/rachel.elise.weiner>

11-14 minutes

A man angry with President Trump unleashed a barrage of gunfire Wednesday morning at Republican members of Congress as they held a baseball practice at a park in Alexandria, wounding House Majority Whip Steve Scalise and four others in a frenzied scene that included a long gun battle with police.

The gunman, James T. Hodgkinson, a 66-year-old unemployed home inspector from southern Illinois, died after the shootout. Two Capitol Police officers assigned to Scalise's security detail were wounded.

Hodgkinson, who had been living in his van in Alexandria for the past few months, had posted anti-Trump rhetoric on his Facebook page and had written letters to his hometown newspaper blaming Republicans for what he considered an agenda favoring the wealthy.

The shooting, coming amid harsh political rancor and a divided country, reverberated through Washington and beyond, as Trump and members of Congress began talking about unity for the first time since the presidential election.

The targeted lawmakers were practicing for the Congressional Baseball Game, a charity competition against a team of Democrats. The game will be played on Thursday night at Nationals Park as planned.

Several congressmen at the Eugene Simpson Stadium Park in Alexandria praised the officers who engaged Hodgkinson, including two Capitol Police officers who were injured. One lawmaker said the baseball team members would have been sitting ducks had the gunman been able to make it onto the field.

"It would have been a bloodbath," said Rep. Joe Barton (R-Tex.).

Rep. Jack Bergman (R-Mich.), a retired Army general, said, the shooter was kept off the field by a chain-link fence, which was locked. "If he had been able to gain entrance to the field, it would have been a whole different story."

As of Wednesday evening, Scalise (La.) remained in critical condition after undergoing surgery at MedStar Washington Hospital Center, a hospital spokeswoman said. A lobbyist, a congressional aide and a Capitol Police officer also were shot, while a second officer was struck by shrapnel. Rep. Roger

Williams (R-Tex.) injured his ankle while helping others take cover.

[Gunman repeatedly criticized Republican lawmakers for favoring 'super rich']

In a televised statement from the White House, Trump called for people to come together and commended the injured officers.

"Many lives would have been lost if not for the heroic actions of the two Capitol Police officers who took down the gunman despite sustaining gunshot wounds during a very, very brutal assault," he said.

What happened at the GOP baseball shooting, in maps and photos

Trump said he spoke with Scalise's wife and offered his full support to the congressman's family, calling Scalise a friend, patriot and fighter. He also thanked the first responders.

"We may have our differences, but we do well in times like these to remember that everyone who serves in our nation's capital is here because, above all, they love our country," Trump said.

Lawmakers and bystanders described a horrific attack that began shortly after 7 a.m., when the shooter began firing more than 50 rounds from a military-style rifle and a handgun, taking aim through the chain-link fence.

Scalise was felled by a bullet to the hip as he fielded grounders at second base, witnesses said. Then the aide and the lobbyist were struck as the gunman moved methodically around the fence and toward the home-plate backstop. As Scalise crawled across the field, leaving a trail of blood, the gunman advanced toward a dugout, where several people were hiding.

Congressmen said the Capitol Police officers emerged from the dugout, moving toward the gunfire. A woman walking her dog said she heard a female officer scream, "Drop your weapon," before the gunman "shot her and she fell to the ground." House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) said the officers "went out into the fire to draw the fire. The shooter was moving toward the dugout where the members were, and they were able to take him down."

Authorities said five people were taken to hospitals, including Hodgkinson. Matt Mika, a lobbyist for Tyson Foods, was in critical condition at George Washington University Hospital, a spokeswoman said. Zach Barth, a legislative correspondent for Williams, was

shot in the leg and released from the hospital Wednesday afternoon.

The House speaker's office identified the injured Capitol Police officers as Special Agents David Bailey, who was treated and released from a hospital, and Crystal Griner, who was struck in the ankle and hospitalized in good condition. Capitol Police Chief Matthew Verderosa said both are expected to recover fully. Police identified a third officer who participated as Special Agent Henry Cabrera. They did not say which officers fired their weapons.

Alexandria Police Chief Michael Brown said two city officers who arrived at the scene opened fire, joining Capitol Police officers who already were in a gun battle with Hodgkinson.

Scalise's office said in a statement that the congressman was in good spirits and speaking to his wife, Jennifer, by phone before he went in for surgery. Wednesday night, the hospital said Scalise was shot in the left hip and that the bullet fractured bones and struck internal organs. They said Scalise had lost a lot of blood and would need additional surgeries.

He has been in Congress since 2008 and represents a district that includes some New Orleans suburbs and bayou parishes. He and his wife have two children.

[Rep. Steve Scalise and the long, awful history of gunned-down lawmakers]

Verderosa said it "will take a while to sort through all the details" during the investigation, which is now being led by the FBI. Tim Slater, the special agent in charge, said it is "too early to tell whether anyone was targeted. ... It's really raw now."

But focus immediately turned to political statements Hodgkinson had made on social media, interactions he had had with lawmakers, and run-ins he had had with law enforcement officials near his home in Belleville, Ill., a suburb of St. Louis.

Rep. Jeff Duncan (R-S.C.) told reporters that, just before the shooting, he spoke briefly with a man he believes was Hodgkinson and that the man "asked me if the team practicing was a Democrat or Republican team." Duncan added, "I told him they were Republicans. He said, 'Okay, thanks,' and turned around.

"I'm shaken up. My colleagues were targeted today."

Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) said Hodgkinson volunteered on his

2016 Democratic presidential campaign, although an aide said that he had no formal role and that no one could remember him. Sanders denounced the shooting, saying on the Senate floor that he was "sickened by this despicable act."

Hodgkinson had sent letters to his local newspaper in Illinois decrying income inequality, encouraging the government to tax the rich and supporting President Barack Obama, according to the Belleville News-Democrat. "A strong middle class is what a country needs to prosper," he wrote in one of his letters to the editor. "The only thing that has trickled down in the last 30 years came from Mitt Romney's dog."

Police in Belleville reported responding in March to a complaint that Hodgkinson was shooting at the end of his street, firing 50 rounds "in the pine trees." Police said that he had a valid license for the weapon, and that he agreed to stop when they told him to.

Rep. Mike Bost (R-Ill.), who represents the district where Hodgkinson lived, said that Hodgkinson had contacted his office 14 times via email or by telephone and that although he never made threats, "he was always angry."

Stephen Brennwald, a lawyer who lives in Alexandria, said he realized after seeing Hodgkinson's photo on the news that he was the same man who had been hanging out for at least the past several weeks in the lobby of a YMCA adjacent to Simpson field. Brennwald said Hodgkinson would regularly show up first thing in the morning — about the same time the shooting took place — and look at his laptop or stare out the window.

"He never worked out. He never talked to anybody. He never did anything," Brennwald said.

Authorities said Hodgkinson used a rifle and a handgun in the attack. They are investigating whether they were obtained legally.

The shooting started at 7:09 a.m. at the popular park on East Monroe Avenue in the Del Ray neighborhood of Alexandria, near Old Town Alexandria and the Potomac Yard shopping complex on Route 1. The Republican lawmakers were holding their final practice before Thursday night's game, a traditional event designed to bolster goodwill between two sides of the partisan aisle.

Scalise, who plays second base, was accompanied by members of the Capitol Police's executive protection unit because as majority whip, he is the third-highest-ranking

member of the House. His security detail was positioned behind the first base dugout; witnesses said the shooter started on the other side of the diamond.

About 20 people were on the field at the time, many catching fly balls from batting practice, and when the gunfire started, players and onlookers took cover in dugouts, under a sport-utility vehicle or in the open on the ground. Barton, the team manager, said the gunman, dressed in blue jeans and a blue shirt, shot at Scalise at second base and fired toward the third baseman, Rep. Trent Kelly (R-Miss.).

Rep. Mo Brooks (R-Ala.) saw the shooter and described the scene as "bedlam." Brooks had just stepped up to home plate with a bat in his hand when he heard the first two or three shots.

He heard Scalise scream and then

go down.

Brooks said he ran behind the batting cage and watched Scalise drag himself toward the outfield. Brooks lay down in the dirt with two or three others, but then realized that if the shooter moved, "he'd have a clear shot." So he ran to the first base dugout. There, he found Barth, who had been shot in the leg. Brooks said he used his belt as a tourniquet.

He said two officers emerged from the dugout and advanced toward the oncoming bullets.

Sen. Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.), still wearing a red and white baseball shirt with "Republicans" on it, said he recalled seeing the rifle and then hearing shots. He said the gunman was firing "at anybody he could hit. I don't know if anybody was targeted, but I just remember seeing some of the gravel bounce up as gunfire hit."

Katie Fillus of Alexandria had just gotten out of her car to walk her dogs in the park when she said she heard "very, very loud popping sounds." She said, "Everybody started screaming, 'Hit the ground! Hit the ground!'"

Fillus said she lay flat in the field as the gunshots grew louder — "like he was walking across the field toward all of us."

She said she watched an officer yell at the gunman and then get shot.

Local Crime & Safety Alerts

Breaking news about public safety in and around D.C.

"She fell on the ground in front of us," Fillus said. "And I belly crawled, dragging through the mud. I got to the car and I ducked under the car."

Bullet holes were left in windows of the YMCA, and bullets were in the

swimming pool. On Wednesday evening, about 100 people gathered at a church in Del Ray for a community prayer service. Trump, accompanied by first lady Melania Trump, visited the hospital where Scalise and Griner were being treated. Aides carried in flowers.

[The Congressional Baseball Game has been a great bipartisan tradition for 100 years]

Rep. Mike Doyle (D-Pa.) and Barton — managers of the respective teams — said they will still take to the field Thursday night.

"We're united not as Republicans and Democrats but as United States representatives," Barton said. "It will be 'play ball' tomorrow night, 7:05."



Emerging portrait of shooting suspect James T. Hodgkinson: Anti-Trump rhetoric on social media, repeat visits to YMCA near Virginia ballfield

https://www.facebook.com/StateofNOVa/info?tab=page_info

11-13 minutes

For weeks, James T. Hodgkinson sat in the lobby of the YMCA in Alexandria, focused on his laptop and carrying a gym bag, but never working out. His perch looked on to the field where the Republican baseball team had been practicing daily for about two months.

On Wednesday, one of the gym regulars said Hodgkinson was there again at 7 a.m. By 7:09, he had left the building and was firing dozens of rounds at the congressional team, wounding five people before being shot dead by police.

Law enforcement officials are piecing together why Hodgkinson left Belleville, Ill., for Virginia and said it was not clear whether the 66-year-old knew that the GOP team was scheduled to practice Wednesday. But in social media postings, Hodgkinson was highly critical of President Trump and other Republican leaders.

The FBI said Hodgkinson had arrived in Alexandria by March and was living out of a white cargo van.

As late as March 24, he was still in Belleville, where neighbors reported Hodgkinson to the police for firing

50 rounds from a hunting rifle into a stand of trees.

Dale Walsh grew up with James Hodgkinson and was taken by surprise when he found out his friend had opened fire at a Republican congressional baseball team practice in Alexandria, Va. Dale Walsh grew up with James Hodgkinson and was taken by surprise when he found out his friend had opened fire at a Republican congressional baseball team practice in Alexandria, Va. (Video: Erin Patrick O'Connor/Photo: Eric Habert/The Washington Post)

(Erin Patrick O'Connor/The Washington Post)

But by early April, Hodgkinson was seen drinking Budweiser and watching golf at a barbecue joint in the Del Ray neighborhood and sitting most nights on a bench near a Walgreens smoking or reading. At the Y, he had become a fixture who drew notice but not suspicions, appearing friendly to some and as a "sourpuss" or odd to others.

