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FRANCE – EUROPE 2

- France bringing top Libyan rivals together in new initiative2
- Macron Takes Aim at Libya Standoff With Paris Talks.3
- France's Macron Faces Grassroots Court Challenge Over Party Rules3
- Rihanna will meet French president Emmanuel Macron after tweeting at him4

- Fortune : Uber Taps Insurance Group AXA in France to Cover Drivers4
- Fortune : Google Taxes: France Ready to Negotiate4
- Nature : President of troubled French funding agency resigns4
- Strange foamy balls are washing up on the shores of northern France (online).....5
- Disputes Between Germany and Turkey Threaten to Affect NATO Mission.....5
- Poland's President Vetoes 2 Proposed Laws Limiting Courts' Independence (UNE).....6

Polish President Blocks Two Bills Meant to Curb Court's Independence 7
 Editorial : Poland Pulls Back From the Brink, for Now .8
 Editorial : Poland's President Says Enough Is Enough...8
 Sierakowski : Poland Turns Away From Democracy, Thanks to the U.S..... 9
 Greece Looks to Turn a Corner After Years of Economic Pain 9
 Mead: Europe's Next Crisis: The Balkans..... 10

INTERNATIONALA..... 11

China Prepares for a Crisis Along North Korea Border (UNE)..... 11
 Chinese Fighter Forces U.S. Plane to Take Evasive Maneuvers..... 12
 Cooperation with Russia becomes central to Trump strategy in Syria (UNE) 12
 YouTube is tricking people who search for ISIS videos13
 U.S. Tries to Ease Tensions Between Israel and Jordan After Embassy Attack..... 14
 Video Shows U.S. Soldiers Surrendering Before Fatal Shooting in Jordan 15
 Israel Agrees to Remove Metal Detectors at Entrances to Aqsa Mosque Compound..... 15
 Editorial : The bounty that heads off famine 16

ETATS-UNIS 17

Senate Braces for Health Showdown With McCain on Hand but a Plan Unclear (UNE) 17
 Trump Urges GOP Senators to Overturn Affordable Care Act (UNE) 18
 Obamacare repeal vote still too close to call..... 18
 Editorial : Can Republicans Govern? 19
 Editorial : Every Republican health-care plan so far would cause great harm to the nation 20
 Leonhardt: G.O.P. Support for Trump Is Starting to Crack..... 20
 Jared Kushner Details Russia Meetings, Denies Collusion..... 21

'I Did Not Collude,' Kushner Says After Meeting Senate Investigators (UNE)..... 22
 Kushner questioned by Senate investigators on Russia (UNE)..... 23
 Trump leaves Sessions twisting in the wind while berating him publicly (UNE) 24
 Trump: Jared Kushner Faces Second Closed-Door Meetings..... 25
 Editorial : The Kushner Statement 26
 Editorial : Russia collusion: Donald in Wonderland..... 26
 Lahren : Give the Russia nonsense a rest..... 27
 On Russia, Congress shows remarkable unity 27
 Trump Is Becoming Unhinged at the Twists and Turns of Kremlingate 28
 With Probable White House Support, Congress Prepares to Vote on Russia Sanctions Bill 29
 Editorial : Congress's drastic — but necessary — rebuke to Trump 29
 Rampell : Jared Kushner 'forgets' to disclose his assets? Seize them. 30
 McGurn: Mueller Is Trumping Congress..... 31
 Scaramucci's White House Role Raises Questions for Planned Sale of His Investment Firm..... 31
 Gerson : Why Anthony Scaramucci won't make a dent in Trump's problems 32
 How Democrats Lost Voters to Trump—and Might Win Them Back 33
 Democrats Try to Find Economic Message After Railing Against Trump (UNE)..... 33
 Editorial : The Democrats' Agenda, and the Art of the Possible 34
 Editorial : The Democrats' Plan for Workers Falls Short..... 35
 Pelosi : Americans deserve better than the GOP agenda, so we're offering a better deal 35
 Editorial : Are Democrats offering 'A Better Deal'? Not so fast. 36
 Robinson : Forget 'A Better Deal.' Here's what would actually work for Democrats. 36
 In Congress, new fears and new protections in wake of baseball team shooting 37
 Editorial : A Terrorism Trial in the Federal Courts 38

FRANCE – EUROPE



France bringing top Libyan rivals together in new initiative

PARIS —
10-13 minutes

French President Emmanuel Macron will host a meeting of the two main rival leaders of chaotic Libya, his office said Monday, to try to "contribute to an end to the Libyan crisis," which is feeding Islamist militants, human traffickers preying on migrants and instability in the region.

The head of Libya's unity government, Fayez Serraj, and Gen. Khalifa Hifter, the Egyptian-backed commander of Libya's self-styled national army, are to meet Tuesday at a chateau outside the French capital, the presidential Elysee Palace said. The two were already in Paris a day before the encounter,

working with French experts to find common ground.

Macron is to meet separately with Serraj, the U.N.-backed Libyan prime minister, and the general, who has the support of the internationally recognized parliament in the country's east, before the two hold a face-to-face encounter with the

Libyan National Army's chief Khalifa Haftar, left, and Libya's UN-backed Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj. (Khalil Mazraawi/AFP/Getty Images)

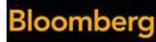
July 24 at 8:01 PM

United Nations' new special envoy for Libya, Ghassan Salamé.

French officials hope the Libyans can agree on a joint declaration, "simple but constructive," an official in the French president's office said.

A joint declaration, while not a political accord, would be a first for the rivals, who have met in the past, most recently in May in the United Arab Emirates.

Still, the idea of the Paris encounter is not to find a solution to the Libyan crisis. Salamé,



Macron Takes Aim at Libya Standoff With Paris Talks

@gviscusi More stories by Gregory Viscusi

5-7 minutes

By

24 juillet 2017 à 18:00 UTC-4
25 juillet 2017 à 08:24 UTC-4

- Rivals Serraj and Haftar to meet at a chateau near Paris
- French say goal is to find 'guidelines' for UN envoy Salame

Emmanuel Macron

Photographer: Krisztian Bocsi/Bloomberg

French President Emmanuel Macron is meeting Tuesday with the head of Libya's United Nations-backed government and the North African oil producer's powerful eastern-based military commander in the latest attempt to seek a solution to their standoff.

Macron's office said the initiative is aimed at facilitating the work of UN special negotiator Ghassan Salame, who will also take part in the talks near Paris between Prime Minister Fayez al-Serraj and Khalifa

the U.N. envoy, would make other proposals in the weeks ahead.

After the May encounter in Abu Dhabi, the hosts said there had been a "significant breakthrough." Libya TV said the men agreed on holding presidential and parliamentary elections next year in the fractured country.

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Major national and political news as it breaks.

Haftar, who leads the so-called Libyan National Army.

"The goal is to build a state capable of responding to the fundamental needs of Libyans and with a unified regular army under civilian control," Macron's office said in a statement Monday announcing the meeting. "It's necessary to control Libyan territory and its borders in order to fight against terrorist groups and human and weapons traffickers, but also in order to return to a stable institutional life."

Libya descended into chaos following the uprising that toppled Muammar Qaddafi in 2011, with myriad armed groups and two administrations vying for power. A UN-mediated peace deal was meant to unite the country, but since arriving in Tripoli in March 2016, Serraj has struggled to expand his influence outside the capital. Salame, a Lebanese academic and civil servant, is the latest of the string of special UN negotiators.

Serraj and Haftar, who's backed by Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Russia, met in Abu Dhabi in May for the first time since early last year. Initially hailed as a breakthrough, analysts said later the meeting was fruitless. A joint official statement was never issued and battlefield

France "wants to facilitate a political entente" and "mark its support for efforts to build a political compromise, under the auspices of the United Nations," that includes all actors in the fractious country, a statement by Macron's office said. The challenge, the statement added, is to "build a state capable of responding to the fundamental needs of Libyans" with one regular army.

That is far from the current situation. Rival governments and militias have battled for supremacy since Libya

descended into chaos after the 2011 civil war, in which dictator Moammar Gaddafi was toppled and then killed.

Political agreement in Libya is widely viewed as the key to ridding the country of extremist groups and the trafficking of weapons and people.

France, and Europe, see the return of a stable nation as vital to controlling Libya's borders — and cutting the flow of migrants to Italy.

developments in the south of Libya soon eroded any goodwill.

The two sides will probably be urged to agree to a cease-fire, to create a unified national army, and to hold elections "as soon as possible," a draft statement showed, though French officials warned it was not finalized.

Among the main points of contention is Article 8 of the UN peace deal, which puts the army under civil authority.

French officials say their goal Tuesday is to define the general guidelines that would help Salame reach an agreement leading to elections next year. The French say they have kept Libya's neighbors such as Algerian, Egypt, and Italy informed. Apart from the U.A.E, Egypt and Algeria have also been involved in recent attempts to find a political settlement.

Italian Foreign Minister Angelino Alfano, in an interview with the newspaper La Stampa published on Tuesday, voiced his country's irritation at Macron's initiative. Italy sees Libya, its former colony, as its sphere of influence.

Italy, like France, supports the Tripoli government and is in contact with Haftar, Alfano said.

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"Our priority however is to strengthen the new UN Envoy Ghassan Salame," Alfano added. "There are too many processes open in Libya, too many mediators, too many initiatives, from the Gulf to Egypt, from Algeria to Tunisia, from the European Union to the interests of individual member states: we need to unify efforts and concentrate them on Salame, if each party follows its own path we'll end up undermining him."

Tuesday's meeting will begin at 3 p.m. Paris time at Chateau de la Celle, a foreign ministry property west of Paris. Macron will hold individual meetings with Serraj and Haftar, before four-way talks including Salame. Salame will also sit down earlier in the day with French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian. Macron will make a statement to the press around 5:30 p.m.

— *With assistance by Ghaith Shennib, and John Follain*

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France's Macron Faces Grassroots Court Challenge Over Party Rules

2-3 minutes

PARIS —

French President Emmanuel Macron faced the first grassroots revolt from within his own camp on Monday when hundreds of activists asked a court to halt voting on new rules for the political party that helped him win power in May.

The challenge came on the heels of a poll showing a slump in the 39-year-old president's approval rating after a series of politically testing

events, including a budget row that prompted the head of the army to quit.

Members of Macron's Republic on the Move party (LREM), which espouses a break with old ways of doing politics, are taking part in an electronic vote on new party statutes that is due to end on July 31.

The activists involved in the legal challenge say they number about 1,200, a fraction of the LREM's total membership of more than 375,000, but they reveal a degree of discontent in the ranks with Macron's forceful style of leadership.

The group says the disputed statutes would limit decision-making and future internal ballots to the LREM's upper echelons.

"This 'lockout' exposes a lack of trust in party members and looks at odds with LREM [party] values," they said.

"The lack of internal democracy is even more distasteful due to the fact that it's all been done in a rush in the middle of the summer without proper consultation of activists."

A party spokeswoman brushed off the accusations, saying LREM was giving a bigger role to grassroots

members in its structures than other French parties and had further increased that power after consulting members earlier this month.

A ruling is expected this week on the court challenge after a hearing on Monday.

Macron, who swept to power on promises of non-partisan rule and an end to traditional Left-versus-Right politics, has had a tough month, marked by a public row over military spending cuts with top armed forces chief General Pierre de Villiers that led to de Villiers' resignation.

An Ifop poll released on Sunday showed Macron's approval rating falling 10 percentage points to 54

percent.

Billed as the biggest drop for a newly elected president since

Jacques Chirac in 1995, it echoed a broadly similar result in a recent BVA poll.



Rihanna will meet French president Emmanuel Macron after tweeting at him

Sara M Moniuszko, USA TODAY
Published 10:18 a.m. ET July 24, 2017

2 minutes

Rihanna attended the Christian Dior show on March 3, 2017 in Paris in a dark ensemble with a purse to match. (Photo: Pascal Le Segretain, Getty Images for Dior)

Thanks to her social media skills, Rihanna is ready to put global leaders to *Work*.

The singer took to Twitter Sunday to reach out to French president Emmanuel Macron as well as leaders from Germany, Canada and Argentina to ask for their help in supporting the Global Partnership for Education's commitment to education.

"Bonjour," she wrote in the tweet to Macron. "will France commit to #FundEducation?"

And her Internet outreach paid off — she is set to meet the French president on Wednesday at the Elysée Palace in Paris according to his public schedule.

This isn't the first time Rihanna has helped rally support from global

leaders. As a global ambassador for the organization, she reached out to Macron's predecessor François Hollande on Twitter last year, which resulted in a positive reply from the past president.

Macron recently welcome another American influencer to Paris, President Donald Trump. Trump visited Paris with the first lady for Bastille Day on July 13 and 14.

Fortune : Uber Taps Insurance Group AXA in France to Cover Drivers

Reuters

3 minutes

Uber and insurance group AXA have joined forces in France to offer accident cover for drivers who work for the ride hailing service after it faced criticism over their treatment.

In France, as in other countries, Uber has been challenged by lawmakers, workers' rights advocates, and the established taxi industry. They complain it is able unfairly to undercut rival services because it uses independent workers who do not enjoy the same rights and benefits as permanent employees.

The agreement announced in France on Tuesday comes on top of

new benefit package schemes that have been announced in various countries in which it operates including the United States and Britain.

"This partnership will provide a safety net for the independent workers who enjoy flexible work at the touch of a button and we'll carry on listening about further improvements we can make to create the best possible experience," said Pierre-Dimitri Gore-Coty, Uber's head of operations for Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

No details of the French scheme were provided except to say that the insurance would be free for drivers. A statement from the two companies said there would be further

information available once the system was in place in the autumn.

Related: Montreal and Toronto Are Becoming Magnet Cities for Tech Giants Google, Microsoft, and Uber

Currently, self-employed drivers' compulsory insurance policies do not offer life cover. AXA said that the French protection of Uber workers would cover medical expenses, disability indemnities, and survivor benefits in case of an accident.

Across the world, large car insurers have begun rolling out coverage tailored to ride-hailing drivers.

In some places that fills a void that had existed for drivers whose personal policies do not cover trips during which they are driving passengers for pay.

In France, however, Uber services are restricted to drivers who already hold a minicab license. Its ride-sharing arm, UberPOP, was outlawed in 2015.

Drivers working for Uber in Britain will be able to access illness and injury cover under a new scheme run by the Association of Independent Professionals & the Self-Employed, Uber said earlier in April.

In New York, Uber holds a group ride-sharing insurance policy that covers accident during a prearranged trip, but also while the driver is waiting for a trip request. The protection insurance works only when a driver is logged in to the app.

Fortune : Google Taxes: France Ready to Negotiate

Reuters

2 minutes

France is ready to negotiate a deal with Google over back taxes, budget minister Gerald Darmanin told financial daily *Les Echos* on Monday.

A French court ruled this month that Google was not liable to pay 1.1 billion euros (\$1.3 billion) in back taxes demanded by French authorities.

Though Darmanin had announced previously that the government would appeal against that ruling he told *Les Echos*: "Nobody wants a long legal process that delays the recovery of back taxes. If Google is ready for sincere talks ... our door is open."

Reuters was unable to contact a Google France representative for immediate comment outside business hours.

The French finance ministry considers that the U.S. company had declared in Ireland advertising revenue earned in France and had

thus avoided paying corporate tax and value-added tax.

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However, the Paris administrative court ruled on July 12 that Google Ireland Limited was not subject to corporate and value-added taxes for the period 2005-2010, striking down the tax administration's demands for back payments.

The ruling in favor of Google, now part of Alphabet Inc, followed a court adviser's recommendation that Google did not have a "permanent

establishment" or sufficient taxable presence to justify the bill.

Darmanin rejected that interpretation, telling *Les Echos* that "the profits really generated in our country surpass the modest amounts that are declared."

"Our target is to receive the tax income that corresponds to the real activity of Google in France," Darmanin was quoted as saying, adding that other companies in a similar situation could also start talks with the ministry.

Nature : President of troubled French funding agency resigns

Barbara Casassus

5-6 minutes

Nature | News

Chief's departure after management complaints might not solve National Research Agency's woes.

24 July 2017

Natalie Hill/Science Europe/CC BY 2.0

Michael Matlosz resigned as president of the French National Research Agency last week.

French researchers say they're pleased that the president and chief executive of the country's National

Research Agency (ANR) has stepped down, but worry that the organisation's woes might not be resolved by his exit.

Michael Matlosz resigned on 21 July, after more than a year of

widely reported discontent with how the funding body was being managed. Despite an uptick in its budget this year, the ANR's funding is still less than it was in 2012, and success rates for grant applications are worryingly low.

Matlosz, a former chemical engineer who was promoted to his post in 2014, left because the agency needed "a new impetus" following recent organizational changes, according to an 18 July statement by Frédérique Vidal, who became France's minister for higher education, research and innovation in May. Matlosz and the ANR declined to comment further. Arnaud Torres, an ANR director, is serving as an interim chief until a new head is found.

Year of discontent

Many scientists say that Matlosz's management created serious tensions within the ANR, including administrative

choices that upset senior scientists and those who served on grant-evaluation panels.

The agency has had a number of public upsets. In March 2016, sociologist François Héran was fired as head of its social-sciences department. In June the same year, all 20 members of an evaluation panel in mathematics and computer science resigned together, complaining that bureaucracy had reduced their freedom to select proposals. Last month, molecular biologist Catherine Dargemont, director of the agency's biology and health division, was fired after she sent a letter to the ANR's governing board, co-signed by ten colleagues, complaining about "recurrent dysfunctions" at the ANR, including the gradual sidelining of senior scientists in important decisions.

And on 26 June, Bernard Hoflack, a proteomics researcher at the Technical University of Dresden, Germany, who is president of the

ANR's evaluation panel in cellular and developmental biology, wrote to the agency's management on behalf of 9 out of 13 panel heads, criticizing poor internal communication, among other things.

Bernard Meunier, a chemist and past president of the French Academy of Sciences, says that ANR bureaucracy is still too burdensome. "Principal investigators spend a huge amount of time on applications, filling in endless forms, finding partners and trying to justify the nine new 'societal challenges', which politicians believe will help create jobs and wealth," he says. He thinks that 70 measures introduced by previous research minister Thierry Mandon to simplify researchers' lives have had almost no impact because administrative bodies resisted them.

The ANR also has broader problems. In France's latest budget, for 2017, the agency's spending was boosted 8% to €643 million (US\$748

million) — still lower than the €710 million it was allotted five years ago. This means that competition to win project funds is fierce, with average success rates running at a paltry 12–13%.

On 11 July, Vidal told a French senate committee that the ANR budget would have to be increased. But last week, the government proposed a cut of €180 million to the research ministry's budget, out of a total €331-million reduction in funding for higher education and research amidst wider cuts of more than €3 billion in public spending. That does not augur well for increases at individual agencies; the ministry said it had not yet decided how much the ANR might lose in funds.



Strange foamy balls are washing up on the shores of northern France (online)

By Amy B Wang

3-4 minutes

Nobody knew what they were at first.

They've been described as "strange spongelike clumps," "yellow mousse" and, perhaps most disturbingly, "possibly the biggest balls of earwax ever."

In recent weeks, hundreds of thousands of mysterious yellow blobs have swept across about 20 miles of the beaches in northern France, according to the Local. Ranging in size and shape, the balls looked like they had the consistency of anything from packing foam to unbaked scone dough.

The unexplained arrival of the spongelike balls baffled locals and tourists alike along France's Opal Coast, usually better known for its tranquil beaches and laid-back fishing villages.

It wasn't long before speculation and tongue-in-cheek headlines about the shapes emerged. Many jokingly pointed to a certain pineapple-dwelling underwater character.

Last week, local firefighters collected samples and sent them to be analyzed. The spongelike clumps were deemed to be paraffin wax, and Pas-de-Calais prefecture officials said in a statement that the substance did not pose any danger to public health or flora and fauna, according to La Voix du Nord.

The statement also noted that the paraffin wax did not need to be

specially treated before being discarded — but did warn visitors with children not to accidentally eat any.

In an interview with Canadian Broadcasting Corp. Radio, however, Jonathan Hénichart, president of the nonprofit Sea-Mer Association, said he still had concerns about what the beached sponge balls could mean. He suspects that a cargo ship carrying industrial paraffin wax may have washed its tank and emptied the paraffin residue too close to shore. It wasn't the first time paraffin wax had appeared on France's shores, he added.

Speaking of Science newsletter

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[Giant snow boulders washed up in Siberia]

"The first time it was not yellow, it was a pink paraffin wax, and then this winter, we got three tons of this paraffin wax but it was white," Hénichart told "As It Happens" host Helen Mann. "And now we received some yellow ones. I don't know maybe they think it's funny to send us some different colors each time."

Hénichart added that even though local officials had said the substance was harmless, the sheer amount of wax on the beach "makes it toxic because the local wildlife will live with this."

"It looks like regulations are too light," Hénichart told CBC Radio. "It's too easy for ships are able to do what they want."



Disputes Between Germany and Turkey Threaten to Affect NATO Mission

Julian E. Barnes and Emre Peker

7-9 minutes

July 24, 2017 12:09 p.m. ET

BRUSSELS—The North Atlantic Treaty Organization is working urgently to defuse a dispute between Turkey and Germany that threatens its operations including counterterrorism missions in the Middle East.

The deepening political divide risks curtailing NATO surveillance flights over Turkey from an air base in Konya, central Turkey, if German lawmakers aren't granted access to personnel stationed there. German officials argue the visits are part of a mandate governing German military deployments abroad.

Last month Berlin ended German operations from nearby Incirlik air base, relocating troops to Jordan, after Ankara blocked a visit by German lawmakers.

Other NATO members and allies including the Netherlands, the U.S. and Austria have also gotten into their own spats with Turkey, unsettling relations inside the 29-country alliance.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg last week was in contact with the Turkish and German foreign ministers seeking a compromise in the current dispute, a NATO official said.

On Monday, NATO announced a compromise in which the German

legislators visit the Konya air base as part of a NATO delegation under the alliance's flag, spokesman Piers Cazalet said. Turkish officials didn't respond to requests for comment on the NATO proposal.

German lawmakers welcomed the compromise. Henning Otte, a lawmaker and defense expert with Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservatives, said, "This is the only way to regain normal relations in the alliance."

Turkey, an early member of NATO and its second-largest military behind the U.S., long played a pivotal role in the security alliance because of its border with the Soviet Union and its anticommunist stance. Today, its position bordering Syria puts it on the front lines of fighting Islamic State and other terror groups.

NATO diplomats want to keep the German contingent at the Konya air base because Germany provides roughly one-third of the air crew for the NATO AWACS surveillance planes. NATO isn't directly involved in fighting Islamic State but provides valuable surveillance and air-traffic management to NATO member forces.

NATO is no stranger to quarrels between members, mainly border disputes, but has long managed to limit them. The latest disagreements are different, current and former NATO officials say. Turkey and its NATO allies are now sniping over fundamental policy issues including human rights, designations of terrorist organizations and decisions on how to fight Islamic State.

The situation is alarming, NATO officials and diplomats said.

"We cannot afford to have disagreements destroy what has been created over decades to preserve security," said Lithuanian Foreign Minister Linas Linkevičius, an advocate for accommodating Turkey. "Let's go and talk."

Turkey's relations inside NATO have deteriorated over the year since a failed

coup attempt there. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan responded with a crackdown that expanded from coup-plotters to opposition lawmakers, journalists, academics and human-rights advocates.

Some NATO members are increasingly critical of how Mr. Erdogan has consolidated power. Mr. Erdogan has responded by attacking NATO allies for supporting Kurdish and other terrorist organizations hostile to Turkey.

Turkish officials have been particularly upset with European allies granting asylum to alleged coup-plotters, as well as Kurdish rallies against Mr. Erdogan and in support of the separatist PKK, which is listed as a terrorist organization by Ankara and NATO. Ankara's Western critics, such as Germany, have cited free speech for allowing the demonstrations and a deterioration in Turkey's rule of law for refusing to extradite suspected putschists.

"The government that shelters terrorists from Turkey in Germany must first account for that," Mr. Erdogan said Friday in Istanbul. "Germany must pull itself together."

Turkish officials have leveled similar criticism at the U.S., long one of Turkey's closest allies. An adviser to Mr. Erdogan last year suggested a ban on U.S. operations from Incirlik over Washington's support for Syrian Kurdish forces that Ankara considers terrorists.

U.S. officials have played down the rift, saying relations are strong out of

public view. Still, the publication last week by a Turkish state-run news agency of a map purportedly showing the locations of U.S. forces deployed in Syria drew a warning from the Pentagon.

Wrangling with Turkey is being intensified by domestic politics in some European countries. Germany holds national elections in September and Austria one month later.

NATO in May delayed exercises with all of its partners due to a dispute between Turkey and Austria after Austrian politicians criticized Mr. Erdogan's policies. NATO agreed to Turkey's demands to put on hold its relationship with Austria, which isn't a member.

Former NATO Deputy Secretary-General Alexander Vershbow said the latest fights are particularly difficult because many are rooted in Mr. Erdogan's belief that he and his country are being slighted by Europe. The Turkish president has repeatedly criticized NATO allies for being slow to condemn the coup and offer him their support.

"It got much more personal," said Mr. Vershbow, now a senior adviser at Rasmussen Global, a consulting firm run by previous NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen. "That is what is different from some of the substantive issues of past."

The latest fight between Germany and Turkey emerged over recent weeks after Germany announced its exit from Incirlik. Turkey offered to allow German lawmakers to visit

troops in Konya but contested the presence of politicians Ankara says support Kurdish terrorists. German officials said politicians from all political parties must be allowed to visit the troops.

Diplomatic back-channeling failed and a public war of words grew. Turkey last Tuesday detained a German human-rights activist pending a trial. Berlin summoned Turkey's ambassador, threatening to cut EU financial support, issuing a travel alert and questioning German investments in Turkey.

The disputes between Turkey and Germany are largely not about NATO, but the spillover from recurring tensions are now putting an important mission—providing air surveillance to the anti-Islamic State—at risk. They also threaten the steady flow of intelligence from reconnaissance flights that help Turkey protect its 565-mile border with Syria, where it actively fights both Islamic State and Kurdish militias.

"If the Turks and Germans don't sort this out it could precipitate a termination of the AWACS flights," Mr. Vershbow said.

—Ned Levin in Istanbul and Andrea Thomas in Berlin contributed to this article.

Write to Julian E. Barnes at julian.barnes@wsj.com and Emre Peker at emre.peker@wsj.com

Appeared in the July 25, 2017, print edition as 'Political Rift Poses Risk for NATO.'

The New York Times

Rick Lyman
9-11 minutes

President Andrzej Duda of Poland in Warsaw on Monday. Pawel Supernak/European Pressphoto Agency

WARSAW — Andrzej Duda was a relatively obscure member of the right-wing Law and Justice party when the leader of the party and the most powerful man in the country plucked him from the chorus line to become its candidate for president in 2015. For most of the party's first 20 months in power, he was a reliable proponent of the governing party's nationalist initiatives.

On Monday, President Duda defied his patron, Jaroslaw Kaczynski, and vetoed two bills aimed at placing Polish courts firmly under political control.

Poland's President Vetoes 2 Proposed Laws Limiting Courts' Independence (UNE)

"It seems that the reality inside the ruling camp is more complex than we might think," said Rafal Chwedoruk, a political scientist at the University of Warsaw, in an interview with the Polish Press Agency.

There were already whispers of growing friction between the two leaders, an apparent schism that reflects a broader divide that has split Poland. The country was once in the vanguard of the democratic change that swept the region after the collapse of Communism. But it has steadily moved toward light authoritarianism and strident nationalism under Law and Justice, which has systematically dismantled much of that progress.

Law and Justice officials, seemingly blindsided by the vetoes, retreated to Mr. Kaczynski's office in the party headquarters to discuss ways forward. In a speech to the nation,

Beata Szydlo, the prime minister, defended the legislation and insisted the party would not give up.

"The president's veto has slowed down the proceedings on reform," Ms. Szydlo said. "But we will not back down from the path of repairing the state. We will not give in to pressures."

Exactly how the party will proceed — whether it will seek to overturn the president's veto, or come up with fresh legislation — she did not say.

Since assuming power, Law and Justice has drawn criticism from European Union officials and political opponents for a series of initiatives that, step by step, have placed formerly independent institutions more firmly under political control. Warnings from Brussels were met with defiance

and counterwarnings to stay out of Poland's domestic politics.

Mr. Duda's move came after several days of dire warnings from the union that passing the laws could result in legal action, even sanctions — as well as after growing street protests.

One of the laws he vetoed would have forced the resignation of all Supreme Court justices, with their replacements to be selected by the justice minister. The other would have given government-appointed members effective veto power in the National Council of the Judiciary, which selects judicial candidates. Both will be sent back to Parliament.

Parliament has the power to override the vetoes, but doing so would require the agreement of 60 percent of lawmakers — a threshold that the Law and Justice Party, which has only a thin majority, could

not meet without support from other parties.

No such partners stepped forward Monday. Pawel Kukiz, a pop star who formed his own political party and was considered the likeliest to side with Law and Justice, posted praise for President Duda on his Facebook page.

In a televised address Monday evening, President Duda said he intended to produce his own version of the bills because he agreed with the government that changes to the courts were needed.

"Without the reform of the justice system, there is no possibility of building a just state," he said. "The bills prepared by the Parliament largely met these goals. However, I couldn't sign them."

Mr. Duda said he was troubled by the provisions that gave the country's chief prosecutor and justice minister power over the choice of high court justices. He was also upset that the bill was pressed through Parliament without being presented to his office for consultations.

"Poland needs reform of the judiciary," Mr. Duda said, "but I am a supporter of a wise reform."

Demonstrators in Lublin, Poland, protesting on Sunday against the proposals. Agencja Gazeta/Reuters

A practicing Catholic and former Boy Scout with a cherubic smile and an upbeat demeanor, President Duda, 45, went along with the government's earlier initiatives, like the one asserting control over the Constitutional Tribunal, which rules on the constitutionality of new legislation and is now dominated by government

supporters. Another placed supporters in control of government-owned media.

The president came under heavy fire for pardoning a party official whose appeal on abuse of power charges was still working its way through the courts. The official, Mariusz Kaminski, was then put in charge of the country's secret services.

But the latest moves against the courts were apparently a step too far for the president.

"I feel that the reform in this shape will not increase the sense of security and justice," Mr. Duda said at the news conference.

Mr. Duda said he would sign a third bill, which reorganizes Poland's local judiciary. It would give the justice minister the power to select the heads of the local courts and — in certain cases — even to direct judges to particular cases. Although protesters and political opponents praised the president's vetoes, they said they would continue their campaign until the third bill is vetoed as well.

The president is a fresher and more telegenic personality than Mr. Kaczynski, now 68, a dour figure who lives alone in north Warsaw and prefers to govern from behind the scenes.

Mr. Duda, the son of teachers, was a studious young man in his native Krakow. He earned a law degree at Jagiellonian University in Krakow and joined its faculty, becoming chairman of its administrative law division.

In the early 2000s, he was a member of the centrist Freedom Union Party, which supported liberal

democratic policies and Western-style free market reforms. But by 2005, when he started his own law firm, his conservatism and Catholicism drew him to Law and Justice, which that year won power in parliamentary elections.

He was never a major figure in the party, first acting as a legal adviser, then as a deputy minister in the Justice Ministry and as a legal aide to Mr. Kaczynski's twin brother, former President Lech Kaczynski, who died in a 2010 plane crash. For a few months, he was the party's press spokesman. He lost a race for Parliament in 2007, though he got in a few years later, and finished third for mayor of Krakow in 2010.

By late 2014, when Mr. Kaczynski chose him as president, Mr. Duda was representing the party in the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France.

As the day dragged on, it became clearer that Mr. Kaczynski and the party's leaders were genuinely surprised and upset by the president's move.

Mr. Kaczynski will "never forgive" the president, said Mariusz Witczak, a lawmaker from Civil Platform, the leading opposition party.

"I believe this is the beginning of a conflict within the ruling camp," said Krzysztof Gawkowski, secretary general of the Democratic Left Alliance, a small opposition party. "For now, it's hard to say how far Andrzej Duda's independence will go."

Lech Walesa, the Nobel Peace Prize laureate who led the Solidarity movement that toppled Communism a quarter-century ago, called the decision "difficult and courageous."

Mr. Walesa, who was the first president after Communism, and who has feuded with Mr. Kaczynski since the 1990s, said he was "positively surprised," adding that he believed Mr. Duda was "beginning to feel like a president."

But Mr. Walesa called on protesters not to slacken their efforts. "What's comforting is that the nation is waking up, that the youth are waking up," he said. "Don't stop protesting!"

On Monday, the Nationwide Women's Strike — a group that brought tens of thousands into the streets late last year in a successful effort to get the government to rescind a bill outlawing all abortions — gave Mr. Duda 48 hours to veto the third bill on local courts, warning of "civil disobedience on an unprecedented scale" if he failed to do so.

At Monday's news conference, Mr. Duda said he had spent the weekend consulting with analysts, historians, philosophers, legal scholars and others, but was most struck by a discussion he had with Zofia Romaszewska, a veteran anti-Communist activist who is a supporter of the government.

She "told me something which struck me most during the weekend," Mr. Duda said. "She said, 'Mr. President, I lived in a state where the general prosecutor could do virtually anything, and I wouldn't like to come back to this state.'"

Correction: July 24, 2017

An earlier version of this article misstated the given name of a lawmaker who said the vetoes should spur "quick reform of the justice system." He is Stanislaw Tyszka, not Pawel.



Polish President Blocks Two Bills Meant to Curb Court's Independence

Drew Hinshaw and Wiktor Szary

6-8 minutes

Updated July 24, 2017 5:45 p.m. ET

WARSAW—Poland's President Andrzej Duda vetoed legislation passed by parliament that would have forced the entire Supreme Court into retirement, in a surprise move that bucked his own party and handed a victory to Poland's pro-democracy protesters.

After days of demonstrations in nearly all major cities, Mr. Duda announced on Monday he wouldn't sign two of the three laws that, taken together, would have given Poland's populist ruling party, Law and Justice, considerable control over the country's judiciary.

"This reform, in this shape, would not strengthen the sense of security and justice" in Poland, the president said. He subsequently announced that he had carried out the vetoes, as protests continued late on Monday outside the presidential palace.

The legislation had drawn the ire of European Union leaders, who warned the measures it set forth would erode the rule of law in Poland's post-Communist democracy. Many of the tens of thousands of Poles who protested believed action from the EU would be decisive in pressuring the government to back down.

The debate in Brussels, however, has moved more slowly than the reaction in Poland itself. The EU's executive branch was set on Wednesday to discuss legal

procedures that could lead to fines against Poland after the country's leaders repeatedly rebuffed EU attempts to start a dialogue. But those actions would have taken months to bear fruit. Bolder steps such as stripping Poland of funding or its voting rights would ultimately require the consensus of all 27 other EU members, making them unlikely.

Meanwhile, Mr. Duda saw a more widespread alliance of opposition rise up. Dozens of university rectors, hundreds of Polish legal experts, top business lobbies and former anti-Communist dissidents all voiced reservations about the bills. The U.S. State Department also criticized the legislation, as did U.S. Senator John McCain. On Monday, prominent Catholic leaders, normally close to the ruling party, thanked Mr.

Duda for his decision to veto the bills.

That broad chorus of opposition appears to have moved Mr. Duda to break with his party. In announcing his intention on Monday, he mentioned a conversation with Zofia Romaszewska, a 76-year-old anti-Communist dissident who was in Poland's 1980s Solidarity movement and has been close to the ruling party. The laws, she said, would return Poland to an era when courts took orders from the ruling party, as they did under Communism.

"I agree with all those who say that it should not be this way," the president said. "It would deepen the divisions in our society."

One of the laws Mr. Duda vetoed would have retired every judge on the Supreme Court except those

exempted by the justice minister, who would have then been allowed to appoint their temporary replacements. He also vetoed a second law that would have given the justice minister and parliament the authority to choose most of the appointees charged with selecting new Supreme Court judges to replace those temporary judges.

The ruling party and the opposition agreed that the two laws would have amounted to a milestone for Poland. The Law and Justice party saw them as a means to purge the last of the country's officials who entered public life in the tainted Communist era. The opposition said the laws would have pushed Poland toward becoming an authoritarian-tinged democracy like Turkey or Russia, where leaders face few constitutional restraints.

Both factions said they were surprised by the vetoes from Mr. Duda, a party loyalist who had never before so exerted his independence. Many protesters who rallied for days outside his office said they

considered their efforts a hopeless bid to inspire him to defy his party.

Mr. Duda, an obscure deputy justice minister when he was put forward by Law and Justice leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski as the party's 2015 presidential candidate, had been seen as a mere figurehead for the ruling party. A popular TV comedy show here lampoons the Polish president as forever stuck in Mr. Kaczynski's waiting room.

With Mr. Duda's acquiescence, the Law and Justice party has passed a series of laws securing more direct parliamentary and government control over the press, as well as over a tribunal—separate from the Supreme Court—that decides whether laws are constitutional.

Mr. Duda's vetoes may now provoke a split in the ruling party, political scientists said, with the president exerting himself as a moderating force.

"I think this is maybe the beginning of a new Andrzej Duda, a new Polish president, an independent

president," said Marcin Matczak, a law professor at the University of Warsaw. "We now have a better chance for a more balanced politics in Poland, and for separation of powers to remain."

Mr. Duda said he would sign a third law, which gives the ruling party more administrative powers over judges who preside over the country's lower courts. He also said he would like to help write legislation over the next two months aimed at overhauling the country's judiciary in what he called "wise reform."

With that process still ahead, the president's vetoes aren't the last word on a controversial matter. "It's a big deal but it doesn't mean the status quo in the Polish judiciary will stay," said Maciej Kisilowski, associate professor of law at the Central European University in Budapest, Hungary.

After the announcement, top ruling-party officials gathered in their headquarters in central Warsaw to discuss further steps. The party doesn't have enough votes to

override their president's veto, but it promised more action ahead.

Arriving for the meeting, Deputy Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki told reporters he was "surprised" and "disappointed" by Mr. Duda's action. Another prominent official complained that "someone chickened out."

"Changes to the judicial system and Poland's justice system are necessary," said Stanislaw Karczewski, head of the upper chamber of the Polish parliament. "And they will be implemented."

—Laurence Norman in Brussels contributed to this article.

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Editorial : Poland Pulls Back From the Brink, for Now

The Editorial Board

4-5 minutes

Protesters in front of the presidential palace in Warsaw urging the Polish president to reject a bill that would change the judiciary system. Adam Chelstowski/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

It took one of Jaroslaw Kaczynski's accomplices in the ruling party he controls to put the brakes to his ruthless assault on Poland's democracy. To general surprise, President Andrzej Duda, a former Law and Justice party backbencher loyal to Mr. Kaczynski, vetoed two bills that would have ended the judiciary's independence and crippled the rule of law. That is heartening, but not the end of the problem.

Following two weeks of massive demonstrations, and after extensive consultations with legal scholars, historians, philosophers and others, Mr. Duda declared that while Poland did need judicial

reforms, it must be "wise" ones, not proposals that would have the governing party appoint all judges. He said one discussion in particular had influenced his decision. It was with Zofia Romaszewska, a former Solidarity activist against the Communist state who told him she did not want to return to a time when courts followed the will of the country's rulers.