Hodgkinson left a trail of political rants against Republicans and the "super rich," and he had adopted a photo of former presidential candidate Bernie Sanders as his Facebook cover image.

In the suburbs of St. Louis, where Hodgkinson had worked as a home inspector, he was described as

politically angry and personally reserved. Over the past decade, he had periodic outbursts involving neighbors, and a daughter, that caused people to call in the police.

Hodgkinson was quick to share his political views online and in letters to his local newspaper. A Facebook page believed to be his features pictures of Sanders and anti-Trump rhetoric, including a recent post that reads: "Trump is a Traitor. Trump Has Destroyed Our Democracy. It's Time to Destroy Trump & Co."

The Republican lawmaker who represented Hodgkinson's home town said the man was "always angry" about the GOP agenda but "never crossed the line" in more than a dozen emails or phone calls to his office.

"Every issue that we were working on, he was not in support of," Rep. Mike Bost (R-Ill.) said, noting that the communications were liberal-leaning but delivered "never with any threats, only anger."

Dale Walsh, a friend of Hodgkinson's, said Wednesday that Hodgkinson was passionate about his beliefs but always appeared to be "in control." Hodgkinson was "pretty well fed up" with the political situation, Walsh said, but the shooting was a shock.

House Majority Whip Steve Scalise and four others were shot by a gunman in Alexandria, Va., on June

14 while finishing baseball practice for a charity game. House Majority Whip Steve Scalise and four others were shot by a gunman in Alexandria, Va., on June 14 while finishing baseball practice for a charity game. (Gillian Brockell/The Washington Post)

(Gillian Brockell/The Washington Post)

"I guess I just want to let people know that he's not evil," Walsh said outside Hodgkinson's home in Belleville. "I guess he was tired of some of the politics going on. Like in this state, we have politicians collecting a check and doing absolutely nothing for us."

Charles Orear, 50, a restaurant manager from St. Louis, became friendly with Hodgkinson during their work together in Iowa on Sanders's 2016 campaign. Orear said Hodgkinson was a passionate progressive and showed no signs of violence or malice toward others.

"You've got to be kidding me," Orear said when told by phone about the shooting.

Orear described Hodgkinson as a "quiet guy" who was "very mellow, very reserved" when they stayed overnight at the home of a Sanders supporter in Rock Island, Ill., after canvassing for the senator from Vermont.

"He was this union tradesman, pretty stocky, and we stayed up talking politics," he said.

Robert Becker, who served as the Iowa director of the Sanders campaign, said Hodgkinson had no formal role on the campaign and that he could find no one who remembered him. Ahead of the caucuses, about 10,000 people volunteered for Sanders at varying points.

On the floor of the Senate on Wednesday, Sanders said, "I am sickened by this despicable act. Let me be as clear as I can be. Violence of any kind is unacceptable in our society, and I condemn this action in the strongest possible terms."

[GOP baseball shooting: Lawmaker Steve Scalise wounded, one person in custody]

Law enforcement officials arrived at Hodgkinson's home in a rural community southeast of St. Louis shortly after 11:30 a.m. The rectangular clapboard farm house sits amid fields of young corn and budding soybeans.

Hodgkinson's home inspectors' license expired last November, according to public records, and his wife told neighbors in April that he was planning to retire, they said. Neighbors also said he had recently put his motorcycle up for sale.

His wife, Suzanne, works as a receptionist at a local accounting office in Belleville, where employees declined to comment Wednesday, and said she had left for the day. It could not be determined whether her husband had been in touch with her recently.

Run-ins with the law

Over the years, Hodgkinson has had multiple scrapes with local police and disputes with neighbors, records show.

Police most recently encountered Hodgkinson on March 24, when the St. Clair County Sheriff's Department received a phone call reporting about 50 shots "in the pine trees" in a lightly populated area near Belleville.

The deputy who responded found that Hodgkinson had a valid firearm license and advised Hodgkinson "to not discharge his weapon in the area." Hodgkinson apparently complied.

Federal agents are trying to track the purchase history of a rifle and a handgun involved in Wednesday's shooting.

In April 2006, police records show Hodgkinson went to a neighbor's house looking for his daughter and "used bodily force to damage" a wooden door upstairs. Witnesses said Hodgkinson forced his way into the home looking for his teenage daughter and grabbed her by the hair when he found her upstairs, according to a police narrative on file with St. Clair County Sheriff's Department.

His daughter escaped and got into the neighbor's car, but Hodgkinson opened the door of the car, pulled out a pocket knife and cut off the seat belt she was wearing, records show. Hodgkinson's wife joined him, struggling to pull out their daughter, as Hodgkinson punched the neighbor who was in the driver's seat of the car in the face, witnesses told police.

Later, Joel Fernandez, the boyfriend of the woman who was punched, went to Hodgkinson's home to confront him. He said Hodgkinson "walked outside with a shotgun and aimed it at Fernandez face," a complaint states. Hodgkinson struck Fernandez on the side of his face with the wooden stock of the shotgun and fired off one round as Fernandez ran away.

Police arrested Hodgkinson and his wife and charged them with domestic battery and aggravated discharge of a firearm, according to a narrative obtained by The Washington Post. Police also recovered a 12-gauge shotgun. The county clerk's online database shows the charges were later dismissed.

A few months later, police were called to an argument with a neighbor after Hodgkinson "accidentally struck her dog while it was sleeping in the roadway," record show. Hodgkinson made multiple complaints about neighbors damaging his lawn by driving through it.

Hodgkinson studied at what is now called Southwestern Illinois College, the school confirmed. The college has no record of Hodgkinson receiving a degree. He also briefly attended Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville.

A Web page on Yelp indicates that Hodgkinson had been doing home inspections since 1994 and had 30 years of experience in construction and remodeling as a general contractor, and that he worked in Missouri and Illinois.

The local newspaper in Belleville published a 2012 picture of Hodgkinson protesting outside the U.S. post office building and holding a sign with the message "Tax the Rich." The Belleville News-Democrat described Hodgkinson as part of a "99 percent" team that was bringing attention to the financial and political power of the top 1 percent of Americans.

Hodgkinson posted regularly on Facebook, as often as three or four times a week, typically linking to a cartoon or article that was critical of Republicans. In January 2015, he linked to a cartoon about Rep. Steve Scalise, one of the people he shot Wednesday, writing the

headline, "Here's a Republican that should Lose His Job, but they Gave Him a Raise."

In a May 24 Facebook post, he urged his friends to sign a petition against the Nexus gas pipeline between Michigan and Ohio.

"Who is this guy?"

At the YMCA in Alexandria, the regulars finally had a name to identify the stranger they had encountered almost daily at the building on East Monroe Avenue. The gym is across from the field where the GOP baseball team has practiced every day starting at 6 a.m., according to Rep. Roger Williams (R-Tex.).

Stephen Brennwald, an Alexandria resident and attorney, said Hodgkinson would routinely show up first thing in the morning, wearing long pants and looking at his laptop or staring out the window. "He never smiled, just had this sourpuss look."

By last week, Brennwald said, he thought to himself that the man in the lobby might be worth discussing with the staff: "I need to talk to someone and say, 'Who is this guy? Why is he here?'"

Former Alexandria mayor William D. Euille said he talked with Hodgkinson nearly every morning in recent weeks and even offered to help him find a job.

"He was a very friendly person," Euille said. "Outside of myself and [the YMCA manager], I don't think he knew anyone else in town."

Euille could not get to the YMCA Wednesday morning because of the police lockdown. He was told by the YMCA's manager that Hodgkinson had been at gym again before he headed toward the ballfield at about 7 a.m.



Virginia Shooting Suspect Was Distraught Over Trump's Election, Brother Says

Nicholas Fandos

6-7 minutes

WASHINGTON — He lived out of his van in the Northern Virginia suburbs and took showers at the Y.M.C.A. On Facebook, he posted furious criticism of President Trump and pledged allegiance to Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont. Back home in Illinois, neighbors complained to the police of his practicing his shooting near their home.

Shortly after 7 a.m. on Wednesday, the police say, James T. Hodgkinson, 66, of Belleville, Ill., opened fire on a baseball field in Alexandria, Va., just steps from the Y.M.C.A., spraying bullets at members of the Republican congressional team practicing there.

Four people were shot in the assault, including Representative Steve Scalise of Louisiana, the majority whip and third-ranking Republican in the House. An ensuing firefight with the police took Mr. Hodgkinson's life.

The suspect's brother said Mr. Hodgkinson was a critic of Mr. Trump, upset over last fall's election and intent on bringing his protest to Washington. But his more immediate motive for the attack remained unclear late Wednesday, even as investigators surrounded Mr. Hodgkinson's home on the outskirts of Belleville, a town of 40,000 across the Mississippi River from St. Louis.

"I know he wasn't happy with the way things were going, the election results and stuff," his brother, Michael Hodgkinson, said in a

phone interview after he received the news on Wednesday.

"Totally out of the blue," he added, saying that his brother was engaged in politics but otherwise led a normal life.

Conversations on Wednesday with friends and family, a review of police records and an examination of Mr. Hodgkinson's voluminous writing on Facebook offered some clues. He was deeply invested in liberal politics and had volunteered for Mr. Sanders's presidential campaign. He also had run-ins with law enforcement over the years.

In 1996, tragedy struck when his 17-year-old foster daughter committed suicide by dousing herself with gasoline and setting herself on fire in a car, according to The Belleville News-Democrat.

We discuss political violence — on a baseball field outside Washington; depicted on a stage in New York — at a time of extreme partisanship.

The newspaper reported that the daughter had been living with the Hodgkinson family for months and had tried to kill herself before.

“He seemed like a loner,” said William D. Euille, Alexandria’s mayor from 2003 to 2016, who came to know Mr. Hodgkinson during regular morning stops at the Y.M.C.A. “But very nice.”

For much of his adult life, Mr. Hodgkinson lived about 100 yards off a rural road in a two-story home on the outskirts of Belleville. He was a high school wrestler, worked for years in construction and then shifted to the home inspection business, starting his own company, JTH Inspections.

Charlene Brennan, a real estate agent in Belleville, said Mr. Hodgkinson had conducted inspections for housing sales she worked on over the years.

“He did not come off as a radical,” Ms. Brennan said. “He did not come off as an unstable individual. He

wasn’t belligerent. He was just kind of a normal guy.”

On social media accounts and in frequent letters to The Belleville News-Democrat, though, Mr. Hodgkinson showed a political intensity. He appeared to have taken Mr. Trump’s victory in November particularly hard, letting a license on his home inspection business lapse that month. And in late March, the authorities said, he relocated to Alexandria, just south of Washington.

Throughout, Mr. Hodgkinson continued to post blistering Facebook assessments of Mr. Trump and the Republicans in charge in Washington.

On Tuesday morning, he posted a cartoon: “How does a bill work?” “That’s an easy one, Billy,” the cartoon reads. “Corporations write the bill and then bribe congress until it becomes law.”

“That’s Exactly How It Works. ...” Mr. Hodgkinson wrote.