This is something Mr. Kaczynski, despite his obsessive hatred of communism, seems incapable of understanding. To him, the opposite of authoritarian Communist rule is authoritarian right-wing rule, not democracy. Since returning his Law and Justice party to power in 2015 he has systematically worked to restrict a free press, public gatherings, nongovernmental organizations and other facets of a democratic society. The judiciary has long been a target — one of his first battles was against the Constitutional Tribunal, which rules on the constitutionality of government actions; he reduced it to a rubber stamp.

The bills Mr. Duda vetoed assailed the last independent bastion of democracy, the courts. One called for the resignation of all Supreme Court judges (there are more than 80) and for replacements chosen by the justice minister; the other would have allowed Parliament to appoint the council that selects judges. The president did sign a measure giving the justice minister control over local courts.

Encouraging as Mr. Duda's action was, the Polish opposition is right to remain wary. Mr. Kaczynski and the Law and Justice party will not relent in their efforts to eliminate any opposition, and they still have strong popular support.

They could have only been encouraged in their antidemocratic, nationalist, anti-immigrant push by President Trump's visit to the country early this month, when he heaped praise on the government, though the State Department did warn on Friday against Poland's efforts to control the judiciary.

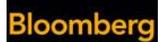
Poland's headlong retreat from democracy under Mr. Kaczynski is

especially disturbing given the excitement that greeted the country's entry into the European Union in 2004 and its initial economic and political successes.

Frans Timmermans, the first vice president of the European Commission, the union's executive, had declared that the assault on courts was bringing Poland perilously close to Article 7 of the bloc's treaty, which warns a country that it is violating fundamental E.U. values and threatens it with sanctions and the loss of voting rights.

We can hope that Mr. Duda's courageous vetoes demonstrate a determination to keep Poland from the brink of autocracy. But the values of European democracy that Mr. Kaczynski and his soul mate in Hungary, Prime Minister Viktor Orban, so willfully threaten are in greater need of defense than ever. That must include the credible threat of invoking Article 7 should the Polish government renew its offensive against the rule of law.

weigh this embarrassment carefully, and think again.



Editorial : Poland's President Says Enough Is Enough

by The Editors
More stories by

The Editors

4-5 minutes

Duda splits from the party that backed him for the presidency.

Photographer: Mateusz Wlodarczyk/NurPhoto/Getty Images

Polish President Andrzej Duda just surprised almost everybody by vetoing parts of new government

legislation that assaults judicial independence. "As president, I don't feel this law would strengthen a sense of justice," he said.

He's right. Poland's democratic institutions are under threat, and the new initiative is only the latest of many. The government should

weigh this embarrassment carefully, and think again.

Duda owes his election to the Law and Justice Party (PiS). Up to now he's backed its policies and has told the European Union, which is concerned about Poland's direction, to mind its own business. It's

encouraging that, despite his debt of loyalty to the ruling party, he's not just expressing concern but also acting.

QuickTake Poland's Populist Turn

The government has already weakened the country's constitutional court, attacked the media, and put supporters in posts not usually reserved for party loyalists. The new legislation aimed to go several steps further -- granting the justice minister power to nominate the heads of local courts, politicizing the National Judicial Council, which nominates

judges, and giving political authorities the power to stack the Supreme Court.

No doubt, Poland's judiciary leaves much to be desired. The government's charges of inefficiency and corruption aren't baseless, and political oversight of judicial appointments is standard in many democracies. Even so, a government that has rolled back democratic rights on so many fronts can't be trusted to fix the problem.

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The European Union is pressing for change but has to move cautiously. There's talk of invoking a treaty provision that could suspend Poland's EU voting rights; the issue is under discussion this week. But there's a risk that such a firm intervention from outside might strengthen domestic support for the government. Far better if Poland's citizens push back against their own government's illiberal tendencies.

That seems to be happening. The new judicial laws aroused a stronger reaction than the previous changes.

If the president is also now on board, that's better still.

--Editors: Therese Raphael, Clive Crook.

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The New York Times Sierakowski : Poland Turns Away From Democracy, Thanks to the U.S.

Slawomir Sierakowski

5-7 minutes

Protesters in front of the presidential palace in Warsaw, on Sunday. Janek Skarzynski/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

WARSAW — Polish democracy won a partial, momentary reprieve on Monday when President Andrzej Duda vetoed two controversial bills that would have given the ruling Law and Justice party direct power over Poland's courts. Partial, because President Duda did sign a bill giving the Justice Ministry control over local courts. And momentary, because Mr. Duda has said he would introduce his own versions of the legislation soon.

It's no secret that Law and Justice and its leader, Jaroslaw Kaczynski, have their sights set on judicial independence, one of the few remaining checks on their control of the Polish state. Less well appreciated, but no less clear, is the role that the United States has played in encouraging them to take this latest step.

Mr. Kaczynski and his party have been grabbing for power since they won 2015's parliamentary elections, but this year they have been particularly brazen. At a European Union summit meeting in March, they tried to block the election of

Donald Tusk, a former Polish prime minister and an opponent of Mr. Kaczynski, to a second term as the head of the European Council.

They lost, 27 votes to 1, an embarrassment that contributed to a steep drop in their poll numbers — which, in turn, has encouraged them to aim only higher and bigger. Hence the judiciary bills, which they wrapped in rhetoric about the need for court reform.

Into this mess stepped Donald Trump, himself mired in controversy and looking for good press. And so the White House announced that on his way to the Group of 20 meeting in Hamburg, Germany, this month, he would visit Poland, a country long regarded as the most pro-American in Europe.

The White House set the terms: Mr. Trump was to be met by cheering crowds, giving the world the impression of a strong American leader adored by foreign masses and their leaders. Conveniently, because the Three Seas Initiative summit meeting was taking place in Warsaw, Mr. Trump could meet with leaders from 11 other countries in the region in one fell swoop.

The visit worked for Mr. Kaczynski, too — embattled in Europe, his government needed to show that Poland enjoys the respect of one of the world's most powerful politicians.

And so Mr. Trump came to Warsaw, confirmed his commitment to

NATO's Article 5 on collective defense, and promised contracts for the sale of Patriot missiles and natural gas to Poland. Mr. Kaczynski's party bused in cheering crowds, and both sides concluded — with good reason — that the visit was a success.

Law and Justice's standing in the polls improved; the latest, carried out before the vote on judicial reform, showed 38 percent support for the party and only 19 percent for Civic Platform, the largest opposition party.

Mr. Trump's visit coincided with the judicial legislation, which was already awaiting a vote in the Sejm, the lower house. But shortly before his arrival, the bills were abruptly withdrawn.

Once the poll numbers and press accolades began to pour in, though, the party put the bills back in action, and added a third, to recall the judges of the Supreme Court so that their successors could be chosen by the Sejm. Because the Supreme Court confirms the results of parliamentary and presidential elections, the bill would have given Law and Justice control not only over the courts, but also over electoral results (this was one of the bills that Mr. Duda vetoed).

In short, for the price of some applause, Mr. Trump gave Mr. Kaczynski the cover to carry out a coup. And what has the United

States done since? The State Department issued a dry statement formulated not to offend the Polish authorities ("We urge all sides to ensure that any judicial reform does not violate Poland's Constitution").

It's unlikely that Mr. Trump meant to condone Mr. Kaczynski's power grab. But by not using his visit to press the Law and Justice leader to respect democracy, Mr. Trump gave his implicit imprimatur to a renewed campaign to get the bills into law. And while Mr. Duda showed political independence in vetoing two of the bills, he has otherwise been a faithful ally of Mr. Kaczynski. We'll see if his new drafts will really run counter to Mr. Kaczynski's, or only extend Mr. Duda's own influence over the courts at the expense of Law and Justice.

The ultimate responsibility lies with Poles, and it is they who will have to respond — as they have done admirably over the last few weeks, staging big protests that most likely pressured Mr. Duda into his vetoes. But until very recently, they wouldn't have had to go it alone: This is precisely the sort of situation in which previous American presidents could and would have used their country's prestige to push for freedom and democracy. Instead, beyond the cheers of manufactured masses, all the Polish people hear from the White House is silence.

The New York Times Liz Alderman Greece Looks to Turn a Corner After Years of Economic Pain

Liz Alderman

8-10 minutes

Andrew Sondern/The New York Times

Greece, long Europe's economic problem child, is trying to prove that it has made progress in its recovery

efforts by announcing plans to sell debt for the first time in years.

The proposed bond sale, the details of which were released on Monday, offered hope that Greece might at last be preparing to wean itself off the international bailouts totaling 326 billion euros, or about \$380 billion, that it has relied on since 2010 to stay afloat.

The sale is a pivotal moment in the painfully fought efforts of Greece to recover from troubles stemming from the financial crisis that began on Wall Street nearly a decade ago and that at one point threatened to break up Europe's currency union.

If investor interest is strong, it would be a landmark moment, not only for Greece but also for the eurozone, the 19 countries that use the euro. If

Greece struggles to find buyers, however, the debt sale could represent yet another blow for a country that has only recently started to see signs of a turnaround after nearly veering out of the currency union just two summers ago.

Dimitri B. Papadimitriou, the economy minister, said his country was "getting out of a rut," adding:

"There's an opportunity for Greece to become a normal country."

In a statement issued later in the day, the office of Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras described the move as "a significant step" for Greece that would help it "gain sustainable and stable access to the international markets." While the government has not explicitly said what the proceeds from the sale will be used for, the bulk of the sale is expected to be used to roll over existing debt.

Ireland and Portugal, which were also severely affected by the euro crisis, exited their international bailout programs several years ago and are experiencing economic revivals. The eurozone recovery has also been gathering pace, with annualized growth at 2.3 percent in the first quarter, stronger than that of the United States.

Explaining Greece's Debt Crisis

European authorities have agreed to disburse \$8.4 billion in fresh funds to Greece, allowing the country to keep paying its bills in the coming months

The upcoming offering of five-year bonds — Greece has previously issued Treasury bills — does not mean that the country is out of the woods. It is just the first of several steps that Athens must take to test whether it can raise money in international markets to support its economy and government operations when the latest bailout, worth €86 billion, expires in August 2018.

The sale is likely to be dominated by institutional investors, eager to snap up bonds that provide a hefty return (albeit in return for considerable risk), especially when compared to lower-yielding assets elsewhere in Europe.

Greece continues to stagger under a mountain of debt, which is now worth €314 billion. That problem has provoked clashes between the country's two main creditors, the

International Monetary Fund and the European Commission, over how best to proceed.

The fund has said that Greece cannot truly recover unless Europe trims its debt; otherwise, the argument goes, Greece may need more lifelines in the future. Germany, the biggest enforcer of austerity in Greece, has repeatedly rebuffed that demand.

The Greek economy is still reeling from years of severe budget tightening, pension cuts, tax increases and other austerity actions required under the bailout programs. To rebuild its finances, the Greek government will need to maintain those measures even after the current rescue expires next year.

Holding the course on austerity has been a remarkable turnabout by Mr. Tsipras, who swept to power in 2015 as a maverick political outsider promising to tear up the bailouts and repudiate the budget squeezing. Mr. Tsipras and his leftist Syriza party nearly pulled Greece out of the eurozone in the months after he took office.

Amid the chaos at the time, the country veered once again toward bankruptcy, and capital controls were imposed. People thronged A.T.M.s to withdraw €60 a day, the maximum then permitted. Businesses could not transfer payments. And the fledgling economic recovery that started in 2014 — the last time Greece went to the bond markets — was stifled.

Since then, Mr. Tsipras seems to have pivoted toward restoring political and economic stability, and the bond offering represents another step on that road. He now appears bent on burnishing his legacy by making the country financially self-sufficient again during his tenure.

Talk in Athens that another surprise election might be held before his term expires in 2019 has also faded away.

Recently, Greece received the green light for the release of €8.5 billion from its current bailout to help it make an imminent debt payment and avoid default. That came only after Mr. Tsipras reluctantly pushed a new round of belt-tightening measures through Parliament, including fresh pension cuts and tax increases that sent protesters into the streets.

The Greek and European Union flags outside a shop in Athens. The bond sale is a pivotal moment in Greece's efforts to show it can move forward without depending on international bailouts. Alkis Konstantinidis/Reuters

The positive signals come as something of a relief to Greece's creditors, who are eager for the country to cut its dependence on bailouts funded by European taxpayers. At the very least, the Greek government looks certain not to create new headaches for the eurozone before pivotal elections in Germany in November, when Angela Merkel is seeking to win a fourth term as chancellor.

The calmer climate has attracted the attention of investors, especially in the United States, where companies and financial firms appear to be intensifying their search for deals as the Greek economy shows signs of stabilizing.

Mr. Papadimitriou, the economy minister, said that on a recent trip to New York and Washington, more than 400 American investors had told him that they saw the potential to do business in Greece in sectors such as banking, maritime ports, pharmaceuticals, tobacco and tourism.

During the trip, Mr. Papadimitriou added, "people were already asking me when Greece would come back to the market."

The country still faces deep economic fissures, however. And success in the financial markets would hardly settle a debate over

whether the nascent recovery has been worth the pain.

Years of budget squeezing have taken a toll. While the economy appears to be stabilizing, expanding 0.4 percent on an annualized basis in the first quarter, growth would have to surge by much more than that to make up for a near 25 percent contraction since the crisis broke out.

Unemployment has fallen to about 23 percent, from a high of around 27 percent, as tourism, a pillar of the Greek economy, rebounds. Big investors are hiring, including Cosco, the Chinese state-run shipping conglomerate that owns Piraeus, Greece's biggest port.

Yet many of the posts being created in Greece are on precarious short-term contracts. And work is still scarce, leading some to stop searching for jobs altogether. Hundreds of thousands of young people have left the country, and the birthrate has dropped. Greece's poverty rate is now the third highest in the European Union, after Bulgaria and Romania.

For regular Greeks battered by years of privation and hardship, however, the government's efforts to appeal to investors have little meaning.

Stavroula Vardaki, 68, looked perplexed at the mention of the government's prospective debt sale. "Who cares if they sell bonds, what difference does it make?" she wondered. "My pension's been cut six times already. I barely have enough to put something aside for my grandchildren.

"How did they get us into this mess?" she asked.

Correction: July 24, 2017

An earlier version of this article misstated the maximum amount of cash Greeks could withdraw each day from banks in 2015. It was €60 a day, not €50.



Mead: Europe's Next Crisis: The Balkans

Walter Russell Mead

5-6 minutes

July 24, 2017 7:06 p.m. ET

At a recent closed think-tank meeting, a well-informed German official was asked what problem in Europe caused him the most worry. His answer came without hesitation: the Western Balkans, where a new crisis is brewing as Turkey and Russia stir the pot.

In his worst-case scenario, Russia and Turkey would encourage their proxies in the Balkans, Serbia and Albania, to help them redraw the region's borders. The Serbian government, with Russian support, could annex large portions of Bosnia populated by ethnic Serbs. Turkish support could help Albania pull off a similar maneuver, not only in heavily Albanian Kosovo but also in Macedonia, where much of the large Albanian minority would like to reunite with the motherland.

This course of events is unlikely. Since some of the territory claimed by Greater Albania partisans is in Serbia, it would be difficult for the two countries to agree on a new map. But it's not an impossible outcome, even if the idea more likely would inspire a James Bond villain than a foreign minister. And increasing numbers of wannabe Bond villains seem to be popping up in world politics these days.

There is a grave reality underlying the German's concerns. The Balkans are unraveling, and the

West now must worry about more than Russian meddling. Turkey is becoming more of a NINO (NATO in Name Only) power, and despite deep Turkish suspicions of Russia, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is cooperating more closely with President Vladimir Putin.

Turkey and Russia have been brought together by their opposition to Germany and the European Union. Russians don't just hate NATO; they see the EU as a barrier against Russia's historical great-power role in European affairs.

Turkey has also turned against the EU and is looking for leverage against Germany and its fellow members. For Russia and Turkey, the ability to cause Europe trouble in the Balkans with relatively little risk and cost is too good to pass up.

The prospect of EU membership for countries like Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Bosnia has done more than anything to keep the fragile peace in the Western Balkans. Every Balkan country would rather be part of the EU than be allied to either Russia or Turkey.

But hopes of near-term EU membership are fading. Europe is losing Britain and has had a hard time managing relations with members like Hungary and Poland. The 28—soon to be 27—EU members have little desire to take in five obstreperous new Balkan states that would make the union even

more ungovernable, and would expect financial aid at a time when the post-Brexit EU budget will already be stretched.

Serbs and Albanians are both signaling that if the West walks away, they will have to look east, and that will mean shifting to a nationalist agenda with Russian and Turkish help.

For the EU, a new round of Balkan chaos would be a disaster: refugees, crime, radicalization among Balkan Muslims, greater opportunities for hostile powers to gain influence at EU expense. But the EU doesn't think it can manage the Balkans on its own. The U.S. will have to be part of the solution, Germans say.

Will the U.S. play ball? Engaging in distant Balkan quarrels to make Germany's life easier isn't exactly Donald Trump's idea of smart

foreign policy. Even as Atlanticist a president as Bill Clinton struggled for two years to keep the U.S. out of the post-Yugoslav wars. Mr. Trump may be even more skeptical of intervention and treat the possibility of a new round of Balkan wars with the chilly aloofness that Barack Obama displayed in Syria. This would be a grave mistake. Although the quarrels in the Balkans are trivial compared with larger problems elsewhere, what happens in the Balkans doesn't always stay in the Balkans, and NATO as well as the EU could be shaken to the core by another round of Balkan bloodletting. The crisis has the potential to redefine U.S.-EU relations for decades.

Europeans argue that relatively small, short-term American investments—active diplomacy and building up U.S. forces in Kosovo—could go a long way. But we have a

president who may not find that argument convincing. Mr. Trump's core foreign-policy conviction seems to be that the U.S. has let its allies enjoy a decadeslong free ride. Europeans who worry about Balkan peace need to think about how they can persuade a skeptical White House to engage. The old appeals—to NATO solidarity, defense of freedom, fear of Russia—may not be enough. Mr. Trump thinks in terms of deals, and Berlin needs to think about how to bring him to the table.

Mr. Mead is a fellow at the Hudson Institute, a professor of foreign affairs at Bard College, and editor at large of the American Interest.

Appeared in the July 25, 2017, print edition.

INTERNATIONALA

China Prepares for a Crisis Along North Korea Border (UNE)

Jeremy Page

9-12 minutes

July 24, 2017 4:40 p.m. ET

BEIJING—China has been bolstering defenses along its 880-mile frontier with North Korea and realigning forces in surrounding regions to prepare for a potential crisis across their border, including the possibility of a U.S. military strike.

A review of official military and government websites and interviews with experts who have studied the preparations show that Beijing has implemented many of the changes in recent months after initiating them last year.

They coincide with repeated warnings by U.S. President Donald Trump that he is weighing military action to halt North Korea's nuclear weapons program, while exerting pressure on China to do more to rein in Pyongyang.

Recent Chinese measures include establishing a new border defense brigade, 24-hour video surveillance of the mountainous frontier backed by aerial drones, and bunkers to protect against nuclear and chemical blasts, according to the websites.

China's military has also merged, moved and modernized other units in border regions and released details of recent drills there with special forces, airborne troops and other units that experts say could be sent into North Korea in a crisis. They include a live-fire drill in June by helicopter gunships and one in July by an armored infantry unit recently transferred from eastern China and equipped with new weaponry.

China's Defense Ministry didn't respond directly when asked if the recent changes were connected to North Korea, saying only in a written statement that its forces "maintain a normal state of combat readiness and training" on the border. It has denied previous reports of thousands of extra Chinese troops moving into border areas.

A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman on Monday said: "Military means shouldn't be an option to solve the Korean Peninsula issue."

Chinese authorities have nonetheless been preparing for North Korean contingencies, including economic collapse, nuclear contamination, or military conflict, according to U.S. and Chinese experts who have studied Beijing's planning.

China's recent changes in force structure, equipment and training are connected to nationwide military reforms launched last year to overhaul Soviet-modeled command

structures and prepare better for combat beyond China's borders, those experts say.

In the northeast, however, those reforms are geared predominantly toward handling a North Korean crisis, the experts say.