The page was filled with references to Mr. Sanders, who has called on Democrats to endorse more progressive politics since losing the Democratic nomination to Hillary Clinton last year.

In a statement on Wednesday, Mr. Sanders condemned violence of any type. “I am sickened by this despicable act,” he wrote. “Let me

be as clear as I can be. Violence of any kind is unacceptable in our society and I condemn this action in the strongest possible terms.”

Mr. Hodgkinson’s behavior got the attention of local authorities several times over the years, records from the St. Clair County Sheriff’s Department show.

In April 2006, Mr. Hodgkinson, according to the sheriff’s department, forced his way into a neighbor’s home to find his daughter, grabbed her by the hair and in an ensuing exchange punched his daughter’s friend in the face.

The Virginia Shooting: The Scene and Reaction

Witnesses describe the scene of the shooting that injured Representative Steve Scalise and others Wednesday morning. President Trump and Senator Bernie Sanders made statements.

By BARBARA MARCOLINI, MALACHY BROWNE and SARAH STEIN KERR on June 14, 2017. Photo by Al Drago/The New York Times. Watch in Times Video »

Later, when the boyfriend of the daughter’s friend confronted Mr. Hodgkinson at home, the boyfriend told the sheriff’s department that Mr. Hodgkinson had answered the door with a shotgun aimed at his face and struck him with it.

Mr. Hodgkinson was charged with domestic battery, aggravated discharge of a firearm and criminal damage to a motor vehicle. The charges were later dismissed.

Friends and acquaintances said they were stunned by Wednesday’s shooting. Dale Walsh, who identified himself as a friend who knew him as Tommy, said Mr. Hodgkinson had been a vibrant presence when he was younger.

“He wasn’t evil,” he said. “I guess he was tired of the politics.”

In Alexandria, Mr. Hodgkinson could be found most mornings at the Y.M.C.A., Mr. Euille said. The two men made small talk about politics and old movies, Mr. Euille said, and Mr. Hodgkinson asked about finding work in town and good places to eat. Most days, Mr. Euille said, Mr. Hodgkinson would sit — often for hours — in a small reception area on his laptop.

That was the case Tuesday morning as well, Mr. Euille said. At some point, Michael Hodgkinson said, his brother called home to tell his wife that he missed her and their dogs and would be coming home.

Twenty-four hours later, Mr. Hodgkinson unleashed his attack just a few paces from the gym’s front door, on the well-groomed baseball diamond where the congressmen were practicing.

The New York Times Editorial : America’s Lethal Politics

The Editorial Board

5-6 minutes

America’s elected representatives enjoying America’s pastime on a ball field just across the Potomac from the Capitol: A particularly American form of terror changed that idyll early Wednesday morning into what Senator Rand Paul, who was there, called “basically a killing field.”

A gunman with a rifle fired dozens of rounds at members of Congress and current and former aides, who dove for cover. “He was hitting us,” said Representative Mike Bishop, Republican of Michigan, who was at home plate when the gunman appeared. In all, four victims were hit, including Representative Steve Scalise of Louisiana, the House majority whip, who was in critical condition Wednesday night after surgery on a bullet wound to his hip.

An American would once have been horrified and shocked by such savagery. An American today would be right to be horrified — and not

very surprised. This was one of two mass shootings in the United States on Wednesday. At a San Francisco UPS facility, a gunman killed three people and himself.

F.B.I. agents collecting evidence after the shooting at Eugene Simpson Stadium Park in Alexandria, Va. Al Drago/The New York Times

Not all the details are known yet about what happened in Virginia, but a sickeningly familiar pattern is emerging in the assault: The sniper, James Hodgkinson, who was killed by Capitol Police officers, was surely deranged, and his derangement had found its fuel in politics. Mr. Hodgkinson was a Bernie Sanders supporter and campaign volunteer virulently opposed to President Trump. He posted many anti-Trump messages on social media, including one in March that said “Time to Destroy Trump & Co.”

Was this attack evidence of how vicious American politics has become? Probably. In 2011, when Jared Lee Loughner opened fire in a supermarket parking lot,

grievously wounding Representative Gabby Giffords and killing six people, including a 9-year-old girl, the link to political incitement was clear. Before the shooting, Sarah Palin’s political action committee circulated a map of targeted electoral districts that put Ms. Giffords and 19 other Democrats under stylized cross hairs.

Conservatives and right-wing media were quick on Wednesday to demand forceful condemnation of hate speech and crimes by anti-Trump liberals. They’re right. Though there’s no sign of incitement as direct as in the Giffords attack, liberals should of course hold themselves to the same standard of decency that they ask of the right.

Was this attack evidence of how readily available guns and ammunition are in the United States? Indisputably. Mr. Hodgkinson, by definition, should not have had a gun, but he was licensed in his home state, Illinois. And in any event it would have been easy for him to acquire a weapon in Virginia, which requires no background checks in private sales,

requires no registration for most weapons and has few restrictions on open carry.

The reaction of some was that the only solution is yet more guns. Representative Mo Brooks of Alabama, who was among those who came under fire on Wednesday, said, “It’s not easy to take when you see people around you being shot and you don’t have a weapon yourself.”

That’s an entirely reasonable reflex. All people in that situation, unarmed and under fire, would long to be able to protect themselves and their friends. Yet consider the society Americans would have to live in — the choices they would all have to make — to enable that kind of defense. Every member of Congress, and every other American of whatever age, would have to go to baseball practice, or to school, or to work, or to the post office, or to the health clinic — or to any of the other places mass shootings now take place — with a gun on their hip. And then, when an attack came and they returned fire, they would probably kill or wound not the assailant but another

innocent bystander, as studies have repeatedly shown.

That is the society the gun lobby is working toward. Is it the one Americans want?



Editorial : The shooting at a GOP baseball practice was an assault on democracy

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

4-5 minutes

The Post's View

Opinion

Opinion A column or article in the Opinions section (in print, this is known as the Editorial Pages).

By Editorial Board

The Post's View

Opinion

Opinion A column or article in the Opinions section (in print, this is known as the Editorial Pages).

June 14 at 7:30 PM

ONE AFTER another after another on the Wednesday morning television news shows came the harrowing accounts from Republican members of Congress of how their baseball practice just hours earlier had become a bloody battlefield.

"All of a sudden we heard just a very loud pop ... then a few seconds later it was a rally," said Sen. Jeff Flake (Ariz.). "He was

President Trump said just the right thing after the attack on Wednesday: "We may have our differences, but we do well in times like these to remember that everyone who serves in our nation's

hunting us ... there was so much gunfire, you couldn't get up and run," said Rep. Mike Bishop (Mich.). "I see a rifle ... and then I hear another bam, and I realize there's still an active shooter," said Rep. Mo Brooks (Ala.). Quite simply, said Rep. Joe Barton (Tex.), "It was scary." Men normally accustomed to being interviewed about the federal budget or foreign entanglements were emotional and very clearly shaken — and so must the nation be.

What occurred on that playing field just outside Washington, where a gunman seemingly nursing a political grudge unleashed an apparently premeditated attack on Republican lawmakers, amounts to an assault on democracy. Majority Whip Steve Scalise (La.) and four others were wounded by the shooter. Quick and heroic actions by a Capitol Police security detail and Alexandria Police thankfully averted others from being shot or killed. The gunman, identified by authorities as James T. Hodgkinson III of Illinois, died after a shootout with police.

Read These Comments

The best conversations on The Washington Post

capital is here because, above all, they love our country. We can all agree that we are blessed to be Americans, that our children deserve to grow up in a nation of safety and peace."

The investigation is continuing, but it appears from his social-media postings and accounts from people who knew him that Mr. Hodgkinson had strong feelings against President Trump. He had been a volunteer in the Democratic primary campaign of Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), who from the floor of the Senate hours after the shooting said he was "sickened by this despicable act."

Who knows what mixture of madness and circumstance causes someone to pick up a gun and go on a rampage? But no matter what authorities discover about Mr. Hodgkinson (and he appears to have had other troubles in his life), Wednesday's attack should cause a gut check about what passes for political discourse in this country. It was discouraging that some on both the political right and left couldn't wait for Mr. Scalise to even get out of surgery before escalating the rhetoric rather than toning it down.

Mr. Trump struck exactly the right tone. "We may have our differences, but we do well, in times like these, to remember that everyone who serves in our nation's capital is here because, above all, they love our country," he said from the White House.

Yet he will not help create that nation if he continues to advocate easy access to lethal weapons.

Beyond that, everyone will begin to seek lessons in what is at base a senseless and intolerable attack. We think Virginia Gov. Terry McAuliffe (D) was correct in not shying away from the issue of gun control when asked at a news conference if he was worried about the safety of politicians. He said he was concerned about all Americans' safety from gun violence, not just politicians: "This is not what today is about, but we have too many guns on the street."

Americans shouldn't have to fear being victims of gun violence as they go about their lives and that includes sending their children to school, going to church, partying at a nightclub — or practicing hitting baseballs.

Post Most newsletter

Most popular stories, in your inbox daily.

Success! Check your inbox for details.

Please enter a valid email address

See all newsletters



Editorial : Their Finest Hour

June 14, 2017
7:28 p.m. ET 122

COMMENTS

4 minutes

We're referring to the two Capitol Hill police officers, Crystal Griner and David Bailey, who prevented what would have been a massacre on Wednesday when they engaged and shot a man with a rifle bent on killing Republican Members of Congress.

The officers were the security accompanying Steve Scalise, the House majority whip, and other Members who were practicing at 7 a.m. for the annual Congressional baseball game scheduled for Thursday. James Hodgkinson, a 66-year-old home inspector from Illinois, began to fire on the dozens of Members and staff assembled on the field. He struck Mr. Scalise in

the hip at second base and wounded a lobbyist and one House aide before the officers returned fire and were hurt themselves.

The officers shot and subdued Hodgkinson, who later died of his wounds, but imagine the carnage had the officers not been armed and ready to act on the spot. Their response is a reminder of the bravery of police who must be trained to respond in an instant when tedious routine becomes a mortal threat. The remarkable good fortune—the wounded are all expected to recover—also teaches again that the best defense against marauding men with guns is other men and women with guns.

Police haven't disclosed a motive, but the evidence suggests it was political. Hodgkinson had multiple social-media posts expressing fury at President Trump and Republicans. Rep. Ron DeSantis of

Florida said that as he left the practice field early he was approached by a man who asked if those on the field were Republicans or Democrats. Mr. DeSantis later recognized the man as Hodgkinson, who had been a volunteer for the Bernie Sanders presidential campaign.

Politically motivated attempts at mass murder aren't common but they do happen and too often they're exploited for partisan ends. The good news is that on Wednesday most political leaders rose to higher ground.

President Trump offered gracious condolences to the wounded, praise for the officers, and a call to national unity. Speaker Paul Ryan and Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi united to denounce the attack, and Mr. Sanders disavowed and denounced Hodgkinson. Mr. Ryan said the baseball game will go on as

scheduled—to a thunderous ovation.

These are divisive political times, when verbal abuse and physical harassment are all too frequent against political opponents. The duty of political leaders and the rest of us is to keep the divisions in the perspective of our shared values of free debate and democratic consent. One way to contribute to a better political climate would be to stop claiming as a reflex that victory by the opposing party is illegitimate, and another would be to stop portraying political assassination as entertainment.

Congress has already imposed tougher security restrictions on access to the Capitol since 9/11, but the Members have to think about more far-reaching security when they appear in public. We admire those who represent Americans without fear, and maybe that's the

risk we have to take in a free society. But it's also true that without those two officers many

more would have died at that ball field.

Appeared in the June 15, 2017, print edition.

**NATIONAL
REVIEW
ONLINE**

Editorial : Steve Scalise, James Hodgkinson & Congressional Baseball Shooting -- Our Heated Political Atmosphere

5-7 minutes

The attempted murder of several Republican members of Congress on Wednesday morning in Alexandria, Va., is nothing short of horrifying. At around 7 a.m., James Hodgkinson, 66, of Belvedere, Ill., opened fire on Republicans practicing for Thursday evening's annual congressional baseball game, striking majority whip Steve Scalise of Louisiana, two congressional aides, and two Capitol Police officers.

It is an extraordinary mercy that no one was killed. (As of this writing, Scalise remains in critical condition.) The gunman, who had several magazines, managed to unload several dozen rifle rounds into the ballfield over the course of about ten minutes. His apprehension was thanks entirely to the heroics of the Capitol Police officers who were present, one of whom continued to return fire even after being hit.

Hodgkinson, who died of his wounds, is a familiar sort. He had a history of arrests for violent offenses, among them domestic battery, battery, and aggravated assault. In 2006, he was detained for allegedly shooting at a man during a confrontation; the man, who was not hit, claimed that Hodgkinson had assaulted his girlfriend (a friend of Hodgkinson's

foster daughter, whom he reportedly abused). According to news reports, Hodgkinson abandoned his wife last month and moved to Alexandria, Va., where he had been living for two months, possibly out of a local gym.

Among profiles of mass shooters, "isolated" and "had a history of violence" are hardly rare qualities. Of course, Hodgkinson was also politically outspoken. He campaigned for Bernie Sanders during the 2016 Democratic primary, and posted frequently about politics on his social-media accounts. He was also a member of a Facebook group that aimed to "terminate the Republican party," and in March he wrote that Donald Trump was a "traitor" and that it was "time to destroy Trump & Co." There appears, too, to have been a political element to the attack. According to multiple Republican congressmen who left the ballfield just before the shooting occurred, Hodgkinson approached them and asked them whether it was Democrats or Republicans in the field. A few minutes later, he opened fire.

By our lights, the person singly responsible for Wednesday's horrors is the man who pulled the trigger. Nonetheless, a pattern of violence is difficult to ignore. Hodgkinson's would-be massacre comes on the heels an attempt last month to run GOP congressman

David Kustoff (Tenn.) off the road for supporting the House's Obamacare-replacement bill, of credible threats of violence against Oregon's Multnomah County Republican party in April (serious enough that local officials canceled an annual parade, where party members were slated to appear), of a series of violent attacks by "antifascists," and of the firebombing of a GOP headquarters in North Carolina during the election cycle. Recent weeks have seen a glut of wishful thinking about a Trump assassination, most obviously the macabre hijinks of Kathy Griffin. A few on the left have encouraged these episodes; most have been silent.

The contrast to the reaction to the shooting of Gabrielle Giffords in 2011 is, needless to say, striking. Left-wing activists, politicians, and journalists leapt to blame Sarah Palin for the shooting that killed six people and injured 13 others, citing maps she distributed that showed bulls-eyes atop "targeted" swing districts. Paul Krugman penned a column entitled "Climate of Hate," blaming the shooting on the "toxic rhetoric . . . coming, overwhelmingly, from the right." The *New York Times* editorial board declared it "legitimate to hold Republicans and particularly their most virulent supporters in the media responsible" for the violence. Bernie Sanders, who denounced today's shooting in categorical

terms, used Giffords's shooting to fundraise, sending out an e-mail to supporters that blamed the shooting on "right-wing reactionaries." "Nobody can honestly express surprise that such a tragedy finally occurred," he wrote.

The atmosphere of our politics has without question become more heated of late. Elements of both left and right are to blame for that, up to and including the president, who was not above encouraging his supporters to rough up political opponents and the members of the media at his campaign rallies. But anything that has occurred on the right has been seen and raised on the left, and, even worse, supplied with sophisticated (and sophistical) defenses.

James Hodgkinson was a man with violent tendencies who seems increasingly to have been living less in the real world than in his own head. That he was influenced by intemperate rhetoric is almost certainly the case. The deranged find excuses. Nonetheless, "The Resistance" is no more responsible for him than the pro-life movement is responsible for Robert Dear.

In this particular case, our friends on the other side of the aisle seem to agree with that sentiment: that political speech is not violence, and violence is not political speech. Would that it were always so.



Editorial : Baseball shooting and Congress

The Editorial Board, USA

TODAY

4-5 minutes

Entrance to House Majority Whip Steve Scalise's office. (Photo: J. Scott Applewhite, AP)

As bad as Wednesday morning's shooting of Rep. Steve Scalise, R-La., and four others at a ballpark outside Washington was, it could have been far worse.

Had the gunman, identified by authorities as James T. Hodgkinson, been a better shot, he could have wreaked more carnage among the many members of Congress, staffers and lobbyists on the field in Alexandria, Va.

And had the Republican team not included Scalise, the House majority whip, no Capitol Police detail would have been present to respond before local law enforcement arrived on the scene. Indeed, the presence and bravery of Capitol Police officers David Bailey and Crystal Griner in the face of danger prevented a much bigger tragedy.

The aftermath of the shooting could also have been worse. Rather than using Wednesday's events to score quick political points, our nation's elected leaders acted with kind of maturity, wisdom and civility that Americans expect but too rarely see.

As President Trump noted, those in public service may have strong differences on policy, but they are all motivated by love of country. As

House Speaker Paul Ryan said, "An attack on one of us is an attack on all of us." And as House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi observed, "On days like today, there are no Democrats or Republicans, only Americans united in our hopes and prayers for the wounded."

The moment invites some reflection on the nature of debate. American politics has grown increasingly polarized in the past several decades, and with that the arguments have gotten more heated. Most public servants are able to keep their arguments from getting personal. But outside of Congress, in the world of social media and public protest, that is not always the case. Hodgkinson was a Democratic backer of Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont with unbridled animosity toward Republicans.

Politicians should not, must not, refrain from standing up for what they believe in. But they should always be mindful of how they make their arguments and how those arguments might be translated into more inflammatory rhetoric by their most impassioned or unhinged constituents.

On a smaller scale, the moment invites some thought about the annual ball game.

From humble beginnings in 1909, it has grown into a major event held at the home of Major League Baseball's Washington Nationals. As evidenced by the early morning practice where the shootings took place, members of Congress have come to take their game seriously. The hours that go into practice represent one of the

few opportunities to spend time with others in an informal setting.

The fact that the game is organized as Democrats against Republicans represents a lost opportunity for politicians to see their rivals in more human terms. The two sides decided to have dinner together Wednesday night. But were the

The New York Times

Collins: Play Ball, and Then Gunfire

Gail Collins
4-5 minutes

But truthfully, American politics has been mean and verbally violent for a lot longer than Donald Trump's been in the White House. Pelosi — who's often depicted as the archvillain in Republican campaign ads — has been getting death threats for years. Back in 2010 a San Francisco man admitted to making more than 30 phone calls to Pelosi and her family, threatening to kill her or blow up her house if she voted for health care reform.

Ironically, the practice Hodgkinson's bullets interrupted was for a ballgame that's a lonely throwback to the good old days of political congeniality, when people from both parties would debate during the day and then go off to drink together after work. The drinking thing is pretty much over. But the representatives and senators do still get together every year to yell good-natured insults at each other and play ball, Democrats against Republicans.

game to be reorganized across party lines as, say, East vs. West or as two teams selected by captains on an alternating basis, some small measure of bipartisan bonding might take place — on a regular basis, rather than only after tragedy.

In the final analysis, a shock like Wednesday's is best seen for what

Even better, there's a bipartisan women's softball team that has its own game every year: lawmakers versus reporters from the D.C. press corps.

"It's really one of the best things we do," said Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, one of the veteran players.

Gillibrand has a keen memory of the day all the team's players signed a ball for her good friend Representative Gabrielle Giffords, who was shot in the head in 2011 while holding a constituent meet-and-greet at a shopping center.

"I'm not shocked or surprised this happened. I lived through this once before," Gillibrand said. "We're in a violent time. We've seen Sandy Hook, we've seen such horrible gun violence in our communities for a very long time."

The women's game is next week. "We'll play," the senator said. "We're meant to carry on our lives."

Creating more comity in Washington is a good goal. (So, by the way, is getting more women in Congress.) But if we're looking to the congressional shooting for

we can learn from it. Play ball, and let the learning begin.

USA TODAY's editorial opinions are decided by its Editorial Board, separate from the news staff. Most editorials are coupled with an opposing view — a unique USA TODAY feature.

lessons, we also have to talk about guns.

The baseball story was awful — Representative Steve Scalise and three other people were hit by gunfire. But every week in America we hear stories that are bloodier. There were 27 incidents of multiple fatal shootings in the week before Hodgkinson took out a rifle and handgun and started firing. A couple of hours after, an aggrieved UPS employee in San Francisco shot and killed three people and wounded two others before turning the gun on himself.

We'll be spending the next few days trying to work through Hodgkinson's history. How did this happen? Were there any warning signs separating him from the hordes of other people who post angry diatribes about politicians? What kind of guns did he use? Where did he buy them?

"I hope this doesn't devolve into the usual situation where you expect that any one tragedy is going to change the conversation," said Dan Gross, president of the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence. He's been through too much of that already, and it's true — if 20 little

To read more editorials, go to the Opinion front page or sign up for the daily Opinion email newsletter. To respond to this editorial, submit a comment to letters@usatoday.com

Read or Share this story: <https://usat.ly/2to3GyO>

children can be shot in their Connecticut school without triggering national gun law reform, it's not likely that the wounding of several adults in Virginia will do the trick.

But we'll keep trying. To start, we need to come together on a consensus that there's something wrong with a country in which an average of 93 people are killed with guns every day, in which gun homicides are so common that news reports frequently don't bother to mention how the murderer obtained his weapon, and in which even multiple shootings often don't make the national news unless there's some suggestion the crime might be related to terrorism.

Write a letter. Call your representative. Hold a meeting. You can demand laws to keep criminals from buying guns, or laws to keep greedy gun sellers from ignoring background checks, or laws to ban rifles that allow one person to take down several dozen victims without reloading. Even if your hopes aren't high, keep fighting. This is a righteous cause.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Visits From Nations on Trump's Travel-Ban List Fall Sharply

3 minutes

Laura Meckler

Data from the State Department on number of visas issued points to similar drops from these six countries as well. But it was unclear whether the decline was primarily due to fewer people seeking to travel to the U.S. or the administration rejecting more applications.

A State Department spokesman said the agency wouldn't release data about visa application rejections for recent months.

The Homeland Security data show a drop in admissions for all six countries in both March and April, the latest months available. The biggest drop was from Somalia, with the number of people being admitted to the U.S. in those two months falling by more than two-

thirds, to 655 from 2,233 a year earlier.

Drops from Libya were the smallest, but off a very low base. Admissions in March and April fell 26% to 195, down from 265 a year earlier.

Of the six targeted countries, the U.S. admitted the greatest number of people from Iran, in both 2016 and 2017.