China's contingency preparations "go well beyond just seizing a buffer zone in the North and border security," said Mark Cozad, a former senior U.S. defense intelligence official for East Asia, now at the Rand Corp.

"Once you start talking about efforts from outside powers, in particular the United States and South Korea, to stabilize the North, to seize nuclear weapons or WMD, in those cases then I think you're starting to look at a much more robust Chinese response," he said. "If you're going to make me place bets on where I think the U.S. and China would first get into a conflict, it's not Taiwan, the South China Sea or the East China Sea: I think it's the Korean Peninsula."

China, like many foreign governments, still considers a U.S. military strike unlikely, mainly because of the risk of Pyongyang retaliating against South Korea, an American ally whose capital of Seoul lies within easy reach of the North's artillery.

The Pentagon declined to discuss U.S. planning efforts. American officials didn't respond to questions about steps taken by China. But top

American officials say they are focused on diplomatic and economic pressure, and view military action as a last resort.

Although technically allied to Pyongyang, Beijing wouldn't necessarily defend its regime, but is determined to prevent a flood of North Koreans from entering northeastern China and to protect the population there, U.S. and Chinese experts say.

Beijing also appears to be enhancing its capability to seize North Korean nuclear sites and occupy a swath of the country's northern territory if U.S. or South Korean forces start to advance toward the Chinese border, according to those people.

That, they say, would require a much larger Chinese operation than just sealing the border, with special forces and airborne troops likely entering first to secure nuclear sites, followed by armored ground forces with air cover, pushing deep into North Korea.

It could also bring Chinese and U.S. forces face to face on the peninsula for the first time since the war there ended in 1953 with an armistice—an added complication for the Trump administration as it weighs options for dealing with North Korea.

Beijing has rebuffed repeated American requests to discuss contingency planning, American officials say.

China has long worried that economic collapse in North Korea could cause a refugee crisis, bring U.S. forces to its borders, and create a united, democratic and pro-American Korea. But China's fears of a U.S. military intervention have risen since January as Pyongyang has test-fired several missiles, including one capable of reaching Alaska.

"Time is running out," said retired Maj. Gen. Wang Haiyun, a former military attaché to Moscow now attached to several Chinese think tanks. "We can't let the flames of war burn into China."

He wrote an unusually outspoken article for one of those think tanks in May arguing that China should "draw a red line" for the U.S.: If it attacked North Korea without Chinese approval, Beijing would have to intervene militarily.

China should demand that any U.S. military attack result in no nuclear contamination, no U.S. occupation of areas north of the current "demarcation line" between North and South, and no regime hostile to China established in the North, his article said.

"If war breaks out, China should without hesitation occupy northern parts of North Korea, take control of North Korean nuclear facilities, and demarcate safe areas to stop a wave of refugees and disbanded soldiers entering China's northeast," it said.

**THE WALL
STREET
JOURNAL.**

Nissenbaum

2-3 minutes

Updated July 25, 2017 7:19 a.m. ET

WASHINGTON—A U.S. Navy reconnaissance plane was forced to take evasive action to avoid a possible midair collision after a Chinese jet fighter came within 300 feet of the American aircraft over the East China Sea, U.S. officials said Monday.

Capt. Jeff Davis, a Pentagon spokesman, said

**The
Washington
Post**

By Karen DeYoung

8-10 minutes

Cooperation with Russia is becoming a central part of the

Maj. Gen. Wang said he didn't speak for the government. But his article isn't censored online—as it would likely be if Beijing disapproved—in China and other Chinese scholars and military figures recently voiced similar views.

In recent weeks, some details of China's preparations have also emerged on the military and government websites.

The new border defense brigade patrolled the entire frontier in June to gather intelligence and has drawn up detailed plans for sealing it in a crisis, according to the military's official newspaper.

Aerial drones would help identify targets, supplementing the new 24-hour video surveillance and addressing problems with "information access, rapid mobility and command and control," another report in the newspaper said.

Many other units in the northeast have recently conducted new combat-focused training for the kind of joint military operations that experts say would be needed for an intervention within North Korea.

In one drill, a new "combined arms brigade" simulated battle against a "blue team" with artillery, tanks and helicopters, state television reported in June.

The new Northern Theater Command, which controls forces in the northeast, also now incorporates units in eastern China

Chinese Fighter Forces U.S. Plane to Take Evasive Maneuvers

Dion

a Chinese J-10 jet fighter rapidly approached under the U.S. EP-3 reconnaissance plane, slowed down and then flew in front of the American pilot, triggering the plane's collision alarm system and forcing it to take evasive action.

The Chinese plane came within 300 feet of the U.S. plane, which was flying in international airspace, according to another defense official.

Capt. Davis said the incident was "uncharacteristic" of the Chinese military, calling it an exception, not the rule, for interactions between pilots in the area.

Cooperation with Russia becomes central to Trump strategy in Syria (UNE)

Trump administration's counter-Islamic State strategy in Syria, with U.S. military planners counting on Moscow to try to prevent Syrian government forces and their allies on the ground from interfering in

that experts say could be launched across the Yellow Sea toward North Korea.

Meanwhile, authorities in Jilin province, which borders North Korea, are reinforcing and expanding a network of underground shelters and command posts to withstand air, nuclear or chemical attack, local government notices show.

Such facilities were needed "to respond to the complicated security situation surrounding the province," Jilin's civil air defense bureau said in a notice on its website, which also features photos and specifications of U.S. military aircraft.

In May, Jilin's government unveiled what it called China's first "combat-ready big data disaster preparedness center" in an underground facility designed to protect critical military and government data from nuclear or chemical attack.

Jilin authorities declined to comment, citing the sensitivity of the subject.

China's military reforms aren't complete and the People's Liberation Army, or PLA, remains ill-prepared for a North Korean operation, some experts say.

"I don't see the PLA at this time being particularly enthusiastic about being tasked to undertake a potential near-term mission in North Korea," said Dennis Blasko, a

former U.S. military attaché in Beijing.

But China, like the U.S., has been surprised by how fast North Korea's nuclear weapons program has progressed, say foreign diplomats and experts. Beijing also worries that Pyongyang's actions are now harming Chinese security interests, since the U.S. deployment in South Korea in April of a missile-defense system that China says can track its own nuclear missiles, diplomats and experts say.

Beijing's interests "now clearly extend beyond the refugee issue" to encompass nuclear safety and the peninsula's long-term future, said Oriana Skylar Mastro, an assistant professor at Georgetown University who has studied China's planning for a North Korean crisis.

"China's leaders need to make sure that whatever happens with (North Korea), the result supports China's regional power aspirations and does not help the United States extend or prolong its influence," Ms. Mastro said.

—Ben Kesling in Washington contributed to this article.

Write to Jeremy Page at jeremy.page@wsj.com

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China's Defense Ministry said the Chinese planes acted to protect national security and reiterated longstanding calls for the U.S. to halt such surveillance missions.

"The operations of the Chinese pilots were legal, necessary and professional," spokesman Ren Guoqiang said in a statement posted on the ministry's website Tuesday. Mr. Ren said such U.S. reconnaissance flights endanger the safety of pilots from both countries' militaries and the "U.S. side should immediately halt this type of unsafe, unprofessional and unfriendly dangerous military activity."

The incident is the latest in a series of incidents between the U.S. and Chinese militaries as tensions rise on the Korean Peninsula.

In May, Chinese planes were involved in two similar incidents criticized by the Pentagon.

—Eva Dou contributed to this article.

Write to Dion Nissenbaum at dion.nissenbaum@wsj.com

Appeared in the July 25, 2017, print edition as 'U.S. Aircraft Nearly Hit by China Fighter.'

coalition-backed operations against the militants.

Syria's once-separate conflicts have moved into close proximity on the battlefield. Part of the plan essentially carves up Syria into no-

go zones for each of the players — President Bashar al-Assad's fight, with Russian and Iranian help, against rebels seeking to overthrow him, and the U.S.-led coalition's war to destroy the Islamic State.

Some lawmakers and White House officials have expressed concern that the strategy is shortsighted, gives the long-term advantage in Syria to Russia, Iran and Assad, and ultimately leaves the door open for a vanquished Islamic State to reestablish itself.

Critics also say that neither Russia nor Iran can be trusted to adhere to any deal, and that the result will be a continuation of the civil war whose negotiated end the administration has also set as a goal.

U.S.-Russia negotiations are continuing even as Congress moves this week toward imposing additional sanctions on Russia and Iran. Elements of the strategy were presented in members-only briefings last week to the House and the Senate by Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Joseph F. Dunford Jr. and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson.

Republicans and Democrats reached an agreement July 21 on legislation that allows new sanctions against Russia for its meddling in the 2016 U.S. presidential election. The bill also includes sanctions against Iran and North Korea. The bill previously passed in the Senate, but was held in the House after Republicans proposed including North Korea sanctions in the bill. Both chambers of Congress will have to pass the revised legislation. Republicans and Democrats reached an agreement July 21 on legislation that allows new sanctions against Russia for its meddling in the 2016 U.S. presidential election. The bill also includes sanctions against Iran and North Korea. The bill previously passed in the Senate, but was held in the House after Republicans proposed including North Korea sanctions in the bill. Both chambers of Congress will have to pass the revised legislation. (Reuters)

(Reuters)

The administration has made no secret of what it has called its "ISIS first" strategy, setting the defeat of the militants as its top priority, after which other elements of Syria's long-term stability are to be addressed. ISIS is an acronym for the Islamic State.

In the most significant change from his predecessor, President Trump turned over to the military decisions on how to prosecute the war against the Islamic State. The result has been rapid gains against militant strongholds, and increased cooperation with Moscow to keep the civil war between Assad and rebels out of the way.

According to lines being drawn on a map of the conflict, the United States and its proxies would concede Assad's control of most of central and southern Syria to just west of the Euphrates River, with a few agreed deviations, said U.S. officials who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss classified discussions. In exchange, once Raqqa, the Islamic State's de facto capital, is retaken, U.S.-backed forces would move downriver to control the militant-populated villages alongside it, to the Iraqi border.

Rather than cooperate with Russia, some administration officials have advocated establishing U.S.-protected outposts in the desert to keep Iran from expanding. Allowing pro-Iranian forces an uncontested presence in Syria's southern desert, they have argued, would put them in position to set up a land bridge across Syria to supply Hezbollah, the Lebanese Shiite militia. The Pentagon, which disagreed, appears to have won the argument.

An east-west "deconfliction" line is being observed south of Raqqa, where U.S. warplanes and advisers are supporting an offensive by American-trained and -equipped local proxy forces. U.S.-backed forces control most of the territory north of this area to the Turkish border and east to Iraq.

In southwestern Syria, a cease-fire negotiated by the United States and Russia has largely stopped fighting between Assad and opposition forces. "This is our first indication of the U.S. and Russia being able to work together in Syria," Tillerson said in announcing the deal. "Russia has the same, I think, interests that we do in having Syria become a stable place, a unified place."

Last month, Trump ordered the shutdown of a years-long CIA

program to train and arm the anti-Assad rebels.

Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman John McCain (R-Ariz.) criticized the halt as "playing right into the hands of [Russian President] Vladimir Putin."

"Making any concession to Russia, absent a broader strategy for Syria, is irresponsible and shortsighted," McCain said in a statement from his home state, where he is being treated for brain cancer.

The Washington-based Institute for the Study of War (ISW), which tracks areas of control and airstrike locations in Syria, noted in a report Friday that Russia was "reshaping its air campaign in Syria in order to compel the U.S. into partnering" with Moscow. Russia has almost entirely ceased its airstrikes in western Syria — where government forces have routed rebels from many rebel — and shifted operations farther east, where the Assad regime is advancing toward the Euphrates under the "guise of fighting ISIS."

This shift, supported by the southwest cease-fire that "further secured Russia's freedom of action," has helped open the door to the "deconfliction" negotiations, the ISW report said.

In last week's briefing for lawmakers, Mattis, Dunford and Tillerson described "prospects for cooperation" with Russia, said Sen. Tim Kaine (D-Va.). Although their enthusiasm was "tempered with expressions of ongoing skepticism," he said, "I would still say the administration is a little bit more optimistic about that than I am."

Kaine, who declined to discuss specifics from the classified briefing, said he thinks that dependence on Moscow — and its assurances that Iran also can be kept in line — could end up undermining prospects for a political settlement of the civil war, ultimately without Assad, that the administration has said is key to preventing a vanquished Islamic State from reestablishing itself.

Unlike McCain, Kaine said he thinks the new strategy Trump promised during his campaign is now complete and is being implemented. The next step, he said, is for the

public to be informed, and for Congress to pass a new authorization for the anti-Islamic State war that would draw the parameters of that conflict in Syria and beyond.

Checkpoint newsletter

Military, defense and security at home and abroad.

Among the issues the strategy puts on the back burner is the growing presence in northwestern Syria of al-Qaeda's Syrian affiliate, the group formerly known as Jabhat al-Nusra, which now largely controls Idlib province. Fighters from the group and other Islamist militant rebel factions, along with moderate opposition fighters backed by the United States, retreated to Idlib after their defeat last year in Aleppo and other areas in Syria's heavily populated west.

Although coalition aircraft have located and struck some al-Qaeda leaders there in recent months, officials said the current strategy is to contain the area and deal with it later. Mattis, Dunford and Brett McGurk, the State Department's envoy to the anti-Islamic State coalition, provided some broad outlines in a news briefing in May.

At that time, Dunford noted that "we're precluded by law from coordinating with the Russians." But, he noted, "we are looking for the Russians to work with the regime, to deconflict our operations." While declining to share details about "a proposal that we're working on with the Russians right now," Dunford said, "My sense is that the Russians are as enthusiastic as we are to . . . ensure that we can continue to take the campaign to ISIS and ensure the safety of our own personnel."

Several skirmishes followed those remarks, including the U.S. shoot-down in June of a Syrian warplane west of Raqqa, and strikes against Iranian-backed militias that moved too close to the garrison town of Tanf, on Syria's border with Iraq, where U.S. troops are training and advising partner forces to fight against the Islamic State.

Talks ensued, and neither of those lines has been significantly breached since then.



YouTube is tricking people who search for ISIS videos

<https://www.facebook.com/peter.holley.923>

logo. (Chris Ratcliffe/Bloomberg News)

YouTube unveiled its latest weapon in its effort to combat terrorist propaganda on its site: Redirection.

Users who search for such content will now be directed to videos that

show victims of terrorism and clerics refuting violent religious narratives.

Social media giants such as Facebook, Twitter and Google have been rushing to respond to the wave of hate speech and terrorist propaganda flooding their

platforms where it can be accessed by people with a penchant for violent behavior.

"When people search for certain keywords on YouTube, we will display a playlist of videos debunking violent extremist

5-6 minutes

A man in silhouette checks a mobile device while in front of a YouTube

recruiting narratives,” YouTube announced in a blog post last week explaining the new system. “This early product integration of the Redirect Method on YouTube is our latest effort to provide more resources and more content that can help change minds of people at risk of being radicalized.”

YouTube, which is owned by Google’s parent company, already prohibits users from uploading videos that include violent or racist content — such as Jihadist and white supremacist propaganda — but users circumvent the video sharing site’s rules by overwhelming the site with hundreds of links. Propaganda videos are also uploaded as “unlisted,” which means that the videos are hidden from searches, but easily posted on social media or disseminated with direct links to the video.

Major companies, such as AT&T, Verizon and Johnson & Johnson, pulled advertising from YouTube in March as a long-standing dispute about the site’s approach to policing offensive videos boiled over, according to Adweek.

But some digital privacy experts raised questions about the new effort by YouTube and the growing role tech companies are playing in determining what users see on the Internet.

Jeffrey Chester — executive director of the Center for Digital Democracy — said the Redirection Effort might be an effective tool for combating propaganda, but he’s concerned about the role advertisers may have played getting the system implemented.

“The advertisers took advantage of this controversy over hate speech to assert their interests over how Google and Facebook operate,” Chester said. “Independent sites — sites that fund the controversial ideas — know that there’s a slippery slope here.

“The danger here is that Google and Facebook are making decisions about how the future of the digital media system operates without public oversight and accountability,” he added.

The Redirect Method was developed by Jigsaw, a company owned by Alphabet, Google’s parent company, to target Islamic State-focused videos in particular, according to YouTube. Jigsaw says the method was developed with research partners who interviewed ISIS defectors and explored the major narratives that the group promoted for recruitment.

Those narratives include ideas like ISIS is an unstoppable military force, one that has been legitimized by Islamic faith and that leads to

effective government rule that improves people’s livelihood.

Along the way, Jigsaw says, researchers discovered that effectively undermining ISIS propaganda does not always mean overtly attacking the group.

“We found an abundance of videos to support our project and our focus of the research was on seeking out videos that appeared to be neutral in intention — including documentaries or citizen journalist footage that portray the world as the creators found it, rather than materials that appear specifically designed to counter ISIS,” Jigsaw writes.

An example, Jigsaw offers, is a video of a bold elderly woman belittling ISIS fighters and telling them to “return to the way of God.” The video has racked up nearly 600,000 views.

Another example of a video someone might be redirected to is an interview with a captured ISIS fighter discussing the perils of life as a terrorist and how the group betrayed him.

“ISIS pays \$100 as a monthly salary, for example, and I used to spend five times that amount,” he explains.

In their blog post, YouTube said that as the company implements the

Redirect Method users can expect to see other changes as well:

Innovations newsletter

Cutting-edge developments in tech and elsewhere.

- Expanding the new YouTube product functionality to a wider set of search queries in other languages beyond English.
- Using machine learning to dynamically update the search query terms.
- Working with expert NGOs on developing new video content designed to counter violent extremist messaging at different parts of the radicalization funnel.
- Collaborating with Jigsaw to expand the “Redirect Method” in Europe.

“As we develop this model of the Redirect Method on YouTube, we’ll measure success by how much this content is engaged,” YouTube added. “Stay tuned for more.”

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

U.S. Tries to Ease Tensions Between Israel and Jordan After Embassy Attack

Rory Jones in Tel Aviv and Suha Ma’ayeh in London

6-8 minutes

Updated July 24, 2017 7:44 p.m. ET

The White House on Monday worked to defuse tensions between Israel and Jordan after an Israeli security guard at the country’s embassy compound in Amman shot and killed two Jordanians when one attacked the guard with a screwdriver.

The incident came as the two key U.S. allies spar over Israeli moves to tighten security at a Jordanian-administered holy site in Jerusalem after Arab gunmen shot and killed two Israeli policemen there this month.

Jason Greenblatt, the White House envoy to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, arrived in Israel Monday evening to speak with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu before flying to meet with Jordanian officials in Amman.

His visit followed a weekend of violence over security at the Jerusalem site—known to Jews as the Temple Mount and to Muslims as the Noble Sanctuary—in which three Israelis and at least three Palestinians were killed.

The situation underscores the tinderbox nature of the stalemate in Israel and the Palestinian territories as peace talks remain stalled, and marks Mr. Greenblatt’s first major diplomatic test.

The Israeli security guard in Amman on Sunday opened fire on a Jordanian worker who had entered the embassy compound under the guise of replacing furniture but instead attacked the Israeli with a screwdriver, Israel’s foreign ministry said.

The Jordanian assailant was killed. The landlord of the building, who was also present, was hit in the crossfire and later died of his wounds, the ministry said.

Jordan confirmed a shooting incident via its state news agency but didn’t say one of its citizens had

attempted to attack the Israeli guard.

The United Nations Security Council held an emergency meeting on Monday to discuss the situation in Jerusalem, a day before its quarterly Middle East briefing.

The U.N.’s envoy to the Middle East, Nickolay Mladenov, briefed the council and warned that the crisis must be contained before Friday, a day of communal prayers at the Al Aqsa mosque, otherwise protests and violence could escalate, moving the Israelis and Palestinians further away from achieving long-term peace.

Diplomats said the meeting had been productive and there was consensus among the 15-member council to condemn the violence and call for calm.