Two appellate courts have halted implementation of Mr. Trump's order, which aimed to temporarily suspend travel to the U.S. by people from these six Muslim-majority nations, citing terrorism concerns. The government has asked the Supreme Court to intervene in the cases and the justices are expected to act on the request this month.

The initial Trump travel order was announced in January, then a revised order was issued in March.

The Department of Homeland Security said Wednesday that there were many reasons why somebody might be denied admission to the U.S. and that it is the agency's responsibility to protect Americans.

"Our dual mission is to facilitate travel in the United States while we secure our borders, our people and our visitors from those that would do us harm like terrorists and terrorist weapons, criminals, and contraband," it said.

Write to Laura Meckler at laura.meckler@wsj.com

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Mueller Probe Examining Whether Donald Trump Obstructed Justice

Del Quentin Wilber, Shane Harris and Paul Sonne

5-6 minutes

Updated June 15, 2017 7:27 a.m. ET

WASHINGTON—President Donald Trump's firing of former FBI Director James Comey is now a subject of the federal probe being headed by special counsel Robert Mueller, which has expanded to include whether the president obstructed justice, a person familiar with the matter said.

Mr. Mueller is examining whether the president fired Mr. Comey as part of a broader effort to alter the direction of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's probe into Russia's alleged meddling in the 2016 presidential election and whether associates of Mr. Trump colluded with Moscow, the person said.

Mark Corallo, a spokesman for Mr. Trump's personal lawyer, Marc Kasowitz, denounced the revelation in a statement.

"The FBI leak of information regarding the president is outrageous, inexcusable and illegal," Mr. Corallo said.

Mr. Trump's reaction to the new turn in Mr. Mueller's inquiry came early Thursday morning in the form of a tweet. He suggested that he is unhappy with the focus on obstruction of justice, given that he

believes there was no underlying crime.

"They made up a phony collusion with the Russians story, found zero proof, so now they go for obstruction of justice on the phony story. Nice," Mr. Trump wrote.

Aides to Mr. Trump have warned him not to tweet about the Russia investigation, an inquiry in which any statement he makes could become fodder for investigators.

Peter Carr, a spokesman for Mr. Mueller, declined to comment. The special counsel's pursuit of an obstruction of justice probe was first reported Wednesday by the Washington Post.

Mr. Mueller's team is planning to interview Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats and National Security Agency Director Mike Rogers as part of its examination of whether Mr. Trump sought to obstruct justice, the person said.

The special counsel also plans to interview Rick Ledgett, who recently retired as the deputy director of the NSA, the person added.

While Mr. Ledgett was still in office, he wrote a memo documenting a phone call that Mr. Rogers had with Mr. Trump, according to people familiar with the matter. During the call, the president questioned the veracity of the intelligence community's judgment that Russia had interfered with the election and tried to persuade Mr. Rogers to say

there was no evidence of collusion between his campaign and Russian officials, they said.

Russia has denied any government effort to meddle in the U.S. election. Mr. Ledgett declined to comment, and officials at the NSA didn't respond to a request for comment. An aide to Mr. Coats declined to comment.

Mr. Coats and Mr. Rogers told a Senate panel June 7 that they didn't feel pressured by Mr. Trump to intervene with Mr. Comey or push back against allegations of possible collusion between Mr. Trump's campaign and Russia. But the top national security officials declined to say what, if anything, Mr. Trump requested they do in relation to the Russia probe.

"If the special prosecutor called upon me to meet with him to ask his questions, I said I would be willing to do that," Mr. Coats said June 7. Mr. Rogers said he would also be willing to meet with the special counsel's team.

Mr. Comey told a Senate panel on June 8 that Mr. Trump expressed "hope" in a one-on-one Oval Office meeting that the FBI would drop its investigation into former national security adviser Michael Flynn, who resigned under pressure for making false statements about his conversations with a Russian diplomat. Mr. Trump has denied making that request.

Mr. Comey said during the testimony that it was up to Mr. Mueller to decide whether the president's actions amounted to obstruction of justice. The former FBI director also said he had furnished the special counsel with memos he wrote documenting his interactions with the president on the matter.

At a June 13 hearing at a House of Representatives panel, Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein declined to say who asked him to write a memo justifying Mr. Comey's firing. The White House initially cited that memo as the reason for the termination, and Mr. Trump later said in an NBC interview that he also was influenced by the Russia investigation. Mr. Rosenstein said he wasn't at liberty to discuss the matter.

"The reason for that is that if it is within the scope of Director Mueller's investigation, and I've been a prosecutor for 27 years, we don't want people talking publicly about the subjects of ongoing investigations," Mr. Rosenstein said.

—Carol E. Lee contributed to this article.

Write to Del Quentin Wilber at del.wilber@wsj.com, Shane Harris at shane.harris@wsj.com and Paul Sonne at paul.sonne@wsj.com

Appeared in the June 15, 2017, print edition as "Mueller Probes Trump Over Obstruction."



Special counsel Robert Mueller is investigating Donald Trump for possible obstruction of justice, officials say (UNE)

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

9-11 minutes

The special counsel overseeing the investigation into Russia's role in the 2016 election is interviewing senior intelligence officials as part of a widening probe that now includes an examination of whether President Trump attempted to obstruct justice, officials said.

The move by special counsel Robert S. Mueller III to investigate Trump's conduct marks a major turning point in the nearly year-old FBI investigation, which until recently focused on Russian meddling during the presidential campaign and on whether there was any coordination between the Trump campaign and the Kremlin. Investigators have also been looking for any evidence of possible financial crimes among Trump associates, officials said.

[Here's what we know so far about Team Trump's ties to Russian interests]

Trump had received private assurances from then-FBI Director James B. Comey starting in January that he was not personally under investigation. Officials say that changed shortly after Comey's firing.

Five people briefed on the interview requests, speaking on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the matter publicly, said that Daniel Coats, the current director of national intelligence, Mike Rogers, head of the National Security Agency, and Rogers's recently departed deputy, Richard Ledgett, agreed to be interviewed by Mueller's investigators as early as this week. The investigation has been cloaked in secrecy, and it is unclear how many others have been questioned by the FBI.

A guide to the five major investigations of the Trump campaign's possible ties to Russia

The NSA said in a statement that it will "fully cooperate with the special counsel" and declined to comment further. The office of the director of national intelligence and Ledgett declined to comment.

The White House now refers all questions about the Russia investigation to Trump's personal attorney, Marc Kasowitz.

"The FBI leak of information regarding the president is outrageous, inexcusable and illegal," said Mark Corallo, a spokesman for Kasowitz.

The officials said Coats, Rogers and Ledgett would appear voluntarily, though it remains unclear whether they will describe in full their conversations with Trump and other top officials or will be directed by the White House to invoke executive privilege. It is doubtful that the

White House could ultimately use executive privilege to try to block them from speaking to Mueller's investigators. Experts point out that the Supreme Court ruled during the Watergate scandal that officials cannot use privilege to withhold evidence in criminal prosecutions.

The obstruction-of-justice investigation of the president began days after Comey was fired on May 9, according to people familiar with the matter. Mueller's office has taken up that work, and the preliminary interviews scheduled with intelligence officials indicate that his team is actively pursuing potential witnesses inside and outside the government.

[Inside Trump's anger and impatience — and his sudden decision to fire Comey]

The interviews suggest that Mueller sees the question of attempted obstruction of justice as more than just a "he said, he said" dispute

between the president and the fired FBI director, an official said.

With the term whirling around Washington, a former federal prosecutor explains what to know about the criminal charge of obstruction of justice. With the term whirling around Washington, a former federal prosecutor explains what to know about the criminal charge of obstruction of justice. (Jenny Starrs/The Washington Post)

(Jenny Starrs/The Washington Post)

Investigating Trump for possible crimes is a complicated affair, even if convincing evidence of a crime were found. The Justice Department has long held that it would not be appropriate to indict a sitting president. Instead, experts say, the onus would be on Congress to review any findings of criminal misconduct and then decide whether to initiate impeachment proceedings.

Comey confirmed publicly in congressional testimony on March 20 that the bureau was investigating possible coordination between the Trump campaign and the Russians.

Comey's statement before the House Intelligence Committee upset Trump, who has repeatedly denied that any coordination with the Russians took place. Trump had wanted Comey to disclose publicly that he was not personally under investigation, but the FBI director refused to do so.

Soon after, Trump spoke to Coats and Rogers about the Russia investigation.

Officials said one of the exchanges of potential interest to Mueller took place on March 22, less than a week after Coats was confirmed by the Senate to serve as the nation's top intelligence official.

Coats was attending a briefing at the White House with officials from several other government agencies. When the briefing ended, as The Washington Post previously reported, Trump asked everyone to leave the room except for Coats and CIA Director Mike Pompeo.

Coats told associates that Trump had asked him whether Coats could intervene with Comey to get the bureau to back off its focus on former national security adviser Michael Flynn in its Russia probe, according to officials. Coats later told lawmakers that he never felt pressured to intervene.

A day or two after the March 22 meeting, Trump telephoned Coats and Rogers to separately ask them to issue public statements denying the existence of any evidence of coordination between his campaign and the Russian government.

Coats and Rogers refused to comply with the president's requests, officials said.

It is unclear whether Ledgett had direct contact with Trump or other top officials about the Russia probe, but he wrote an internal NSA memo documenting the president's phone call with Rogers, according to officials.

As part of the probe, the special counsel has also gathered Comey's written accounts of his conversations with Trump. The president has accused Comey of lying about those encounters.

Mueller is overseeing a host of investigations involving people who are or were in Trump's orbit, people familiar with the probe said. The investigation is examining possible contacts with Russian operatives as well as any suspicious financial activity related to those individuals.

Last week, Comey told the Senate Intelligence Committee that he had

informed Trump that there was no investigation of the president's personal conduct, at least while he was leading the FBI.

Comey's carefully worded comments, and those of Andrew McCabe, who took over as acting FBI director, suggested to some officials that an investigation of Trump for attempted obstruction may have been launched after Comey's departure, particularly in light of Trump's alleged statements regarding Flynn.

"I took it as a very disturbing thing, very concerning, but that's a conclusion I'm sure the special counsel will work towards, to try and understand what the intention was there, and whether that's an offense," Comey testified last week.

Mueller has not publicly discussed his work, and a spokesman for the special counsel declined to comment.

Accounts by Comey and other officials of their conversations with the president could become central pieces of evidence if Mueller decides to pursue an obstruction case.

Investigators will also look for any statements the president may have made publicly and privately to people outside the government about his reasons for firing Comey and his concerns about the Russia probe and other related investigations, people familiar with the matter said.

Comey testified before the Senate Intelligence Committee last week that he was certain his firing was due to the president's concerns about the Russia probe, rather than over his handling of a now-closed FBI investigation into Hillary Clinton's use of a private email server as secretary of state, as the White House had initially asserted.

"It's my judgment that I was fired because of the Russia investigation," Comey said. "I was fired, in some way, to change — or the endeavor was to change the way the Russia investigation was being conducted."

Checkpoint newsletter

Military, defense and security at home and abroad.

The fired FBI director said ultimately it was up to Mueller to make a determination whether the president crossed a legal line.

In addition to describing his interactions with the president, Comey told the Intelligence Committee that while he was FBI director he told Trump on three occasions that he was not under investigation as part of a counterintelligence probe looking at Russian meddling in the election.

Republican lawmakers seized on Comey's testimony to point out that Trump was not in the FBI's crosshairs when Comey led the bureau.