Jordan initially barred the Israeli guard from leaving for Israel, Israeli media reported. But the security guard and Israel’s diplomatic envoys in Amman returned to Israel late Monday after a flurry of diplomatic efforts between Israeli

and Arab officials, Mr. Netanyahu’s office said.

Thousands of Jordanians took to the streets of Amman on Friday to protest Israel’s installation of metal detectors at the Jerusalem shrine after a shooting incident the previous Friday at the compound left two Israeli policemen dead. On Sunday, it also introduced surveillance cameras at its entrance.

The moves, considered standard security measures by Israeli officials, have stirred widespread anger among Palestinians and Waqf, the Jordanian religious authority that administers the site.

Early Tuesday morning, Israel began removing the metal detectors that had angered Muslims from entrances to the shrine, according to the Associated Press. Israel’s Security Cabinet said it would replace them with more advanced technologies, the AP said.

The plaza in Jerusalem’s Old City is holy to both Muslims and Jews, home of the Al Aqsa mosque and

said to previously have been the site of two ancient Jewish temples.

But only Muslims are allowed to pray on the site, and although Jewish groups have been lobbying for that right, the Israeli government hasn't initiated any plans to change the status quo.

Waqf has called on Muslims not to visit the site until the cameras are removed. It accuses Israel of using such security apparatus to try to take control of the area, a charge Israel denies.

"The Jordanian government has to tone down its statements on the issue of Jerusalem," Oded Eran, the former Israeli ambassador to Jordan, told reporters on Monday. "The atmosphere is quite tense in Amman."

U.S. President Donald Trump

The New York Times Video Shows U.S. Soldiers Surrendering Before Fatal Shooting in Jordan

Dave Philipps and Ben Hubbard

3-4 minutes

Newly released video of the killing of three American Special Forces soldiers in November at the gate of a military base in Jordan shows that the episode, which was initially explained as a split-second mistake by a Jordanian guard firing on Americans who failed to stop, was actually a six-minute gun battle where Americans crouched behind barriers and repeatedly waved their hands in surrender as the gunman closed in and killed them.

The footage, which was made public on Monday by the Jordanian military, contradicts statements Jordanian officials initially made saying that the Americans had failed to stop at the gate, or that the accidental discharge of an American

appointed Mr. Greenblatt in December to lead efforts to make peace between Israelis and Palestinians. A former lawyer with no diplomatic experience, he has made multiple trips to the region but hasn't outlined a definitive plan for restarting peace talks, frustrating some people on both sides. The latest round of peace talks collapsed in 2014.

Former Secretary of State John Kerry flew into the region in late 2015 amid a similar simmering standoff over the Jerusalem compound, and persuaded Mr. Netanyahu, Jordan's King Abdullah II and Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas to soften their rhetoric over the site.

Though tensions then calmed around the Temple Mount, there swiftly followed a spate of stabbings and shooting attacks by

weapon sparked the shooting.

The video makes it clear that the gunman, Ma'arik al-Tawayha, a Jordanian Air Force sergeant, deliberately fired at two of the soldiers.

Sergeant Tawayha, who was wounded in the gunfight, was sentenced last week to life in prison for the killing of Staff Sgt. Matthew C. Lewellen, 27, of Kirksville, Mo.; Staff Sgt. Kevin J. McEnroe, 30, of Tucson; and Staff Sgt. James F. Moriarty, 27, of Kerrville, Tex.

The verdict sparked street protests among members of Sergeant Tawayha's influential tribe, the Howeitat, who said he had acted within the rules of engagement and was being punished to placate a powerful ally. According to the Jordanian news media, the authorities responded with arrests and what the tribe says were

Palestinians against Israelis across the West Bank and Israel over a number of months.

Mr. Abbas said this weekend that the Palestinian Authority would cut all ties with Israel until the Temple Mount issue is resolved, including cooperation around security matters.

The two sides coordinate information around potential terror threats and in tamping down protests or violence, measures that political analysts said would be difficult to cease.

Israel and Jordan have also increased security cooperation in recent years, particularly in the wake of an influx of Syrian refugees into Jordan and the expansion of Islamist sentiment in the country. The two countries have begun cooperating further on economic

issues, with Israel last year confirming it would export gas to its neighbor.

—Eli Stokols in Washington and Farnaz Fassihi at the United Nations contributed to this article.

Corrections & Amplifications

Oded Eran is the former Israeli ambassador to Jordan. An earlier version of this article incorrectly stated his name as Oden Eran. (7/24/17)

Write to Rory Jones at rory.jones@wsj.com

Appeared in the July 25, 2017, print edition as 'U.S. Envoy In Mideast As Jordan, Israel Spar.'

The New York Times Israel Agrees to Remove Metal Detectors at Entrances to Aqsa Mosque Compound

Isabel Kershner

7-9 minutes

Jordanian security forces outside the Israeli Embassy in Amman, Jordan, on Sunday. A deadly confrontation at the compound has led to a diplomatic crisis between Israel and Jordan. Ahmad Abdo/European Pressphoto Agency

JERUSALEM — After days of violent protests, bloodshed and a diplomatic crisis with Jordan over

the placement of metal detectors at the entrances to the Aqsa Mosque Compound in Jerusalem's Old City, the Israeli government said early Tuesday it would remove them.

The turnabout came after a day of intense discussions between leaders of Israel and Jordan, the custodian of the shrine, and with American mediation. It also occurred hours after the end of a standoff prompted by a confrontation at the Israeli Embassy in Amman, Jordan, that led to the deaths of two Jordanians.

intentional internet blackouts to limit spread of news of the protests, but the tribe has continued to press for a new trial.

James R. Moriarty, a Houston lawyer and the father of Sergeant Moriarty, said Monday that he was briefed by the F.B.I., which told him the video was released by Jordanian authorities to defuse protests and keep Sergeant Tawayha from being extolled as a martyr.

"Jordan tried to minimize this, saying it was the Americans' fault, and now it has come back to haunt them," Mr. Moriarty said.

It remained unclear whether the video would appease those in Jordan who felt that Sergeant Tawayha had been wrongfully convicted.

Initially, both the American and Jordanian governments concealed

details about the shooting, with American officials not mentioning that the three men killed had been training Syrian rebels as part of a covert program run by the C.I.A.

The case has baffled investigators from both countries, who have not found any indications that Sergeant Tawayha had extremist views that would have led him to kill Americans.

The video provides no insight into why the shooting happened. It has no sound, making it unclear what anyone involved was saying, and the camera angle is limited, showing only two of the cars in the four-car convoy after the shooting begins.

A Jordanian official said on Monday night that the video could not be released earlier because Sergeant Tawayha's trial was in progress.

question him and initially barred him from leaving the country.

Early on Tuesday, the Security Cabinet, whose proceedings are usually secret, issued an unusual statement, saying it had "accepted the recommendation of all the security bodies" to replace the metal detectors with less-obtrusive security measures based on advanced technologies. Israeli security forces began dismantling the metal detectors early Tuesday.

Israel said the guard had opened fire in self-defense after being stabbed and had diplomatic immunity. Jordan had wanted to

Mr. Netanyahu thanked President Trump for “directing” Jared Kushner, his senior adviser and son-in-law, and for dispatching Jason Greenblatt, his special representative for international negotiations, to the region to help with the effort to bring the Israeli Embassy staff home quickly. Mr. Netanyahu also thanked King Abdullah II “for our close cooperation.”

The crisis began with a brazen attack on the morning of July 14, when three armed Arab citizens of Israel emerged from Al Aqsa Mosque and fatally shot two Israeli Druze police officers who were guarding the compound. Mr. Netanyahu quickly ordered metal detectors and cameras placed at entrances to the contested and volatile holy site, which is revered by Jews as the Temple Mount and by Muslims as the Noble Sanctuary.

Zakaria Jawawdah, father of the slain Jordanian worker, Mohammad Jawawdah. “My son was not a trouble-maker or a terrorist and he did not belong to any political parties,” he said. Raad Adayleh/Associated Press

Palestinian Muslims refused to enter the esplanade through the detectors, praying outside in protest.

Jordan, an important regional ally of Israel, had taken a hard line against the detectors and other restrictions from the start. But the confrontation at the Israeli Embassy in Amman, Jordan’s capital, that occurred

Sunday night, and the ensuing diplomatic standoff, jolted Israel, the Americans and the Jordanian leadership into action.

Lifting a nightlong news blackout on the embassy attack, Israel’s Foreign Ministry said Monday morning that a Jordanian worker who had come to help replace furniture stabbed the Israeli security officer with a screwdriver. The security officer, who was not seriously wounded, “defended himself,” the ministry said.

The Jordanian worker — Mohammed Jawawdah, 16 — was shot and killed, according to Jordan’s Public Security Directorate, and the Jordanian landlord of the embassy’s residential quarters, a doctor who had accompanied Mohammed and another worker, was also hit and later died of his wounds. The official Jordanian reports described the event as a “shooting incident” and made no immediate mention of the stabbing.

Mohammed’s father, Zakaria Jawawdah, told Reuters, “My son was not a troublemaker or a terrorist, and he did not belong to any political parties.”

The episode quickly turned into a charged, if discreet, showdown over diplomatic immunity, and Mr. Netanyahu dispatched the chief of the Shin Bet, Israel’s internal security agency, to Amman to handle the emerging crisis.

“I assured the security guard that we will see to bringing him back to Israel; we have experience in this,” Mr. Netanyahu said earlier.

Since the metal detectors went up, three members of an Israeli family were stabbed to death in an attack at their home in a West Bank settlement and four Palestinians were killed in clashes with security forces in and around Israeli-annexed East Jerusalem.

Israeli border police officers stood guard as Muslim men prayed at the Aqsa Mosque compound in Jerusalem in July. Mahmoud Illean/Associated Press

At the United Nations, the Israeli and Palestinian ambassadors traded barbs on Monday, as the Security Council met behind closed doors with the United Nations envoy in charge of the tattered Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

The Israeli ambassador, Danny Danon, accused the Palestinian Authority of rewarding the man who stabbed the Israeli family in the West Bank. “This attack is not an isolated incident. It is part of a wave of terror sweeping the free world by those brainwashed by hateful teachings,” he said.

The Palestinian ambassador, Riyad Mansour, retorted by pointing to Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands and violence carried out by Israeli settlers in the occupied West Bank.

Asked to comment on the stabbings, Mr. Mansour said the

Palestinian authorities cannot be held responsible for the behavior of individuals who act out of frustration. “Don’t expect all Palestinians to be angels,” Mr. Mansour said. “Even some might take the issue in their hands as individuals.”

The metal detectors became the latest symbol of the broader struggle over ownership and control of the sacred site.

Israel captured East Jerusalem, along with its holy places, from Jordan in the 1967 war, and annexed the area in a move that was never internationally recognized. Under the delicate arrangements that have governed the administration of the site for decades, Jordan maintains a special role, reaffirmed in its peace treaty with Israel in 1994.

Even before the deadly confrontation in Amman in the Israeli Embassy compound, Jordan — whose population includes many people with Palestinian roots — had called for an emergency meeting of Arab foreign ministers and had urged Israel to respect the historical status of the holy site, rescind unilateral moves and remove the metal detectors.

Israeli analysts said the sides had to find a solution that would not be seen as rewarding violence, from Israel’s perspective, but would placate the outraged Jordanian and Palestinian publics.



Editorial : The bounty that heads off famine

The Christian Science Monitor

3-4 minutes

July 24, 2017 —With more than 20 million people at risk of famine, or what is called the worst humanitarian crisis since World War II, a Monitor series this week looks at some of the successes in avoiding famine. The focus is on the peasant farmers of Eastern Africa, the epicenter of a drought-fueled hunger crisis. More deeply, the articles probe what it means to build “resilience” among people in dealing with a disaster.

Resilience implies a sustainable capacity of strength and intelligence to face a hazard and to recover. One country in the region, Ethiopia, has shown remarkable progress in resilience ever since the 1980s when a famine killed hundreds of thousands. Last year, for example,

its government was able to provide close to half of the relief money for the country’s drought.

One reason for Ethiopia’s progress is that many small-scale farmers have developed the skills and assets to endure dry periods. Instead of passively accepting a scarcity of rain, they have created an abundance of new irrigation, improved farming techniques, upgraded roads and schools, and instituted better land rights for women. To achieve these, however, villages also needed to develop a shared vision to devise local solutions and not rely on cookie-cutter ideas imposed from outside.

Other countries have also relied on community-driven goals to lift up the poor. In the 1970s, South Korea set up its New Village program, or Saemaul Undong. After a genocidal rampage in the mid-1990s, Rwanda decentralized many of its economic programs. More recently, Brazil’s

Zero Hunger program (Fome Zero) relied on local action groups.

The idea of community-led development has now blossomed worldwide. The change can be seen in the sustainable development goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations in 2015. Not only has the UN set a goal to end persistent hunger by 2030, it also calls for participatory decisionmaking “at all levels.” That is a big shift from the UN’s 2000-15 millennium development goals, which relied on a top-down approach driven by national governments and the international aid community.

Many aid groups are calling to “localize the SDGs.” The World Bank insists that the poor “effectively organize to identify community priorities.” The United States Agency for International Development has set up self-reliance programs in Africa that use a bottom-up approach; villages

drive the agenda and must hold local officials accountable.

The conceptual shift lies in seeing the poor less as victims or beneficiaries and more as leaders with all the qualities, such as integrity, to deal with a disaster. They may need immediate food aid or tips on how a community can define a new future. But the talents and resources to end their own hunger lie largely within.

The poor’s dignity is not so much restored as it is expressed.

If given the capacity to set their own goals, the hungry should be seen as partners in solving their problems, not clients or dependents. They may need a fish to eat right away and later be taught how to fish. But most of all, they must be seen as able to discover their own fishing poles.

In that idea lies resilience.

ETATS-UNIS

The
New York
Times

Senate Braces for Health Showdown With McCain on Hand but a Plan Unclear (UNE)

Thomas Kaplan and Julie Hirschfeld Davis

8-11 minutes

What to Watch for in the G.O.P.'s Health Care Showdown

On Tuesday, Republicans will make another attempt to try to repeal and possibly replace the Affordable Care Act. But will they have the votes this time?

By NATALIE RENEAU on July 24, 2017. Photo by Stephen Crowley/The New York Times. Watch in Times Video »

WASHINGTON — Senate Republican leaders, keeping alive their push to dismantle the Affordable Care Act, are barreling toward a showdown vote on Tuesday to begin debating a repeal of the health law. And Senator John McCain announced Monday night that he will be on hand to cast his vote, despite a diagnosis of brain cancer.

Before Mr. McCain, an Arizona Republican, announced that he was jetting in to cast what is expected to be a vote in favor of starting debate, President Trump spent Monday ratcheting up pressure on Republican senators to get onboard. Mr. Trump criticized their inaction and warned that they risked betraying seven years' worth of promises to raze and revamp the health law if they did not.

"Remember 'repeal and replace,' 'repeal and replace' — they kept saying it over and over again," Mr. Trump said at the White House, flanked by people who he said suffered as "victims" of the "horrible disaster known as Obamacare."

"Every Republican running for office promised immediate relief from this disastrous law," the president said. "But so far, Senate Republicans have not done their job in ending the Obamacare nightmare."

Tom Perez, the Democratic National Committee chairman, countered, "No matter how many ways President Trump tries to twist or hide the truth, the facts won't change: The Affordable Care Act has been a lifesaver for millions of Americans."

The remarks from Mr. Trump, who has been largely absent from the

policy debate, had the ring of a threat by a president who has grown frustrated watching Republicans repeatedly try, and fail, to reach consensus on his campaign promise to immediately roll back the health law and enact a better system.

He said their constituents would exact a price for inaction — "you'll see that at the voter booth, believe me" — and hinted that any Republican who did not support the bid to open debate on an as-yet-determined health bill would be painted as complicit in preserving a health law passed on the basis of "a big, fat, ugly lie."

"For Senate Republicans, this is their chance to keep their promise," Mr. Trump said, repeating the "repeal and replace" mantra on which Republicans campaigned last fall. "There's been enough talk and no action; now is the time for action."

After months of planning, debating and legislating, much of it behind closed doors, the Senate this week has reached the moment when votes will have to be cast. The big question Monday was what exactly the Senate will be voting on.

The fight on the Senate floor will unfold in stages.

First, the Senate majority leader, Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, said he would move ahead with a procedural vote on Tuesday to take up the health bill that narrowly passed the House in May. He urged his colleagues to do so.

"Many of us have waited literally years for this moment to finally arrive, and at long last, it has," Mr. McConnell said on the Senate floor.

If that vote succeeds, the Senate would then be able to consider numerous amendments, including complete substitutes for the House bill. But it remains unclear what would take its place, and Senate Republican leaders have not said which substitute measure would be considered first.

Under one possible series of events, Mr. McConnell could quickly move to replace the House bill with an entirely new measure to repeal the Affordable Care Act without a replacement.

If that amendment vote fails, as it most likely would, he could move to replace the House bill with a version of the proposal he has been refining for weeks: to repeal the health law while also replacing it.

Senator John Cornyn of Texas, the No. 2 Senate Republican, said there would be "endless amendments" if the procedural hurdle were cleared. He played down the significance of which substitute measure would come first.

"Everybody will get a vote on everything they want to vote on," Mr. Cornyn said. He added, "What we're trying to do is convince everybody that if they'd like to get a vote on their amendment, then they need to vote to proceed to the House bill."

Democrats were incredulous.

"We are potentially one or two days away from a vote on a bill that would reorganize one-sixth of the American economy, impacting tens of millions of American lives, and no one knows what it is," said Senator Chuck Schumer of New York, the Democratic leader. "It's sort of like Alice in Wonderland around here."

What they will vote on will not matter if senators oppose beginning debate. Mr. McConnell can lose only two Senate Republicans, now that Mr. McCain intends to be in the chamber.

Senator Susan Collins, Republican of Maine, is all but certain to vote no on the procedural vote, no matter what legislation Mr. McConnell promises to put before the chamber if the initial hurdle is cleared.

At least two other Republicans, Shelley Moore Capito of West Virginia and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, have indicated they will not vote to proceed if Senate leaders plan to then put forth a measure to repeal the health law without providing a replacement.

While in West Virginia later on Monday, addressing the National Scout Jamboree, Mr. Trump teased the health and human services secretary, Tom Price, about whether he would be able to wrangle support from Ms. Capito and other Republicans. "He better get them," Mr. Trump said, smiling at Mr. Price to indicate he was joking — or at least seemed to be.

"Otherwise, I'll say, 'Tom, you're fired.'"

He then added, "You better get Senator Capito to vote for it."

Republican leaders are pressuring senators to go along at least with the procedural step, to bring them closer to delivering on their longtime promise of repealing the Affordable Care Act, which was adopted without any Republican votes.

"While disagreements remain on the best way to repeal and replace Obamacare, one thing is certain: The American people rightfully expect us to keep our promises and get the job done," said Senator Ted Cruz, Republican of Texas, who said he would vote to begin debate.

Another complication is whether the more comprehensive of the different repeal measures that could go before the Senate — Mr. McConnell's bill, which would also replace the health law — could be pared down because of parliamentary rules.

The repeal bill is being considered under special expedited procedures that apply to certain budget-related legislation. These rules limit debate, preclude a filibuster and allow passage with a simple majority vote. However, the rules stipulate that provisions of the bill can be removed if they would not change federal spending or revenue, or if the budgetary effects are "merely incidental" to a policy objective.

The Senate parliamentarian, Elizabeth MacDonough, who serves as a sort of referee, has made a preliminary finding that a number of provisions of Mr. McConnell's repeal-and-replace bill appear to violate Senate rules.

These provisions would, for example, cut off federal funds to Planned Parenthood for one year; prohibit the use of federal subsidies to buy insurance that includes coverage for abortions; and require people who have experienced a gap in insurance to wait six months before obtaining coverage in the individual market.