After Comey's testimony, in which he acknowledged telling Trump that he was not under investigation, Trump tweeted that he felt "total and complete vindication." It is unclear whether McCabe, Comey's successor, has informed Trump of the change in the scope of the probe.

Read more:

'I expect loyalty,' Trump told Comey, according to written testimony

Top intelligence official told associates Trump asked him if he could intervene with Comey on FBI Russia probe

The New York Times Mueller Seeks to Talk to Intelligence Officials, Hinting at Inquiry of Trump (UNE)

Michael S. Schmidt and Matt Apuzzo

4-5 minutes

WASHINGTON — Robert S. Mueller III, the special counsel examining Russia's meddling in the 2016 election, has requested interviews with three high-ranking current or former intelligence officials, the latest indication that he will investigate whether President Trump obstructed justice, a person briefed on the investigation said on Wednesday.

Mr. Mueller wants to question Dan Coats, the director of national intelligence; Adm. Michael S. Rogers, the head of the National Security Agency; and Richard Ledgett, the former N.S.A. deputy director.

None of the men were involved with Mr. Trump's campaign. But recent news reports have raised questions about whether Mr. Trump requested their help in trying to get James B. Comey, then the F.B.I. director, to end an investigation into the president's former national security adviser, Michael T. Flynn. Last week, Mr. Coats and Admiral

Rogers declined to answer questions before Congress about the matter.

Mr. Mueller's office has also asked the N.S.A. for any documents or notes related to the agency's interactions with the White House as part of the Russia investigation, according to an intelligence official.

The Washington Post first reported on Wednesday that Mr. Mueller had requested the interviews with the intelligence officials.

It has been clear since Mr. Mueller was appointed last month that he was likely to scrutinize the

president's actions. Mr. Trump has said he is willing to be interviewed by Mr. Mueller's agents, and Mr. Comey said he was sure that the special counsel would investigate the possibility of obstruction.

In recent days, Mr. Trump is said to have considered firing Mr. Mueller but to have been talked out of it by aides. If the president is under investigation for obstruction, a move to fire Mr. Mueller would prove more complicated politically.

The F.B.I.'s gathering information about the possibility of a crime does not necessarily mean prosecutors

are building a case against the president. In the early stages of investigations, F.B.I. agents typically want to gather all the facts. Agents then present those facts to prosecutors, who decide whether they want to take the case.

Mr. Mueller's requests are among his first publicly known acts since he took over the investigation last month, after it was publicly revealed that Mr. Comey had written a memo about how Mr. Trump asked him to halt the inquiry into his fired national security adviser, Mr. Flynn.

In testimony on Capitol Hill last week, Mr. Comey said Mr. Mueller had a copy of that memo and several others Mr. Comey had written about his interactions with Mr. Trump.

A spokeswoman for the White House referred all questions on the matter to Mr. Trump's outside lawyer, Marc E. Kasowitz. A spokesman for Mr. Kasowitz said, "The F.B.I. leak of information regarding the president is outrageous,

inexcusable and illegal."

The scrutiny of Mr. Trump's actions is part of a ripple of unintended consequences that began when the president, frustrated by the cloud of investigations into Russian collusion, fired Mr. Comey last month. "When I decided to just do it, I said to myself — I said, 'You know, this Russia thing with Trump and Russia is a made-up story,'" Mr. Trump told NBC. He then said: "I might even lengthen out the investigation, but I have to do the right thing for the American people. He's the wrong man for that position."

The White House could try to assert executive privilege to keep the intelligence officials from discussing conversations between them and the president with Mr. Mueller. But that could set up a fight in court, where judges have generally held that criminal investigators can demand information that would normally be privileged.

In his memos, Mr. Comey said Mr. Trump had encouraged him to end

an F.B.I. investigation into Mr. Flynn, an effort that Mr. Comey called "very disturbing." There is a broad federal inquiry underway into Mr. Flynn's actions. Among the issues being examined are whether he misled investigators about his ties to Russia, and his failure to disclose that he was working as a foreign agent of Turkey from August to November 2016: the same time he was advising the Trump campaign.

The Justice Department appointed Mr. Mueller last month to investigate whether members of the Trump campaign colluded with Russian operatives to influence the outcome of last year's presidential election. Mr. Mueller inherited the criminal investigations into Mr. Flynn and Mr. Trump's former campaign chairman, Paul Manafort. He was also given the authority to investigate obstruction.

While Rod J. Rosenstein, the deputy attorney general, has not said what exactly prompted him to appoint Mr. Mueller, his decision

came after The New York Times published details about an Oval Office meeting Mr. Comey had with the president at the White House in February. During the meeting, the president brought up Mr. Flynn and told Mr. Comey, "I hope you can let this go," according to the memo. Mr. Comey told the Senate that he viewed that as a clear directive from the president to drop the investigation.

A former senior official said Mr. Mueller's investigation was looking at money laundering by Trump associates. The suspicion is that any cooperation with Russian officials would most likely have been in exchange for some kind of financial payoff, and that there would have been an effort to hide the payments, probably by routing them through offshore banking centers.

POLITICO Trump attacks reports he's under investigation as 'phony'

By Louis Nelson

3-4 minutes

The Washington Post reports that Mueller has expanded that investigation to examine whether the president committed obstruction of justice. | AP Photo

The president also calls out the 'very bad and conflicted people' leading the probe.

President Donald Trump on Thursday dismissed reports that he was being investigated for obstruction of justice, suggesting online that such allegations have been cooked-up to replace accusations that his presidential campaign colluded with the Russian government

during the 2016 election.

"They made up a phony collusion with the Russians story, found zero proof, so now they go for obstruction of justice on the phony story. Nice," Trump wrote on Twitter Thursday morning. In a subsequent post, Trump attacked those investigating him, calling them "very bad and conflicted people," although he did not specify if he was referring to the Congressional probes into hit 2016 campaign or the special prosecutor's.

Story Continued Below

"You are witnessing the single greatest WITCH HUNT in American political history - led by some very bad and conflicted people! #MAGA," Trump wrote.



5-6 minutes

Rove: What Trump Has to Fear From Mueller

Karl Rove

supercilious charge as "secret innuendo."

Good for Mr. Sessions. But since Democrats seem intent on preparing the battlefield for the 2018 midterm elections, expect more such baseless charges. Never mind the damage they do to public trust.

Consider the accusation that President Trump obstructed justice in the FBI investigation of former national security adviser Mike Flynn. According to former FBI Director James Comey, the president told him: "I hope you can

On Wednesday, The Washington Post reported that special counsel Robert Mueller, charged with leading an independent Russia investigation, had expanded that investigation to examine whether the president committed obstruction of justice.

That probe reportedly includes not only Trump's conversations with former FBI Director James Comey, in which the president allegedly asked Comey to drop the bureau's investigation into former national security adviser Michael Flynn, but also interactions between Trump and Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats, CIA Director Mike Pompeo and NSA Director Mike Rogers.

According to the Post report, the investigation into whether or not

Trump sought to obstruct justice began shortly after he fired Comey, in line with private assurances that the former FBI director offered to the president that he was not under investigation at the time.

Trump has loudly denied that there was any collusion between his campaign and the Kremlin and has suggested that Comey lied about their interactions regarding Flynn. The president has suggested that there could be recordings of his interactions with Comey that would vindicate him, although he has yet to release those recordings or even confirm their existence.

Missing out on the latest scoops? Sign up for POLITICO Playbook and get the latest news, every morning — in your inbox.

June 14, 2017 7:31 p.m. ET

While Jeff Sessions was testifying Tuesday on Capitol Hill, Sen. Ron Wyden suggested that the attorney general had recused himself from investigating Russian electoral meddling because of unknown, "problematic" reasons. "There are none—I can tell you that for absolute certainty," Mr. Sessions shot back, dismissing the

see your way clear to letting this go, to letting Flynn go."

"There's no question he abused power," House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi said last week. Two Democratic backbenchers, Reps. Al Green of Texas and Brad Sherman of California, have even drafted articles of impeachment based on the charge.

But I talked to four legal experts—two former Justice Department officials, a former White House lawyer and a former U.S. attorney—who all agreed Mr. Trump has the rightful power, as head of the

executive branch, to order the FBI to end any investigation.

One expert raised this thought experiment: If President John F. Kennedy had ordered FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover to stop investigating Martin Luther King Jr., would that have constituted obstruction of justice?

It's also far from clear Mr. Trump ordered anything. His words were vague. A hope is not an order. The president said he wanted to get to the bottom of Russian election meddling. He added that he hoped Mr. Comey would discover whether

any of Mr. Trump's "satellites"—an apparent reference to people who worked in his presidential campaign—had done anything wrong. Both statements suggest Mr. Trump wanted the Russian investigation to go forward and believed it would clear his name.

The statute that describes obstruction of justice speaks of "corrupt" conduct. Yet there is no evidence Mr. Trump acted with criminal purpose—for example, that he was bribed to shut down the Flynn investigation, or that he was trying to hide some personal financial interest in Mr. Flynn's foreign lobbying. No wonder Mr. Comey, when discussing the conversation at the time with other officials, didn't claim obstruction.

Still, Mr. Trump has created a potential problem for himself. At a Friday press conference, ABC's Jonathan Karl asked the

president whether he would be "willing to speak under oath to give your version of those events." Mr. Trump replied: "One hundred percent."

The president had better hope that Robert Mueller, the special counsel now looking into potential Russia-Trump ties, is nothing like Patrick Fitzgerald, the special counsel appointed in 2003 to investigate the leaking of a CIA official's name to the columnist Robert Novak.

Mr. Fitzgerald knew within days, if not hours, of his appointment that the leak had come from Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage but that it violated no law since the CIA employee was no longer a covert operative.

Despite no underlying crime, Mr. Fitzgerald spent more than three years obsessed with trying to justify his existence by prosecuting someone in the Bush White House

for lying under oath. I was one of those in his sights.

He focused on me because, while I could not remember a brief call in 2003 from a Time reporter, I had ordered my staff the following year to search for any evidence I had talked to the journalist. That was supposed to be proof I had lied. Mr. Fitzgerald gave up hunting me only when he learned that my lawyer had directed me to search my files after hearing from the reporter's colleague that I had talked with him.

Instead Mr. Fitzgerald indicted the vice president's chief of staff, Lewis "Scooter" Libby, a very good man, on a disagreement over who said what, when and to whom.

Today, given what we know, Mr. Trump is not vulnerable on obstruction of justice. But if Mr. Mueller turns out to be another Mr. Fitzgerald and finds no underlying offense, he may decide that he

must still get someone for something, even over inconsequential differences of memory.

Promising to speak under oath is dangerous for Mr. Trump, since any trial would be in Washington, D.C. There were no Republicans on Mr. Libby's jury, and Mr. Trump received a mere 4% of the vote there. The president better pray Robert Mueller is more responsible than Patrick Fitzgerald.

Mr. Rove helped organize the political-action committee American Crossroads and is the author of "The Triumph of William McKinley" (Simon & Schuster, 2015).

Appeared in the June 15, 2017, print edition.



Senate Panel to Probe Donald Trump's Firing of Ex-FBI Director James Comey

Byron Tau

4-5 minutes

June 14, 2017 1:02 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON—The Senate Judiciary Committee plans to open an investigation into the circumstances surrounding President Donald Trump's removal of James Comey as FBI director, a probe that could examine the thorny question of whether Mr. Trump improperly interfered in a continuing investigation by doing so.