If a senator objects to any of these provisions, the presiding officer could sustain the objection, following the parliamentarian's advice. Republicans would then need 60 votes to keep that provision

in the bill — a nearly impossible threshold for any significant issue.

**THE WALL
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Trump Urges GOP Senators to Overturn Affordable Care Act (UNE)

Stephanie Armour, Kristina Peterson and Louise Radnofsky

7-9 minutes

Updated July 24, 2017 7:22 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON—President Donald Trump made a last-minute pitch to GOP senators urging them to vote Tuesday to begin debate on a sweeping health-care law, an exhortation that added to the pressures facing congressional Republicans at a critical moment.

An unusually large number of GOP senators have signaled resistance to taking even the first procedural step to begin debate on overturning former President Barack Obama's 2010 Affordable Care Act. More than half a dozen GOP senators have said they would block debate on different versions of the health-care bill, though it remained up in the air exactly how many would vote no on Tuesday.

That makes Tuesday's vote to proceed with the consideration of legislation pivotal in either derailing Republicans' health-care ambitions or inching them closer to reviving a bill that is still on shaky ground.

Lawmakers typically vote with party leaders at least to begin debate on legislation, and failure to pass the motion would be a rebuke for Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R., Ky.), who has argued that allowing debate to begin would give senators unhappy with the bill a chance to amend it.

Mr. McConnell can only afford to lose two votes, with Vice President Mike Pence breaking any tie, since no Democrats are expected to vote for the proposal. In a late boost for GOP leaders, Sen. John McCain (R., Ariz.) announced he would return to the Senate Tuesday. He has been recovering from surgery in Arizona, where he was diagnosed last week with a brain tumor.

The dissent from some senators, and the full-court press to get their votes, has turned what is typically a mundane procedural motion into a high-stakes political gamble.

"Every Republican running for office

promised immediate release from this disastrous law," Mr. Trump said Monday, adding that "so far Senate Republicans have not done their job in ending the Obamacare nightmare."

Mr. McConnell took to the Senate floor to deliver an unambiguous pitch. "Many of us have waited literally years for this moment to arrive, and at long last it has," Mr. McConnell said Monday. "I'll keep my commitment to vote to move beyond the failures of Obamacare. I would urge all of our colleagues to do the same."

Democrats warned that any vote to push the bill forward could lead to legislation that harms consumers, stripping insurance coverage from many millions of people who received it under the ACA.

"Make no mistake, a yes vote tomorrow is an endorsement of the most indefensible process on a major piece of legislation I've seen in my 24 years in the Senate," said Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D., Calif.).

For now, even if the motion to proceed passes, Mr. McConnell is still far short of the votes needed to pass the underlying legislation—either a measure repealing most of the ACA, or the most recent version of a bill aiming to supplant it with a new health-care system.

Opening debate would leave GOP lawmakers open to dozens of politically perilous votes on amendments, including those offered by Democrats designed to put them on the spot. Any senator would be able to force a vote on an amendment, in a marathon session known informally as a "vote-a-rama."

That could be particularly damaging to GOP senators with the most competitive re-election races next year, including Sens. Dean Heller of Nevada and Jeff Flake of Arizona. Democrats, too, could face votes they would rather not take.

Failure to get a vote to debate the health bill could hold similar political danger. Conservative advocacy groups are warning they will view GOP senators who don't back the procedural motion as breaking their campaign promise to repeal the

ACA. Some have said they would promote GOP challengers to run against them in future primaries.

"Failure is not an option," said Michael Needham, chief executive of Heritage Action, in a statement Monday. "For seven years, Republicans promised the American people that they would do everything in their power to dismantle Obamacare. Every single Republican should vote yes tomorrow."

Mr. Trump made a similar point in his White House comments Monday, asking whether GOP senators had been pretending to want to repeal the law on previous occasions, when they voted for repeal knowing that Mr. Obama would veto the measure. "They now have a chance," Mr. Trump said. "This is their chance to keep their promise."

Following those comments, Mr. Trump went to West Virginia with Sen. Shelley Moore Capito (R., W.Va.), a trip that could escalate pressure on the senator. Ms. Capito has said she wouldn't vote for the procedural motion if it means a repeal of the ACA with no replacement, but hasn't indicated how she would vote on the latest version of the Senate replacement bill.

Uncertainty has surrounded the vote in part because it was unclear as of late Monday what the underlying legislation would be, so senators didn't know what they would be debating. Republican senators are scheduled to have their regular luncheons Tuesday, and that could provide clarity before the vote.

Senators and GOP aides said Monday night that leaders wouldn't have to choose between the repeal-only bill and the repeal-and-replace version. Under Senate rules, both measures can receive votes during the amendment session. But GOP leaders could still make a decision about which measures would come up first, an issue that was still under discussion Monday night.

Despite his reputation as a deft negotiator, Mr. McConnell has already been forced to delay a vote on the motion three times, largely

because it was clear he didn't have enough support.

Several options are on the table. Conservative GOP senators such as Rand Paul of Kentucky want a plan that would repeal most of the ACA after two years, allowing lawmakers time to come up with a replacement. "So if my team remembers what they've said and what they're supposed to stand for—count me in," he wrote in an op-ed in the Hill on Monday. "But if they continue not to, I'll be a hell no."

But that repeal-only strategy is unlikely to win support from centrist Republicans who want to see parts of the current health law retained. However, Republicans haven't coalesced around a single bill that would replace the ACA with an alternative system.

Still, any replacement plan is expected to include steep cuts to the enhanced federal Medicaid program for low-income Americans, an end to funding for the program's expansion and a return to less expensive health plans that offer fewer benefits. Recent tweaks could include more funding for states that see their Medicaid expansion phased out.

Mr. McConnell and the president have made it clear that getting support for the motion to debate the bill is a central objective. But even if they succeed, the next hurdle would be equally challenging—passing an actual bill.

"In my experience of 37 years in public service, I have never experienced a time when somebody stopped a leader of the party on the motion to proceed," Sen. Pat Roberts (R., Kan.) said last week. "You can always vote against the bill or offer an amendment."

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Appeared in the July 25, 2017, print edition as 'Trump Chides Senators on Health Vote.'

POLITICO Obamacare repeal vote still too close to call

Jennifer Haberkorn

4-5 minutes

Momentum is on Mitch McConnell's side but a half-dozen Republicans are still on the fence heading into an all-important vote Tuesday.

Senate Republicans are barreling toward a dramatic and highly unusual vote on Obamacare Tuesday without knowing whether

they'll have the votes to start dismantling the health care law.

At stake is not just the seven-year-old campaign pledge to repeal Obamacare, but also demonstrating

that Republicans — when given full control of Washington — can govern. Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), recently diagnosed with brain cancer, made it all the more dramatic Monday evening when he announced he would return to Washington for the vote.

Story Continued Below

The vote count was unclear as of Monday night. About a half-dozen senators were publicly undecided about whether to allow debate to start on rolling back the Affordable Care Act. The vote is expected Tuesday afternoon.

"It's probably more drama than it deserves for a motion to proceed," Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.) said Monday afternoon, referring to the Senate term for allowing debate to start.

McConnell and his leadership team are throwing everything they have

at wavering senators: the threat of political disaster if they fail, an open amendment process to allow their ideas to be debated — and the argument that a flawed Senate bill can be fixed later in conference negotiations with the House.

"Big day for HealthCare," President Donald Trump tweeted Tuesday morning. "After 7 years of talking, we will soon see whether or not Republicans are willing to step up to the plate!"

If Senate Republicans can successfully begin debate on Tuesday, it would mark a huge political win as the GOP has been near death on Obamacare repeal many times in the past several weeks. Debate would start with no clear path to how to finish the bill.

If the vote is unsuccessful, Republicans have pledged to keep working at repealing the law. Senior Republicans have speculated that

conservative backlash over a failed vote could pull some senators back to the negotiating table.

It is still unclear what policy the Senate is going to vote on. To get their members on board, Republican leaders are being as vague as possible about what the final bill to replace Obamacare would include, after two recent drafts met fatal opposition.

Republicans are strongly considering a strategy that would tee up two separate votes — one on the repeal only and another on the plan the Senate has been working on to repeal and replace Obamacare.

If one fails, "you set up a vote on the other one," Thune said. The theory is that by making that assurance, Republicans could pick up votes to start debate from ardent conservatives as well as waffling moderates.

Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) on Tuesday reiterated that he would support starting debate if he gets a vote on a bill to repeal large parts of the health law without a replacement. He bemoaned "billions of dollars of pork" tucked into the bill to win over moderates.

"So conservatives are getting squat in this bill. Conservatives are getting nothing," he said on Fox News. "There is no promise of a clean repeal vote. And if they're not even going to talk with conservatives. If we are going to be excluded from the process, conservatives don't need to participate in this pork fest."

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Editorial : Can Republicans Govern?

The Editorial Board

5-6 minutes

July 24, 2017 7:36 p.m. ET

Mitch McConnell is scheduling another showdown vote in the Senate—the third attempt—as early as Tuesday on a motion to proceed to debate on health reform. Succeed or fail, the Republican Majority Leader is right to demand this moment of political accountability.

Mr. McConnell wanted to hold the vote last week after a rump group of GOP Senators on the right and left opposed his latest draft. But the White House sought more time for talks and he agreed—apparently in the name of hope over experience. The vote he wants to hold Tuesday would require 50 Senate ayes to proceed to a floor debate, and he can only afford to lose two Republicans.

Members have been debating among themselves for weeks, they know or should know the bill's essential policy choices, and the bill isn't getting prettier with age. That's especially true on Medicaid reform and spending, which is the chief gripe of the so-called moderates led by Rob Portman of Ohio. They keep demanding more money. They keep getting it, but it's never enough.

The first version of the bill's "stability fund" for states was \$62 billion. The moderates demanded more and pushed that to \$132 billion in the second version. Then they demanded \$45 billion to fight opioid addiction. Check again. Now we hear they are back demanding tens of billions more. A spokesman said Mr. Portman is undecided on the bill.

A particular outrage would be if Senators blocked the bill from even going to debate if the extra money isn't added to the latest McConnell draft. Never mind that they could offer an amendment on the floor after debate begins and see where the sense of the Senate is. The moderates, and conservatives like Rand Paul and Mike Lee, are using Mr. McConnell's narrow margin to trump the policy preferences of the vast majority of their conference as the price of even allowing debate.

Tennessee Senator Bob Corker had it right last week when he said that "it's beginning to feel like a bazaar, much like how ObamaCare was put together where disparate things are added and put in."

Mr. McConnell is obliged by procedural rules to introduce the bill that passed the House for the motion to proceed to debate. By our deadline Monday, he had not announced what he would offer as the first amendment on the Senate floor. Some Republicans want him to offer his latest draft, and he probably will if he thinks he may

have the votes to pass it. The bill would then have to endure an amendment free-for-all, with Democrats and perhaps some Republicans seeking to amend it in ways that might kill it. But at least we'd get a debate, and voters could see which Senators have which priorities.

Mr. McConnell's other option would be to offer the December 2015 bill that repealed ObamaCare with a two-year delay to find time to replace. Fifty-one of the 52 current GOP Senators voted for that repeal bill that Barack Obama vetoed. (Maine's Susan Collins was the exception.)

The only difference now is that President Trump will sign the bill. This would keep a core promise to GOP voters over four elections and seven years. Opposing this same bill now would expose Senators who campaigned for repeal only when they thought it had no chance to happen. The vote would stick with them for the rest of their careers.

Paradoxically, repeal-and-delayed-replacement might also offer the best chance for bipartisan action on health care. With the fuse lit on ObamaCare repeal, Congress would have an urgent incentive to fix it. Democrats might not want to help the GOP do so, but their refusal would be litigated in the 2018 midterms. If they refused to help at all, they would share the

blame for collapsing insurance exchanges.

The larger stakes in the ObamaCare fight are whether Republicans can be a governing party. They can win elections but not since the early 2000s have they showed they can pass a major reform through Congress. They blew it the last time they controlled both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue in 2005-2006. They've already wasted six months on health care in this Congress with nothing to show but division and discord.

This failure is all the more remarkable given the current Senate election cycle. Only one GOP incumbent—Dean Heller of Nevada—faces a difficult challenge in 2018 and that is 16 months away. If Republicans can't reform Medicaid when they are in this strong an election position, when will they ever? Forget about modernizing Medicare or Social Security before a debt crisis.

What is becoming clearer every day is that some GOP Senators would rather not vote on health care at all. They'd rather talk in the cloakrooms until time runs out on this Congress. But voters want to see who honors their campaign promises, and especially who doesn't. Call the roll.

Appeared in the July 25, 2017, print edition.

Editorial : Every Republican health-care plan so far would cause great harm to the nation

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

July 24 at 7:11 PM

THE SENATE has been deadlocked on repealing and replacing Obamacare all month, but Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) announced Monday afternoon that the chamber would vote Tuesday on . . . well, on something.

The scrambling reflected a basic fact: Every major Republican proposal put forward so far would mean millions of Americans would lose access to health care. Each plan would theoretically fulfill a GOP campaign promise while inflicting serious harm on the nation.

A bill drafted under Mr. McConnell's guidance would repeal big portions of Obamacare, roll back Medicaid and slash help for those buying private health insurance. The nonpartisan Congressional Budget

Office (CBO) found that the most recent version of that bill would result in 22 million more uninsured people in a decade, in part because it would dramatically hike deductibles for low-income people, who would not bother to buy insurance at all.

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That same bill augmented by an amendment from Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Tex.) would do much more harm to the individual health-care market. Mr. Cruz would separate healthy insurance-buyers from sick ones, allowing the former to buy cheap, skimpy plans and forcing costs for the latter to go spiraling upward. Insurers warned lawmakers strongly that the Cruz language would severely disrupt individual insurance markets. And voting on such a

potentially destabilizing measure before the CBO has even had a chance to analyze it would be breathtakingly irresponsible.

There is a bill that would kill much of Obamacare and replace it with nothing specific. Instead, the measure would delay the law's death by two years, under the logic that Congress would feel compelled to pass some kind of replacement between now and then. The CBO found that this bill would result in 32 million more uninsured people in a decade, catastrophically unraveling individual health-care markets.

Then there are a couple of less-commented-upon GOP health-care proposals. One from Sen. Bill Cassidy (La.) and Sen. Lindsey O. Graham (S.C.) would give states enormous block grants with few requirements. Another, somewhat more promising option comes from Mr. Cassidy, Sens. Susan Collins (Maine), Shelley Moore Capito

(W.Va.) and Johnny Isakson (Ga.), who would allow states that want to keep the Obamacare system to do so, while letting others take a more conservative path but within defined guardrails.

The proposals under consideration run the gamut from bad to horrendous, and the rushed process for proceeding to the floor has made a mockery of the "world's greatest deliberative body." The only proposal that could serve even as a template for a reasonable, bipartisan bill is the Cassidy-Collins-Capito-Isakson plan. But it has been sidelined since it emerged, and it would require weeks of negotiation to get it into shape.

Senators should reject Tuesday's motion to proceed to debate on repealing and replacing Obamacare. Keeping an irresponsible campaign promise is not worth inflicting any of these "reforms" on the American people.

Leonhardt: G.O.P. Support for Trump Is Starting to Crack

David Leonhardt

5-7 minutes

President Trump lacks the degree of backing in Congress that his predecessors had with congressional members of their own party. Gabriella Demczuk for The New York Times

Again and again over the past year, Mitch McConnell and Paul Ryan have had to decide what kind of behavior they are willing to tolerate from Donald Trump. Again and again, McConnell and Ryan have bowed down to Trump.

They have mumbled occasional words of protest, sometimes even harsh ones, like Ryan's use of "racist" last year. Then they have gone back to supporting Trump.

The capitulation of McConnell and Ryan has created an impression — especially among many liberals — that congressional Republicans stand behind the president. McConnell and Ryan, after all, are the leaders of Congress, and they continue to push for the legislation Trump wants and to permit his kleptocratic governing.

But don't be fooled: Republican support for the president has started to crack.

Below the leadership level, Republicans are defying Trump more often, and McConnell and Ryan aren't always standing in their way. You can see this defiance in the bipartisan Senate investigation of the Russia scandal. You can see it in the deal on Russian sanctions. And you can see it in the Senate's failure, so far at least, to pass a health care bill.

It's true that we still don't know how these stories will end. If the Senate passes a damaging health care bill or lets Trump halt the Russia investigation, I will revisit my assessment. For now, though, I think many political observers are missing the ways that parts of Trump's own party have subtly begun to revolt.

Just listen to Trump himself. "It's very sad that Republicans," he wrote in a weekend Twitter rant, "do very little to protect their President." In a historical sense, he is right. Members of Congress usually support a new president of their own party much more strongly than Republicans are now.

They typically understand that a young presidency offers the rare opportunity for sweeping legislation — like the Reagan tax cut, the George W. Bush tax cut, the Clinton deficit plan and the Obama stimulus, health bill and financial regulation. Some intraparty tensions

are unavoidable, and defectors kill some legislation — as happened with the Clinton health plan and the Obama climate plan. But partisan loyalty is the norm.

Congress members tend to echo White House talking points fulsomely. They find the votes to pass bills. They defend the president against scandal. And the loyalty doesn't stop in the first year. During Watergate, as the political scientist Jonathan Bernstein has noted, most Republicans stood by Richard Nixon until almost the bitter end.

Matt Glassman, another political scientist, is one of the sharper observers of the White House-Congress relationship, and I asked him to put the current situation in context. Glassman said that many progressives have made the mistake of comparing how *they* want Congress to treat Trump with what it is doing. The more relevant yardstick is how Congress's treatment compares historically.

"The current congressional G.O.P. seems less supportive and more constraining of the Potus than basically any in history," Glassman wrote to me, "save the unique circumstances of Andrew Johnson (who wasn't really a Republican) and John Tyler (who bucked his party aggressively), neither of whom were elected."

Many of today's Republicans avoid going on television as Trump surrogates. They mock him off the record, and increasingly on the record, too. In recent weeks, eight senators have publicly stood in the way of a health care bill. Republican senators are also helping to conduct an investigation of Trump's campaign and have backed the appointment of Robert Mueller as special counsel.

One reason is that they don't fear Trump. About 90 percent of Republican House members won a larger vote share in their district last year than Trump did, according to Sarah Binder of George Washington University. Since he took office, Trump's nationwide net approval rating has fallen to minus 16 (with only 39 percent approving) from plus 4.

So it's not just Republican politicians who are inching away from Trump. Republican voters are, too.

None of this is meant to suggest that congressional Republicans have been profiles in courage. They haven't been. They have mostly stood by as Trump has lied compulsively, denigrated the rule of law and tried to shred the modern safety net. But they have put up just enough resistance to keep him from doing far more damage than he otherwise would have.

In the months ahead, unfortunately, that level of resistance is unlikely to be sufficient. Trump has made clear that he isn't finished trying to take

health insurance away from millions of people or trying to hide the truth about his Russia ties. "The constitutional crisis won't be if

Trump fires Mueller," as the A.C.L.U.'s Kate Oh put it. "The constitutional crisis is if Congress takes no real action in response."

For now, anxious optimism — or maybe optimistic anxiety — seems the appropriate attitude.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Jared Kushner Details Russia Meetings, Denies Collusion

Rebecca Ballhaus

9-12 minutes

Updated July 24, 2017 5:25 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON— Jared Kushner, President Donald Trump's son-in-law and a senior White House adviser, said Monday he didn't collude with any Russian efforts to interfere in last November's presidential election and rejected any suggestion that Moscow was responsible for the president's victory.

Speaking to reporters outside the White House, Mr. Kushner said his actions over the last two years "were proper and occurred in the normal course of events in a very unique campaign."

"I did not collude with Russia, nor do I know of anyone else on the campaign who did so," he said.

Mr. Kushner said Mr. Trump defeated Democratic rival Hillary Clinton because he had "a better message and ran a smarter campaign, and that is why he won. Suggesting otherwise ridicules those who voted for him."