"The Judiciary Committee has an obligation to fully investigate any alleged improper partisan interference in law enforcement investigations," said Sen. Chuck Grassley, an Iowa Republican and committee chairman, said in a letter released Wednesday. "It is my view that fully investigating the facts, circumstances, and rationale for Mr. Comey's removal will provide us the opportunity to do that on a cooperative, bipartisan basis.

"The American people deserve a full accounting of attempts to meddle in both our democratic processes and the impartial administration of justice," Mr. Grassley said.

Mr. Comey was removed from his position last month by Mr. Trump. In testimony before the Senate Intelligence Committee earlier this month, Mr. Comey said he had felt directed by the president to drop an investigation into former national security adviser Mike Flynn. Mr. Trump denies he gave such instructions.

The White House initially said Mr. Comey was removed for performance reasons, but Mr. Trump later suggested he was dismissed in part over the continuing Russia investigation.

Mr. Grassley's letter came in response to a push from Dianne Feinstein, the top Democrat on the Judiciary Committee. Ms. Feinstein has asked for Judiciary to conduct its own probe in addition to the other investigations unfolding on Capitol Hill. The Judiciary Committee has jurisdiction over federal law enforcement, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The announcement marks the latest intensification of congressional scrutiny of Mr. Trump's actions in the early months of his administration. Mr. Trump has called the inquiry into whether his associates colluded with Russia a "witch hunt."

A White House spokeswoman didn't immediately respond to a request for comment on Mr. Grassley's announcement.

The Senate and House intelligence committees are already probing whether Russia interfered in the 2016 elections. Mr. Grassley's announcement means another congressional panel will be examining the separate question of how and why Mr. Trump came to fire Mr. Comey.

Mr. Grassley said actions taken under the Obama administration would be examined by the committee as well, specifically whether former Attorney General Loretta Lynch acted improperly in the investigation into Hillary Clinton's use of a private email server while in government.

The FBI opened a probe of Mrs. Clinton's actions while she was serving as secretary of state after classified material was found on her server. Launching the probe was a highly charged move given that Mrs. Clinton was, at the time, expected to run for president as the Democratic nominee, something she eventually did.

Mr. Comey testified that Ms. Lynch "directed me not to call it an

'investigation' and call it a 'matter'—which confused me."

The Clinton campaign would insist for most of 2015 and 2016 that the FBI probe was a "security review" rather than a criminal investigation. Ms. Lynch also met briefly with Mrs. Clinton's husband, former President Bill Clinton, during the investigation, an action that was widely criticized as improper.

Ms. Feinstein agreed that Ms. Lynch's behavior in the Clinton email matter warranted further scrutiny.

"I think we need to know more about that, and there's only one way to know about it and that's to have the Judiciary Committee take a look at that," Ms. Feinstein said recently on CNN.

Write to Byron Tau at byron.tau@wsj.com

Appeared in the June 15, 2017, print edition as 'Senate Panel Will Examine President's Firing of Comey.'



5 Charged With Involuntary Manslaughter in Flint Water Crisis (UNE)

Scott Atkinson and Monica Davey

6-8 minutes

FLINT, Mich. — By the time Robert Skidmore, an 85-year-old former auto industry worker, died in late 2015, officials had seen signs for months that Flint was wrestling with

outbreaks of Legionnaires' disease, prosecutors say. Yet despite a wave of such cases in 2014 and 2015, no public warning was issued until early 2016.

By then, it was too late for Mr. Skidmore and 11 others: a failing so egregious, prosecutors say, that it amounted to involuntary manslaughter.

Five officials in Michigan, including the head of the state's health department, were charged on Wednesday. It is the closest investigators have come to directly blaming officials for the deaths and illnesses that occurred when a water contamination crisis enveloped this city.

The tainted water has been tied to lead poisoning in children and prompted officials to begin a costly, yearslong process of replacing pipes all over the city. Even now, officials recommend that only filtered tap water be consumed, and many residents say they can trust only bottled water, given false assurances they once received from state and local officials.

The latest charges reached farther than before into Michigan's state government, affecting two cabinet-level officials in the administration of Gov. Rick Snyder and leaving open the possibility that the investigation would go higher still.

Nick Lyon, the director of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, was charged with involuntary manslaughter and misconduct in office, felonies that could lead to as much as 20 years in prison. Dr. Eden V. Wells, the chief medical executive for the department, was charged with obstruction of justice and lying to a peace officer, and could face up to seven years if convicted. They are among 15 current and former state and local officials facing criminal charges as a 17-month investigation into Flint's tainted water supply continues.

Before Wednesday, the criminal charges had focused mainly on the lead contamination and, in counts like misconduct in office and willful neglect of duty, on ways that state and city workers had failed to do their jobs.

"The Flint water crisis was and is a failure of leadership," said an investigative report issued on Wednesday by Bill Schuette, Michigan's

attorney general. "A cause of the breakdown in state governmental management was a fixation, a preoccupation, with data, finances and costs, instead of placing the health, safety and welfare of citizens first."

Besides, the report found, a solution for Flint's essential water problem was maddeningly simple, and cheap: The addition of common anti-corrosion chemicals could have cost the financially struggling city only \$200 a day.

But officials failed to take that step when they switched the city's water supply in early 2014, the investigators said, partly to save money. Residents began complaining of puzzling colors, putrid odors and an array of rashes and illnesses, which eventually included Legionnaires' disease.

In charging Mr. Lyon, and four others who already faced other charges in the water case, with involuntary manslaughter, Mr. Schuette said they had failed to properly alert the public about increases in Legionnaires' cases, allowing the problem to continue and withholding crucial information from residents, who might have avoided the water had they known.

An examination of government emails from 2014, 2015 and 2016 revealed that officials were aware of the pattern of Legionnaires' cases, but that they failed to act swiftly on the revelations and tended to become mired in jurisdictional battles over protocol and responsibility.

Mr. Lyon knew of the Legionnaires' outbreak by late January 2015, court documents claim, but did not notify the public for another year. At one point, the documents allege, he said that "he can't save everyone" and that "everyone has to die of something."

The charging documents pointed in particular to the death of Mr. Skidmore, the former autoworker, on Dec. 13, 2015. Mr. Schuette said

that Mr. Skidmore had been tending to his ailing wife in mid-2015 when he grew ill, apparently from the water.

According to the charges, Mr. Lyon's "acts and failure to act resulted in the death of at least one person," Mr. Skidmore. The documents asserted that Mr. Lyon "willfully disregarded the deadly nature" of the Legionnaires' outbreak and "exhibited gross negligence when he failed to alert the public about the deadly outbreak and by taking steps to suppress information illustrating obvious and apparent harms that were likely to result in serious injury."

Defense lawyers for Mr. Lyon called the claims baseless and said they were confident in their client's case. One challenge for prosecutors may be proving a direct link between Flint's corroding water pipes and Legionnaires' disease, legal experts said. Some scientists have suggested that the corrosion may have allowed Legionella bacteria to thrive in the water supply during warm summer months.

"The true facts simply do not support the prosecution's claims," the defense lawyers, Chip Chamberlain and Larry Willey, said in a statement. "This case appears to be a misguided theory looking for facts that do not exist."

Governor Snyder, too, issued a statement of support for Mr. Lyon and Dr. Wells, and appeared to criticize the legal process, noting that other state employees had been charged more than a year ago but had yet to be tried in court.

"That is not justice for Flint, nor for those who have been charged," Mr. Snyder said. "Director Lyon and Dr. Wells have been and continue to be instrumental in Flint's recovery. They have my full faith and confidence, and will remain on duty at D.H.H.S."

Mr. Schuette, a Republican, is widely seen as a possible candidate

for governor in 2018. He declined to say whether the investigation might lead to charges against Mr. Snyder, though he emphasized that it was continuing and that the investigative report issued on Wednesday was an "interim" look at the Flint case. He said investigators had tried unsuccessfully to interview Mr. Snyder, who is barred by term limits from running for re-election, but he would not elaborate.

"We only file criminal charges when evidence of probable cause to commit a crime has been established, and we are not filing charges at this time," Mr. Schuette said.

Mr. Snyder's lawyer said that the governor has always been willing to be interviewed — but under oath, like other witnesses, to avoid any appearance of special treatment.

"We have repeatedly told the Office of Special Counsel that when they provide an investigative subpoena the governor will provide additional testimony under oath," the lawyer, Brian Lennon, said in a written statement.

Mr. Skidmore, whose death is at the center of the five counts of involuntary manslaughter issued on Wednesday, was found to have Legionnaires' disease in June 2015, after he went to a hospital with pneumonia-like symptoms.

"It's a very tragic story," Mr. Schuette said, adding later, "The family had to bury their mother and their father."

Mr. Skidmore's wife of more than six decades died only weeks after he became ill, and Mr. Skidmore continued to fight his symptoms on top of grief, his family said.

"Grandma died. Six months later, after bouncing between the hospital, home care and back, he passed away," said Megan Skidmore Cuttitta, his granddaughter. "Each time he went to the hospital, he'd get better, but each time he came home, he got worse."



California and New York just sued to protect Obama's final energy rules

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

4-5 minutes

Eleven states, led by California and New York, have sued the Trump administration for failing to finalize energy-efficiency regulations for portable air conditioners, walk-in coolers and other products.

The lawsuit, filed on Tuesday, represents the latest front in an escalating legal battle over the remaining pieces of Obama's climate change legacy — led by a coalition of blue states, which are also fighting attempts to roll back Obama's Clean Power Plan.

The pro-climate states have already made headway. Earlier, the Energy Department announced it would move ahead on energy-efficiency

standards for ceiling fans, after a prior lawsuit by New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman and his colleagues. The agency said that the regulation would take effect in September.

The current lawsuit involves the final five in a large batch of rules issued by the Obama administration's Energy Department, which were left in a curious state of limbo after Trump's inauguration.

The standards were finalized shortly before Trump's inauguration, but subjected to a mandatory 45 day "error correction" review, focused on catching typographical errors and other minor problems.

But the Trump administration did not, at the end of that review period, send the regulations on for formal publication in the Federal Register.

The case was filed by attorneys general from the states of

California, New York, Maine, Connecticut, Illinois, Vermont, Oregon, Washington, Maryland, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and the city of New York. Three environmental and public interest organizations, the Sierra Club, Natural Resources Defense Council and Consumer Federation of America, also filed suit Tuesday on the same topic.

The regulations cover air compressors, commercial boilers, portable air conditioners, uninterruptible power supplies and walk-in freezers.

The rules require manufacturers to improve the energy efficiency of

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL**

June 14, 2017
7:27 p.m. ET 252

COMMENTS

4-5 minutes

Senate Republicans continue to negotiate the details of their health-care reform, and one measure of progress is that their opponents are more manic and disingenuous. Progressives who used to deride the GOP for incompetence are now panicked that they may really succeed, and thus the faux tantrums.

The distortion du jour is that the GOP is operating "in secret." This week Minority Leader Chuck Schumer accused Republicans of working "behind closed doors, writing a bill they won't let the public read. . . . Today, no Member of Congress can read the bill because we don't know what it is."