Mr. Kushner spoke to the press after an interview behind closed doors Monday with the Senate Intelligence Committee staff. It was his first time speaking to congressional investigators who are probing Russian meddling in the election. Mr. Kushner is set to speak Tuesday, also in private, to the House Intelligence Committee.

That interview Tuesday would come on the same day lawmakers are set to vote on a bill that would punish Russia with sweeping sanctions for interfering in the U.S. election. The bill would force the president to notify Congress if he wants to lift the sanctions, and the White House had criticized the legislation as an erosion of the president's power.

Press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders, who said Sunday that the president would sign the bill, said Monday that Mr. Trump would "study" the bill before deciding whether to sign it.

Congressional investigators and Special Counsel Robert Mueller, who is overseeing a criminal probe for the Federal Bureau of Investigation, are investigating possible Russian meddling in the

2016 election, as well as whether Trump associates colluded in it.

According to a January report from the U.S. intelligence community, the interference was directed by the highest levels of the Russian government. The tactics included hacking state election systems, stealing and leaking information from party committees and political strategists, and using social media and other outlets to disseminate negative stories about Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton and positive ones about Mr. Trump, the report said.

Mr. Trump and his campaign aides have denied any collusion, and the president has said he questions U.S. intelligence agencies' consensus Moscow sought to intervene during the campaign. Russian officials have denied the charge.

The Senate Judiciary Committee was originally scheduled to hear testimony this week from former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort and Donald Trump Jr, the president's eldest son. But both men made agreements with the panel to provide documents and sit for interviews with committee staff as their representatives negotiate the terms around their public testimony. The committee's chairman, Sen. Chuck Grassley (R., Iowa), said they won't appear Wednesday but would eventually testify in public.

A third witness scheduled to appear at Wednesday's hearing, Glenn Simpson, has been issued a subpoena. Mr. Simpson, a former Wall Street Journal reporter who now runs a political-intelligence firm in Washington called Fusion GPS, helped compile a dossier of unverified material about the president when Mr. Trump was running for the Republican nomination.

Ahead of the Senate panel interview on Monday, Mr. Kushner released an 11-page statement detailing his contacts with Russian officials and businesspeople in the two years since Mr. Trump launched his presidential campaign.

In that statement, he said he had no improper interactions and that he hadn't "relied" on Russian funds to "finance [his] business activities."

A spokesman for Mr. Kushner didn't respond to a question about

whether the statement meant no Russian funds were involved in his businesses.

Mr. Kushner also provided to the committees documents including calendar entries, emails and call sheets that referenced any meetings or interactions with Russians, according to a person familiar with the document production.

Democratic Sen. Ron Wyden, an Oregon Democrat and a member of the intelligence committee, said that Mr. Kushner's back-to-back appearances behind closed doors are no substitute for a public appearance.

"Kushner's statement, which he released publicly to the press, raises far more questions than it answers," Mr. Wyden said in a statement. "He has an obligation to be transparent with all relevant documents to back up his claims."

Mr. Kushner's written statement released Monday included details of a previously undisclosed, brief meeting with the Russian ambassador to the U.S. in April 2016.

During the encounter—shortly before Mr. Trump would become the Republican party's effective nominee—Mr. Kushner met Ambassador Sergey Kislyak at an event at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington, D.C. Mr. Kushner said he was introduced to Mr. Kislyak and three other ambassadors by Dimitri Simes, the publisher of a foreign-policy magazine who was hosting the event, at a reception held directly before it.

Mr. Trump, who gave a speech addressing foreign policy at the event, also greeted Mr. Kislyak and three other foreign ambassadors who came to a VIP reception, The Wall Street Journal reported in May 2016.

Mr. Kushner's account makes no mention of Mr. Trump being present at the reception. Attorney General Jeff Sessions—then a U.S. senator advising the Trump campaign—also attended the event, and said in sworn testimony before a Senate panel this past June that he couldn't recall whether he had a passing encounter with Mr. Kislyak there.

"The ambassadors...expressed interest in creating a positive relationship should we win the election," Mr. Kushner wrote in his

statement. "Each exchange lasted less than a minute; some gave me their business cards and invited me to lunch at their embassies. I never took them up on any of these invitations and that was the extent of the interactions."

A spokesman for Mr. Kushner had previously denied that Messrs. Kushner and Kislyak met privately at the event. A separate Kushner spokesman said Monday that the statement doesn't contradict the previous denial because the two met at a reception, not one-on-one.

In the statement, Mr. Kushner also denied trying to establish any "backchannel" with Russia, though he said that in a December meeting with Mr. Kislyak, Mr. Kushner proposed receiving information about military operations in Syria via a secure communications line at the Russian embassy, because the Trump transition team had no secure system of its own.

After Mr. Trump's victory on Election Day, the White House repeatedly denied that there had been any contacts between his campaign and Russian officials—many of which have since emerged. "It never happened," spokeswoman Hope Hicks told the Associated Press in November. "There was no communication between the campaign and any foreign entity during the campaign."

Since then, it has emerged that several members of Mr. Trump's campaign—some of whom now serve in his administration—did have contact with Russians. They include Mr. Sessions, former national security adviser Mike Flynn and Donald Trump Jr.

The Russian Embassy announced on Twitter Saturday that Mr. Kislyak has concluded his assignment in Washington.

The new meeting disclosed on Monday comes on top of three previously confirmed meetings Mr. Kushner has held with Russians. He also disclosed that in October he reported to a Secret Service agent an email he received from someone under the name "Guccifer400" that threatened to "reveal candidate Trump's tax returns and demanded that we send him 52 bitcoins in exchange for not publishing that information." The agent advised Mr. Kushner to ignore the email, and Mr. Kushner said he wasn't contacted by the sender again.

In June 2016, Mr. Kushner met with Russian lawyer Natalia Veselnitskaya, Mr. Manafort and Donald Trump Jr. in a meeting arranged by the younger Mr. Trump. Emails the president's son released earlier this month showed the meeting was held to discuss allegedly damaging information about Mrs. Clinton that the Trump campaign was told was being offered by the Russian government in support of the elder Mr. Trump's candidacy.

Mr. Kushner said Monday that he arrived late to the meeting and left early, sending his assistant an email that said: "Can u pls call me on my cell? Need excuse to get out of meeting." He said that while he was there, the meeting didn't discuss "anything about the campaign" and said there was no follow-up.

Mr. Kushner disclosed the meeting with Ms. Veselnitskaya earlier this year in a required form to obtain a security clearance. Mr. Kushner

initially filed a disclosure that didn't list any contacts with foreign government officials, but the next day submitted a supplemental disclosure saying that he had engaged in "numerous contacts with foreign officials."

He said Monday that the omission of foreign contacts was an administrative error.

Mr. Kushner has since submitted information about "over 100 contacts from more than 20

countries," he said. That information hasn't been publicly disclosed.

—Shane Harris, Natalie Andrews and Peter Nicholas contributed to this article.

Write to Rebecca Ballhaus at Rebecca.Ballhaus@wsj.com

Appeared in the July 25, 2017, print edition as 'Kushner Denies Collusion With Russians.'

The New York Times 'I Did Not Collude,' Kushner Says After Meeting Senate Investigators (UNE)

Matt Apuzzo and Maggie Haberman
11-14 minutes

Jared Kushner: 'I Had No Improper Contacts'

The president's adviser and son-in-law gave a brief statement following a meeting with congressional investigators looking into Russian influence in the 2016 election.

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS. Photo by Tom Brenner/The New York Times. Watch in Times Video »

WASHINGTON — President Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, described himself to Senate investigators on Monday as a political and foreign policy neophyte who met with Russians as part of a hectic and unconventional presidential campaign, not as part of a plot to steer the election.

"All of my actions were proper and occurred in the normal course of events of a very unique campaign," Mr. Kushner told reporters on the White House grounds after two hours behind closed doors on Capitol Hill. "I did not collude with Russians, nor do I know of anyone in the campaign who did."

Hours before he traveled to Capitol Hill for his session with the investigators, Mr. Kushner, a senior White House adviser, released a lengthy written statement explaining the purpose of a number of contacts with Russians last year — meetings that have thrust him into the middle of a controversy that has engulfed the early months of the Trump administration.

The decision to release the statement, and to appear voluntarily before Congress, is a clear strategy to try to navigate a political storm. His meetings with a Russian ambassador, lawyer and banker have prompted questions about his honesty, and calls from Democrats to deny him access to classified

information. By being the first member of Mr. Trump's campaign inner circle to speak to congressional investigators, he was able to shape the narrative with his version of a still murky chain of events.

But Monday's moves were not without legal risk. Though he was not under oath when he spoke to the Senate Intelligence Committee, lying to Congress is a federal crime. His public statement was frequently unequivocal, leaving him little room to maneuver if new evidence emerges to contradict his story.

The Justice Department and congressional committees are investigating whether anyone around Mr. Trump conspired with the Russian government to disrupt last year's election, and whether Mr. Trump tried to impede the investigation.

During his public statement on Monday, Mr. Kushner said Mr. Trump won the election because he had a better message and ran a smarter campaign than Hillary Clinton, not because he had any help from Russia.

"Suggesting otherwise ridicules those who voted for him," Mr. Kushner said. He took no questions from reporters.

Months of reports about repeated contacts last year between Mr. Trump's advisers and Russians have buffeted Mr. Trump's staff. Administration officials once flatly denied there had been any meetings with Russians during the campaign or transition, only to have journalists discover one meeting after another. This month, The New York Times reported that members of the senior campaign staff, including Mr. Kushner, met in June 2016 with a Russian lawyer on the explicit promise of receiving damaging information about Mrs. Clinton.

Jared Kushner's Four Meetings With Russians

In a statement to congressional investigators, Jared Kushner described four meetings he had with Russians during the Trump campaign and transition. He said there was no collusion.

By DREW JORDAN, MARK SCHEFFLER and CHRIS CIRILLO on July 24, 2017. . Watch in Times Video »

An email to Donald Trump Jr., the president's son and the person who set up the meeting, said the information was part of the Russian government's campaign to support the elder Mr. Trump.

Mr. Kushner said he was unaware of the promise of damaging information because he did not read the email chain forwarded to him by Donald Trump Jr., titled "Re: Russia - Clinton - private and confidential." He said he arrived at the meeting late and left early, after emailing his assistant asking for an excuse to escape.

That account steers questions about the meeting squarely to Donald J. Trump Jr. and Paul J. Manafort, the former campaign chairman who also attended the June 2016 meeting. Both men are in discussions with Congress about when they will appear before investigators.

During his meeting with congressional staff members, Mr. Kushner acknowledged that after the November election, he sought a direct line of communication to the Russian president, Vladimir V. Putin. He characterized that action as a routine part of his job in establishing foreign contacts for Mr. Trump's transition team.

"The fact that I was asking about ways to start a dialogue after Election Day should of course be viewed as strong evidence that I was not aware of one that existed before Election Day," Mr. Kushner said.

Mr. Kushner said he met the Russian ambassador, Sergey I. Kislyak, in December, along with Michael T. Flynn, a retired general who would become Mr. Trump's national security adviser. Mr. Kushner said that he expressed hope during the meeting that the new administration would have an improved relationship with Moscow, and that he had asked Mr. Kislyak whom he should talk to who was in direct contact with Mr. Putin.

Mr. Kislyak said "generals" in Russia had important information to share about Syria, Mr. Kushner recalled. The United States and Russia are the dominant proxy powers in Syria's civil war.

"He asked if there was a secure line in the transition office to conduct a conversation," Mr. Kushner said. "General Flynn or I explained that there were no such lines. I believed developing a thoughtful approach on Syria was a very high priority given the ongoing humanitarian crisis, and I asked if they had an existing communications channel at his embassy we could use."

That request, first reported by The Washington Post and since confirmed by former senior American officials, generated suspicion that Mr. Kushner was trying to avoid American surveillance. Mr. Kushner denied that. "I did not suggest a secret back channel," he said. When Mr. Kislyak rejected the idea of using the Russian Embassy, Mr. Kushner said, they dropped the discussion.

Days later, Mr. Kushner met with Sergey N. Gorkov, the head of Vnesheconombank, a bank under American sanctions. Mr. Kushner said that Mr. Kislyak had described Mr. Gorkov as someone "with a direct line to the Russian president who could give insight into how Putin was viewing the new administration and best ways to work together."

Mr. Kushner met with staff of the Senate Intelligence Committee on

Monday. Stephen Crowley/The New York Times

While meetings with foreign diplomats are common during presidential transition, the Gorkov meeting was unusual because his bank is under sanctions by the American government and has ties to Russian intelligence. Aides to Mr. Kushner have said that, in the frenzy of transition and after an election that Mr. Trump's team did not expect to win, Mr. Kushner's meetings were not vetted ahead of time as they would have been during a typical transition.

Jared Kushner's Meeting With a Russian Banker

Jared Kushner is now under congressional and F.B.I. scrutiny after his meeting with a close ally of Vladimir V. Putin of Russia. Here's how the Russian banker Sergey N. Gorkov could benefit from meeting President

Trump's senior adviser.

By NATALIA V. OSIPOVA and MARK SCHEFFLER on June 5, 2017. Photo by Sergei Karpukhin/Reuters... Watch in Times Video »

Mr. Gorkov gave Mr. Kushner a piece of art and a bag of dirt from his family's ancestral village in Belarus. "He said that he was friendly with President Putin, expressed disappointment with U.S.-Russia relations under President Obama and hopes for a better relationship in the future," Mr. Kushner said.

He said that he had regarded it as a campaign meeting and that business deals were not discussed. And Mr. Kushner said he had disclosed the gifts to the transition office — a sign, he said, that the meeting was no secret.

Mr. Kushner said he did not discuss specific policies, including American

sanctions against Russia, with either Mr. Kislyak or with Mr. Gorkov.

Mr. Kushner's meetings attracted special attention because he did not initially disclose them on federal forms required for his security clearance. Mr. Kushner said that his staff had inadvertently filed an incomplete form, leaving off all foreign contacts — not just Russian ones — as well as other information.

By making his prepared remarks public, Mr. Kushner ensured that his version of events would be seen in full. He is scheduled to speak on Tuesday with House investigators, again in private.

Several White House aides have expressed concern about appearing before Congress behind closed doors.

Michael Caputo, a former Trump campaign aide who spoke to the

House Intelligence Committee in a closed session on July 14, has urged officials to release a transcript of his appearance after a Democratic congresswoman who did not attend the hearing told CNN that Mr. Caputo may have "lied" to the committee.

"I'm warning anybody who would listen against doing a closed hearing in the future," Mr. Caputo said in an interview.

Roger Stone, one of Mr. Trump's longest-serving advisers, was scheduled to appear at a closed session this week, but it was postponed. Mr. Stone said he wanted to make an immediate release of the transcript of the session a condition of his appearance.

"It's not an unreasonable request," Mr. Stone said. "Everybody in this lineup should be concerned."



Kushner questioned by Senate investigators on Russia (UNE)

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

10-12 minutes

Jared Kushner, President Trump's senior adviser and son-in-law, spent two hours Monday answering questions from Senate investigators about his contacts with Russian officials, as the various probes into Russian interference during the 2016 campaign entered a new phase involving some of those closest to Trump.

After his closed-door questioning, Kushner spoke briefly to reporters outside the White House.

"Let me be very clear: I did not collude with Russia, nor do I know of anyone else in the campaign who did so," he said. "I had no improper contacts. I have not relied on Russian funds for my businesses, and I have been fully transparent in providing all requested information."

"Since the first questions were raised in March, I have been consistent in saying I was eager to share whatever information I have with investigating bodies, and I have done so today," he said. "All of my actions were proper."

Legal experts expect that all of Kushner's answers to the Senate Intelligence Committee will be shared with special counsel Robert S. Mueller III, who is conducting a separate investigation of potential criminal activity surrounding Russian meddling and key figures in the Trump campaign.

White House senior adviser Jared Kushner, center, accompanied by his attorney, Abbe Lowell, right, arrives on Capitol Hill on July 24. (Oliver Contreras for The Washington Post)

Trump spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders said the president "was very proud of Jared for voluntarily going to the Hill and being very transparent with every interaction that he's had. He thought Jared did a great job and was very glad that he was able to go through that process and lay everything out and I think show the members of that committee as well as everybody else what a witch hunt and hoax this whole thing is."

Kushner dismissed outright the notion that Russia could be responsible for his father-in-law's election victory. "Donald Trump had a better message and ran a smarter campaign, and that is why he won. Suggesting otherwise ridicules those who voted for him," he said.

Kushner's appearance Monday will be followed by further questioning Tuesday — again, behind closed doors — before the House Intelligence Committee, which is also probing Russian election-year meddling.

U.S. intelligence agencies have concluded that the Russian government orchestrated a far-reaching campaign to disrupt last year's presidential campaign and influence the outcome in Trump's favor. A major question for the current investigations is whether any Trump associates acted to help or advise the Russian effort.

Kushner and the White House used the grilling to offer their most detailed refutation — in the form of an 11-page written statement — of the idea that anyone in the campaign sought to coordinate with people acting on behalf of the Russian government.

"Hopefully, this puts these matters to rest," Kushner wrote.

Kushner's statement detailed four meetings he had with Russian officials or nationals during the 2016 campaign and transition period. He described them as brief and unremarkable contacts in his role as the Trump campaign's liaison to foreign governments.

With some of the closest members of President Trump's campaign slated to testify before congressional panels investigating its ties with Russia, here's what investigators want to ask Trump's son, son-in-law and former campaign manager. Here's what investigators want to ask Trump's son, son-in-law and former campaign manager. (Jenny Starrs/The Washington Post)

(Jenny Starrs/The Washington Post)

[Read Kushner's prepared statement]

Kushner wrote that his first meeting with a Russian official was in April 2016 at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington, where Trump delivered a major foreign policy speech, the execution of which Kushner said he oversaw. Kushner wrote that he attended a reception to thank the event's host, Dimitri Simes,

publisher of the National Interest, a foreign policy magazine. Simes introduced Kushner to four ambassadors at the reception, including Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak, Kushner said.

"With all the ambassadors, including Mr. Kislyak, we shook hands, exchanged brief pleasantries and I thanked them for attending the event and said I hoped they would like candidate Trump's speech and his ideas for a fresh approach to America's foreign policy," he wrote. "The ambassadors also expressed interest in creating a positive relationship should we win the election. Each exchange lasted less than a minute; some gave me their business cards and invited me to lunch at their embassies. I never took them up on any of these invitations and that was the extent of the interactions."

Kushner did not name the other three ambassadors he met at the reception, and he denied having had any other contact with Kislyak during the campaign, disputing a report by Reuters that he had two phone calls with the ambassador.

"While I participated in thousands of calls during this period, I do not recall any such calls with the Russian Ambassador," Kushner wrote. "We have reviewed the phone records available to us and have not been able to identify any calls to any number we know to be associated with Ambassador Kislyak and I am highly skeptical these calls took place."

In fact, he said that on Nov. 9, the day after the election, when the

campaign received a congratulatory note from Russian President Vladimir Putin, Kushner tried to verify it was real and could not remember Kislyak's name. "So I sent an email asking Mr. Simes, 'What is the name of the Russian ambassador?'" Kushner wrote.

Kushner also described attending a June 2016 meeting organized by his brother-in-law Donald Trump Jr. with a Russian attorney. He said it was listed on his calendar as "Meeting: Don Jr. | Jared Kushner." He wrote that he arrived at the meeting late, and that when he got there the Russian lawyer was talking about a ban on adoption of Russian children by Americans.

"I had no idea why that topic was being raised and quickly determined that my time was not well-spent at this meeting," Kushner wrote. "Reviewing emails recently confirmed my memory that the meeting was a waste of our time and that, in looking for a polite way to leave and get back to my work, I actually emailed an assistant from the meeting after I had been there for 10 or so minutes and wrote, 'Can u pls call me on my cell? Need excuse to get out of meeting.'"