Despite Mr. Schumer's bewilderment, he still knew enough to assert that the Senate bill will "greatly hurt the American people." Well, which is it? And if Republicans are trying to suppress a public debate about repealing and replacing Obama Care, then they haven't prevailed, either now or across the

**The
New York
Times**

Editorial :
The Editorial Board

3-4 minutes

Maggie Chiang

Nearly one in five adult children at some point provide care for at least one elderly parent, according to a new study by the Center for Retirement Research at Boston College. The burden is particularly demanding for daughters, who

their products over time, so as to consume less energy for the same level of performance.

The Obama administration had depicted such regulations as a key piece in its push to reduce the United States' greenhouse gas emissions in line with the Paris climate agreement — from which the Trump administration has said it will withdraw.

Energy-efficiency regulations reduce greenhouse gas emissions from electricity and also save consumers money. In this case, according to the states, the standards could save \$ 24 billion over a period of 30 years.

presidential campaign. Health care has been central to U.S. political debate for nearly a decade as Democrats created a new entitlement with little public support.

Compared to that effort, the Senate this time has been a model of deliberative democracy. On Dec. 19, 2009, a Saturday, then Majority Leader Harry Reid tossed the 2,100-page bill the Senate had spent that fall debating and offered a new bill drafted in an invitation-only back room. Democrats didn't even pretend to care what was in it while passing it in the dead of night on Dec. 24, amid a snowstorm, in the first Christmas Eve vote since 1895.

Liberals excused this legislative sausage-making as the price of making history, which was an insult to sausages. MIT economist and ObamaCare architect Jonathan Gruber told an academic audience in 2014 that "lack of transparency is a huge political advantage. And basically, you know, call it the stupidity of the American voter or whatever, but basically that was really, really critical to getting the thing to pass."

Mr. Gruber has since re-emerged to complain of the current debate that "I'm just worried about the speed

spend as much time on such care as spouses of older adults, and as much time as sons, in-laws, grandchildren and other relatives combined.

House Republicans' proposal to slash federal spending on Medicaid by some 25 percent over 10 years, shifting costs to states that could not afford them, would be devastating, because nursing homes, home care and community-based programs for the elderly account for almost two-thirds of

Energy and Environment newsletter

The science and policy of environmental issues.

"If they don't take effect, then consumers are the ones who really lose," said Lauren Urbanek, a senior energy policy advocate for the Natural Resources Defense Council, one of the groups suing over the incomplete regulations.

It isn't clear why the regulations are being held up, but four of them were apparently put on hold very early in the Trump administration when the new government put in place a regulatory freeze.

they're moving at for what that implies, because it implies no effort to actually get this right." The professor had apologized for what he called his "inexcusable" remarks in 2014 but he's betting he can con Americans again.

The irony is that the GOP negotiations are so time-consuming because Senators are trying to improve the product as they build a consensus that can get 50 votes. They're trying to answer the House bill's critics on the left and right, not that they'll get any credit.

One objection is that the House's tax credits aren't generous enough to help the working poor; the Senate is likely to increase their value. Another is that the House's Medicaid expansion wind-down is too disruptive for Governors to manage; the Senate will probably create a longer off-ramp. When they reach an agreement, they'll release the specifics.

The policy parameters are known to anyone paying attention, including those like Mr. Gruber who are arguing in especially bad faith because no bill the Senate could possibly produce would satisfy them. Even as the GOP moves the bill toward the political center,

Medicaid spending. One of the few ways that adult children can get help with caregiving duties is Medicaid's support for seniors, which many middle-class people qualify for after spending most of their income and assets on long-term care. Cutting Medicaid could make it more difficult to qualify, so more adult children would have to care for their parents.

The stresses, which are already significant, would become extreme. The researchers at Boston College

Since then, the Trump administration has also put in place a regulatory policy that requires the dismantling of two regulations for every new one issued.

A spokesman for the Energy Department said that the agency "does not comment on pending litigation."

One of the near-final regulations, regarding commercial boilers, also has run into opposition from industry.

reflexive liberal opposition increases.

Mr. Schumer claimed Republicans have "solicited zero bipartisan support," which is hilarious. Democrats opted for total pre-emptive resistance to the Trump Administration, and in January Mr. Schumer and Nancy Pelosi announced together that "we are a united caucus. We are two united caucuses. And we're united in our opposition to these Republican attempts to make America sick again," as he put it. House Republicans hadn't even released a bill at that point and the ObamaCare exchanges were already in increasing distress, but Democrats refused to participate.

This is also a notable change from 2009-10, when Democrats froze out centrist Republicans who wanted to cut a bipartisan deal of the kind Orrin Hatch and Ted Kennedy had struck on the children's health insurance program. The Obama White House preferred a far more liberal program that would complete the entitlement state. The GOP's obligation now is to start to clean up that mess.

Appeared in the June 15, 2017, print edition.

Editorial : Daughters Will Suffer From Medicaid Cuts

The Editorial Board

spend as much time on such care as spouses of older adults, and as much time as sons, in-laws, grandchildren and other relatives combined.

House Republicans' proposal to slash federal spending on Medicaid by some 25 percent over 10 years, shifting costs to states that could not afford them, would be devastating, because nursing homes, home care and community-based programs for the elderly account for almost two-thirds of

Medicaid spending. One of the few ways that adult children can get help with caregiving duties is Medicaid's support for seniors, which many middle-class people qualify for after spending most of their income and assets on long-term care. Cutting Medicaid could make it more difficult to qualify, so more adult children would have to care for their parents.

The stresses, which are already significant, would become extreme. The researchers at Boston College

found that these caregivers spend an average of 77 hours per month with their parents, the equivalent of about two weeks of full-time work. That time is money. Calculations based on the American Time Use Survey indicate that caregivers effectively forfeited \$522 billion in 2012 due to such duties; that is more than double the total cost of formal care, at \$211 billion. Women caregivers were more likely than men to retire because of these demands, and those who kept working reduced their workweeks

by three to 10 hours on average. Beyond this sacrifice, caregivers spend 35 percent of their own budget on parental care, surveys indicate.

Caregiving also takes a toll on physical and mental health. Women who care for parents report more pain, and significantly higher out-of-pocket costs for their own health care. Both

women and men say they are more depressed and had poorer health because of parental care.

Even if Medicaid spending were not cut, demand for long-term care would rise as baby boomers age, leading to increased reliance on adult children and formal caregiving arrangements. That unfolding dynamic is not a concern for the distant future. The youngest baby

boomers are now 52, the oldest are 71. More than half of 85-years-olds need help with one or more basic self-care tasks, including getting out of bed, walking across a room, going to the bathroom, bathing, dressing, eating, taking medicine, using a phone, shopping and cooking.

In the face of deep Medicaid cuts, a system of caregiving that is already clearly strained would implode.

If health, prosperity and dignity were driving policy making, lawmakers would be looking for ways to increase Medicaid coverage, not destroy it.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

COMMENTS

3 minutes

The Federal Open Market Committee surprised no one Wednesday when it raised the federal funds rate by another quarter percentage point, its third such increase since December. The real surprise Wednesday is that the government's measure of inflation fell in May to below the Fed's target of 2%.

The Fed's governors and regional presidents might have been spooked by that decline in the price

Editorial : The Fed Moves Up

June 14, 2017
7:24 p.m. ET 12

level to below their target, and a year or two ago they would have been. But the economy has now reached its eighth anniversary of expansion, and the Fed is still holding its target interest rate of 1%-1.25% below the increase in the consumer price index. The real rate of interest is still negative, even as the national jobless rate has fallen to 4.3% and the global economy seems to be accelerating.

In other words, the Fed hardly seems at risk of tightening too quickly even if the dangers of price inflation are receding. Much of the price decline is due to the fall in oil prices in recent weeks, and the Fed's decision makers should see

how that moves through the overall economy in the coming months.

Monetary conditions have even eased since the Fed's last move as long-bond rates have fallen. Investors bid up bond yields after they anticipated pro-growth tax policies from the new Republican Congress and President, and they have bid them back down as they grow more doubtful of that result. The Open Market Committee's estimates for future interest rate levels suggested one more increase through the end of 2017, but the committee can adjust that pace if the economy slows.

The Fed also released more detail of its plans to begin winding down

the huge balance sheet it acquired during and since the financial panic. Sometime this year the Fed will stop reinvesting all of the principal proceeds of its securities as they mature. The Fed will initially cap its roll off at \$6 billion a month for Treasury bonds and \$4 billion a month for mortgage-related debt and securities.

The idea seems to be to go slow given that the Fed has never attempted this kind of policy reversal. That's fair enough, but we wish the Fed started by selling its mortgage bonds first so it gets out of the business of allocating capital that much sooner. The U.S. housing market is doing well enough these days in any case.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Starr: Gorsuch Gets Comfortable in Scalia's Chair

Kenneth W. Starr

3-4 minutes

June 14, 2017 7:30 p.m. ET

The Supreme Court will convene Thursday afternoon for a tradition-rich ceremony welcoming its newest member. Like a civil wedding, Justice Neil Gorsuch's investiture will be short and sweet. After the attorney general reads aloud the formal commission, Justice Gorsuch will be escorted up to his seat, the chief justice will make a few welcoming remarks, and the court will adjourn.

Entirely symbolic, the ceremony comes during the court's busiest season, with the frenetic rush to decide the remaining cases from the term that began last October. After his rancor-filled confirmation process, Justice Gorsuch joined the court in mid-April, in time to

participate in the final 13 cases. On Monday the court issued his first opinion, in *Henson v. Santander*. It was unanimous.

Predictions about judicial behavior are frequently off-base, but Justice Gorsuch so far comes across as an energetic jurist in the Scalia mold. He set a rookie record for the number of questions asked—22—in a first appearance at the high court. Justice Sonia Sotomayor previously held the mark at 15.

On the substance, Justice Gorsuch seems committed to honoring Antonin Scalia's legacy. In a lecture last year at Case Western Reserve University, then-Judge Gorsuch proudly embraced his predecessor's approach to the law: "Though the critics are loud and the temptations to join them may be many, mark me down too as a believer that the traditional account of the judicial role Justice Scalia defended will endure."

When Scalia ascended to the high court in 1986, he saw the danger of a runaway judiciary, as embodied in the Warren Court and to a lesser extent the Burger Court. The judges were "making it up" as they went along. Justice Gorsuch used those words in his first oral argument, a case involving a complex interplay of federal statutes. Like Scalia, Justice Gorsuch searched for an authoritative answer in the text alone. That approach, textualism, was Scalia's way of restoring the judiciary's proper role.

Statutory interpretation provides daily grist for the judicial mill, but the stakes are far higher in interpreting the Constitution. To the textualist school, "making it up" is the ultimate judicial sin.

In contrast to Scalia, Justice Gorsuch came of age as a lawyer not in the freewheeling Warren Court era, but during the more judicially restrained leadership of

Chief Justice William Rehnquist. By that time, the Federalist Society was going strong, and Scalia's approach was increasingly in favor: The written Constitution was law, not moral philosophy.

Thursday afternoon, Justice Gorsuch will ceremonially take the chair Scalia occupied for almost 30 years. At his confirmation hearing, he called Scalia a mentor who "reminded us that words matter—that the judge's job is to follow the words that are in the law, not replace them with those that aren't."

Antonin Scalia changed the way mainstream judges think about their role in a representative democracy. On this investiture day, the Scalia tradition boasts a worthy inheritor.

Mr. Starr served as a federal judge, solicitor general and Whitewater independent counsel.

Appeared in the June 15, 2017, edition.