Kushner also detailed two interactions with Russian officials during the transition period, before Trump was sworn in as president on Jan. 20. The first, on Dec. 1, was a meeting with

Kislyak at Trump Tower in New York. Retired Lt. Gen. Michael T. Flynn, who would become the president's national security adviser, also attended.

"I stated our desire for a fresh start in relations," Kushner wrote. "Also, as I had done in other meetings with foreign officials, I asked Ambassador Kislyak if he would identify the best person (whether the Ambassador or someone else) with whom to have direct discussions and who had contact with his President. The fact that I was asking about ways to start a dialogue after Election Day should of course be viewed as strong evidence that I was not aware of one that existed before Election Day."

Kushner wrote that Kislyak addressed U.S. policy in Syria and wanted to "convey information from what he called his 'generals.'" But Kislyak said they could not come to the United States and "asked if there was a secure line in the transition office to conduct a conversation."

Kushner said that he or Flynn explained there were no such lines, and that Kushner asked Kislyak if the Russians had "an existing communications channel at his embassy we could use where they would be comfortable transmitting the information they wanted to relay to General Flynn." He wrote that

Kislyak said "that would not be possible," and they agreed to wait until after the inauguration to receive the information.

The Washington Post first reported in May on Kushner and Kislyak's discussions about establishing a secret means of communication, although Kushner suggested in his testimony that the channel would have been for the purpose of this one meeting.

"I did not suggest a 'secret back channel,'" he wrote. "I did not suggest an ongoing secret form of communication for then or for when the administration took office. I did not raise the possibility of using the embassy or any other Russian facility for any purpose other than this one possible conversation in the transition period."

The second transition-period meeting Kushner said he had with Russians was on Dec. 13, when, at the urging of Kislyak, he met with Sergey Gorkov, a banker with "a direct line" to Putin.

Checkpoint newsletter

Military, defense and security at home and abroad.

On Dec. 6, the Russian Embassy asked Kushner to meet with Kislyak on Dec. 7, and Kushner declined, he wrote. The Russians asked if he could meet on Dec. 6, and Kushner declined again, he wrote. Kislyak

then requested a meeting with Kushner's assistant — "and, to avoid offending the Ambassador, I agreed," Kushner wrote.

Kislyak and Kushner's assistant, whom Kushner did not name, met on Dec. 12, and Kislyak requested that Kushner meet with Gorkov, "who could give insight into how Putin was viewing the new administration and best ways to work together."

Kushner agreed to meet Gorkov, making room in his schedule for him the next day. Their meeting lasted 20 to 25 minutes, Kushner wrote, and Gorkov presented two gifts — "a piece of art from Nvgorod, the village where my grandparents were from in Belarus," and a bag of dirt from there. Kushner gave the gifts to his assistant and asked him to formally register them with the transition office.

During the meeting, Kushner wrote, Gorkov told him about his bank and discussed the Russian economy, expressing "disappointment with U.S.-Russia relations under President Obama and hopes for a better relationship in the future." Kushner wrote that "no specific policies were discussed," including sanctions imposed by the Obama administration.

Ashley Parker contributed to this report.



Trump leaves Sessions twisting in the wind while berating him publicly (UNE)

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

8-11 minutes

Attorney General Jeff Sessions walks down the stairs of the Eisenhower Executive Office Building on Monday. (Jabin Botsford/The Washington Post)

President Trump and his advisers are privately discussing the possibility of replacing Attorney General Jeff Sessions, and some confidants are floating prospects who could take his place were he to resign or be fired, according to people familiar with the talks.

Members of Trump's circle, including White House officials, have increasingly raised the question among themselves in recent days as the president has continued to vent his frustration with the attorney general, the people said.

Replacing Sessions is viewed by some Trump associates as potentially being part of a strategy

to fire special counsel Robert S. Mueller III and end his investigation of whether the Trump campaign coordinated with the Kremlin to influence the 2016 election, according to the people, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to comment publicly.

On Tuesday, Trump renewed his attack on Sessions, accusing him on Twitter of taking a "VERY weak position" on alleged "crimes" by Hillary Clinton and intelligence leakers.

The president had taken another swipe at Sessions on Monday, calling his attorney general "our beleaguered A.G." and asking why Sessions was not "looking into Crooked Hillary's crimes & Russia relations?"

President Trump turned on his longtime surrogate Attorney General Jeff Sessions and other members of the Justice Department over the ongoing Russia investigation, and Sessions's recusal from it. President Trump turned on his longtime surrogate

Attorney General Jeff Sessions and other members of the Justice Department over the Russia investigation. (Jenny Starrs/The Washington Post)

(Jenny Starrs/The Washington Post)

Both points are notable. Sessions was once considered one of Trump's closest advisers and enjoyed access few others had. Now he is left to endure regular public criticism by his boss.

Trump's suggestion, too, that his top law enforcement official investigate a former political rival is astounding, and even his allies have said in the past that such a move would be unheard of in the United States. Trump, after the election, had backed away from the idea of possibly prosecuting Hillary Clinton.

Sessions's tight relationship with Trump and the White House has unraveled since he recused himself in March from the Russia probe. The president had privately complained about that decision for

weeks, and in an interview with the New York Times last week he said he would not have appointed Sessions as attorney general had he known that Sessions would do such a thing.

[Sessions says he plans to stay in role, despite Trump's comments about him]

After Sessions recused himself, he passed on the responsibility to Deputy Attorney General Rod J. Rosenstein, who then appointed Mueller as special counsel overseeing the Russia investigation. Trump could order Rosenstein — and then Associate Attorney General Rachel Brand — to fire Mueller. If they quit instead of doing so, he could appoint an acting attorney general who would. Trump could also appoint an acting attorney general with them in place — effectively passing over Rosenstein and Brand — and order that person to remove the special counsel.

Trump's authority to jump Rosenstein and Brand, though, is murky. The Justice Department has

issued opinions in the past saying that such a move is and isn't permissible. And his pick for an acting attorney general would have to have Senate confirmation and be serving elsewhere in the government or have worked in the Justice Department for 90 days within the past 365 and be at a certain senior pay level.

Attorney General Jeff Sessions said he is "totally confident that we can continue to run this office in an effective way" on July 20 after President Trump criticized Sessions for recusing himself from the Russia probe. Attorney General Jeff Sessions said he is "totally confident that we can continue to run this office in an effective way" on July 20. (The Washington Post)

(The Washington Post)

[Column: Trump or Congress can still block Mueller. I know. I wrote the rules.]

Another scenario is that Trump could make a recess appointment, said Steve Vladeck, a professor at the University of Texas School of Law. Under that plan, Trump could choose an attorney general during the August recess who would serve until the end of the next Senate session, which would run to Jan. 3, 2019. That person would have the same authority as someone who is confirmed by the Senate, Vladeck said.

Among the names being floated as possible Sessions replacements are Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Tex.) and former New York mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani, according to people familiar with the conversations.

Giuliani dismissed a report mentioning his name as a possible attorney general and told CNN that Sessions "made the right decision under the rules of the Justice Department" to recuse himself. He did not return a message seeking comment.

In a statement released late Monday, Cruz said he is "deeply gratified that we have a principled conservative like Jeff Sessions serving as Attorney General. The stories being reported in the media tonight are false. My focus is and will remain on fighting every day to defend 28 million Texans in the U.S. Senate."

Some Trump advisers said that this process could be agonizing for the attorney general, with the president's anger flaring but no decision being reached for weeks or maybe months, leaving Sessions isolated from the White House. Sessions was at the White House complex on Monday for a routine meeting but did not meet with the president.

But not all in Trump's orbit share the view that Sessions's days are numbered.

Anthony Scaramucci, the new White House communications director, told CNN on Monday afternoon that Trump and Sessions "need to sit down face-to-face and have a reconciliation and a discussion of the future."

Former House speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.), a vigorous Trump ally, said in an interview that he and Trump had talked about Sessions and that Trump had indicated "he was very unhappy both with the recusal and the fact that Jeff didn't talk to him beforehand." But Gingrich said he would "strongly oppose" the firing of Sessions, because "I think his base likes Sessions."

"His base thinks that on things like [violent street gangs] and sanctuary cities that Sessions is doing a fine job, and I think his base would be confused," Gingrich said.

Gingrich also said he believed Sessions could survive the president's criticisms.

"He said he's beleaguered, not failed, and he is a little beleaguered," Gingrich said. "This whole thing has been a mess."

Trump, though, continues to let Sessions twist in the wind. One person close to Trump said the president asked him about how firing Sessions "would play in the conservative media." Trump also asked him whether it would help to

replace Sessions "with a major conservative," the person said.

For his part, Sessions shows no signs of stepping down.

Checkpoint newsletter

Military, defense and security at home and abroad.

On Friday, Sessions traveled to Philadelphia to meet with law enforcement officials. In his speech, he vowed to crack down on illegal immigration and on "sanctuary cities" that are not communicating with federal authorities about undocumented immigrants. He spoke of how hard he is working, despite having none of his U.S. attorneys in place and most of his senior officials still not confirmed by the Senate.

"I do my best every day," Sessions said, "to fulfill the goals the president and I share."

Several of Sessions's Republican former colleagues on Capitol Hill have defended him in the face of the president's criticism.

Sen. John Cornyn (R-Tex.), a close friend, said that Sessions was "doing just fine." He also encouraged the president to try to patch up his relationship with his attorney general.

"They're both adults, and they can work it out," Cornyn said.



Trump: Jared Kushner Faces Second Closed-Door Meetings

Mary Claire
Jalonick / AP

5-7 minutes

(WASHINGTON) — President Donald Trump's son-in-law and adviser Jared Kushner will return to Capitol Hill Tuesday for a second day of private meetings with congressional investigators, this time for a closed-door conversation with lawmakers on the House Intelligence Committee.

Kushner on Monday answered questions from staff on the Senate's intelligence panel, acknowledging four meetings with Russians during and after Trump's victorious White House bid and insisting he had "nothing to hide." He emerged smiling to publicly declare, "All of my actions were proper."

A quiet insider who generally avoids the spotlight, Kushner is the first top Trump lieutenant to be quizzed by the congressional investigators probing Russia's meddling in the 2016 presidential election.

Hours before the Senate meeting, Kushner released an 11-page statement that was billed as his remarks to both the Senate and House committees. In it, he acknowledged his Russian contacts during the campaign and then the following weeks, in which he served as a liaison between the transition and foreign governments. He described each contact as either insignificant or routine and he said the meetings, along with several others, were omitted from his security clearance form because of an aide's error. Kushner cast himself as a political novice learning in real time to juggle "thousands of meetings and interactions" in a fast-paced campaign.

"Let me be very clear," Kushner said afterward in a rare public statement at the White House. "I did not collude with Russia, nor do I know of anyone else in the campaign who did so."

Kushner's statement was the first detailed defense from a campaign insider responding to the controversy that has all but consumed the first six months of Trump's presidency. U.S.

intelligence agencies have concluded that Russia sought to tip the 2016 campaign in Trump's favor. Congressional committees, as well as a Justice Department special counsel, are investigating whether Trump associates coordinated with Russia in that effort and whether the president has sought to hamper the investigations.

Kushner said Monday he "will continue to cooperate as I have nothing to hide."

Related

Read More: *Here's Why Jared Kushner Is Testifying Behind Closed Doors*

Trump watched on TV as Kushner made his appearance outside the West Wing and "thought Jared did a great job," said White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders. She said his House testimony on Tuesday would show "what a hoax this entire thing is."

Trump also took aim at the top Democrat on the House intelligence panel, California Rep. Adam Schiff, calling him "sleazy" in a tweet and saying he "spends all of his time on

television." Schiff said on CBS's *Face the Nation* Sunday that he has a "great many questions" for Kushner.

Schiff responded Monday by tweeting that Trump watches TV too often and his "comments and actions are beneath the dignity of the office."

In the statement for the two committees, Kushner provided for the first time his recollection of a meeting at Trump Tower with a Russian lawyer who was said to have damaging information about Trump's Democratic rival, Hillary Clinton.

Emails released this month show that the president's son, Donald Trump Jr., accepted the meeting with the idea that he would receive information as part of a Russian government effort to help Trump's campaign. But Kushner said he hadn't seen those emails until recently shown them by his lawyers.

He called the June 2016 Trump Tower meeting with Russian lawyer Natalia Veselnitskaya such a "waste of time" that he asked his assistant to call him out of the gathering. He

says he arrived late and when he heard the lawyer discussing the issue of international adoptions, he texted his assistant to call him out.

"No part of the meeting I attended included anything about the campaign; there was no follow-up to the meeting that I am aware of; I do not recall how many people were there (or their names), and I have no knowledge of any documents being offered or accepted," he said.

Kushner also confirmed earlier media reports that he had suggested using Russian diplomatic facilities to set up



Editorial : The Kushner Statement

The Editorial Board

4 minutes

July 24, 2017 7:34 p.m. ET

Jared Kushner on Monday introduced a useful precedent for the Trump Presidency: comprehensive disclosure. In an 11-page statement released before meeting this week with the Senate and House intelligence committees, the President's son-in-law and White House aide described his contacts with Russian figures during the campaign and after the election.

The statement to the committees ends with a definitive denial of collusion with the Russians: "I did not collude, nor know of anyone else in the campaign who colluded, with any foreign government."

The Beltway media are past the point of no return on their collusion



Editorial : Russia collusion: Donald in Wonderland

The Editorial Board, USA

TODAY

4 minutes

If the Russia collusion story is nonsense, you'd have to believe 6 impossible things: Our view

Donald Trump on "The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon" in 2015.(Photo: Douglas Gorenstein, NBC, via AP)

President Trump continues to insist that any collusion between his campaign team and Russia is "phony" and a "witch hunt." On Sunday, the president's new communications director, Anthony Scaramucci, said "the Russian thing is a nonsensical thing."

To believe that, however, is to be like the White Queen in *Alice Through the Looking Glass*: You'd

secure communications between Trump adviser Michael Flynn, who would become Trump's national security adviser, and Russian officials. But he disputed that it was an effort to establish a "secret back channel."

His statement describes a December meeting with Flynn and Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak in which Kushner and Kislyak discussed establishing a secure line for the Trump transition team and Moscow to communicate about policy in Syria.

odyssey, so there is little chance that Mr. Kushner has put this issue behind him. But as we suggested in these columns last week ("The Trumps and the Truth"), the White House's best defense against death by a thousand cuts of anonymous leaks is radical transparency on Russia. Mr. Kushner's statement has provided a template.

There isn't much in this statement about Russia beyond what we know, but Mr. Kushner expressly rebuts some of the more incendiary news reports of recent months.

The biggest was the recent disclosure of a meeting between Donald Trump Jr. and a Russian lawyer, which was also attended by several functionaries serving as "translators." About 10 minutes into the meeting, which he calls a waste of time, Mr. Kushner says he emailed his assistant: "Can u pls call me on my cell? Need excuse to get out of meeting." Aside from the amusement of this extraction effort,

have to believe as many as six impossible things before breakfast.

You'd have to believe:

1) That all the emerging contacts, phone calls and meetings between Team Trump and Russian proxies, in the midst of Russia's cyber and disinformation campaign aimed at influencing U.S. elections, were innocent and coincidental.

2) That when Donald Trump Jr., son-in-law Jared Kushner and then-campaign manager Paul Manafort met in June 2016 with Russians dangling dirt on Hillary Clinton — "part of Russia and its government's support of Mr. Trump," the invitation email read — it was just naive openness to opposition research that came to naught, not attempted collusion that contradicted previous denials of contacts between campaign officials and Russian operatives.

Kushner said that when Kislyak asked if there was a secure way for him to provide information from his "generals," Kushner suggested using facilities at the Russian Embassy.

"The ambassador said that would not be possible and so we all agreed that we would receive this information after the Inauguration. Nothing else occurred," the statement said.

Kushner said he never proposed an ongoing secret form of communication.

Mr. Kushner's email to his assistant is surely available to investigators for confirmation.

Mr. Kushner also rebuts suggestions that he served as a back-channel conduit between the Russians and Trump Administration, and he denies ever discussing sanctions against Russia with its then ambassador to the U.S., Sergey Kislyak.

In Mr. Kushner's accounting, the Russian ambassador comes off as a suspiciously eager pest, constantly seeking meetings with the President-elect's son-in-law. Mr. Kushner says he finally agreed to a meeting that would have set off alarms of skepticism in a more politically experienced person. Mr. Kislyak puts him together with one Sergey Gorkov, "a banker and someone with a direct line to the Russian president."

An important point is that with this and the other contacts described,

He also acknowledged meeting with a Russian banker, Sergey Gorkov, at the request of Kislyak but said no specific policies were discussed.

As for his application for a security clearance, Kushner said his form was submitted prematurely due to a miscommunication with his assistant, who had believed the document was complete.

He said he mistakenly omitted all of his foreign contacts, not just his meetings with Russians, and has worked in the past six months with the FBI to correct the record.

Mr. Kushner offers details about what was, and what was not, discussed at these meetings. Up to now, Team Trump has taken the view that because every story is unfair or a witch hunt, they are under no obligation to provide their side of these allegations. Which has left the field open for months to media speculation.

Now we have the Kushner disclosure template. Lying to Congress is a crime, so this statement and its details involve some risk for Mr. Kushner if some other meetings or Russian connections turn up. But if this is all there is, the collusion narrative will have to find another protagonist. The President and other campaign officials could save themselves and the country much grief with similar disclosures.

Appeared in the July 25, 2017, print edition.

OPPOSING VIEW:

3) That Donald Trump knew nothing about this meeting and it was pure happenstance that, three hours after his son agreed to the meeting, the presidential candidate gave a speech boasting he would soon release information about Clinton's "corrupt dealings."

4) That the initial failure of Kushner to mention several contacts with Russians on his security clearance forms, and Attorney General Jeff Sessions' failure to tell Congress about meetings with Russia's ambassador to the United States, represented mere oversight or forgetfulness.

5) That the president knows better than the entire intelligence community, which concluded that Russia hacked American democracy and views Vladimir Putin as a formidable adversary, not a strong leader worthy of admiration.

6) That there's nothing suspicious about recent discussion of presidential pardons and efforts to tarnish the investigation of special counsel Robert Mueller, the widely respected former head of the FBI.

In the real world, as opposed to wonderland, a president with nothing to hide would welcome an investigation that would find him faultless.

He would praise Sessions for taking the ethical step of recusing himself from the Russia investigation. He would demand transparency from aides regarding their contacts with Russians. (Kushner's detailed 11-page statement Monday was a start in that direction.) And he would want them to testify voluntarily, under oath and in public.

As this tale continues to unfold, the public should ask itself this: If stories about Russian

interference are really "fake news," then why are the president and many of his men acting so guilty?

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Lahren : Give the Russia nonsense a rest

Tomi Lahren
Published 6:31
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3 minutes

Peel back just a few layers on Robert Mueller's probe and it's purely partisan: Opposing view

President Trump at the White House on July 24, 2017. (Photo: Chris Kleponis, pool photo)

President Trump recently called Washington more of a sewer than a swamp. With the stench of blatant bias and partisanship surrounding the Russia probe worsening by the day, he's right.

You'd think after more than six months of this Russia nonsense,



On Russia, Congress shows remarkable unity

The Christian
Science Monitor

8-10 minutes

July 24, 2017 Washington —The Russia controversy — one of the most defining issues of Donald Trump's young presidency — has been cast by the president and his supporters as a political "witch hunt," even while Democrats are all over the news talk shows raising serious questions.

But strip away the political and media noise, and what is left is a Congress where both Republicans and Democrats appear resolved to keep Russia in check — even if that means crossing the president. In fact, observers say this Congress is the most hard-line against Moscow in decades, mostly because Russia's attempts to influence last year's US elections are too close to home to ignore.

"When we feel like we're threatened, and certainly our elections and our cybersecurity are threatened, we go shoulder-to-shoulder," Sen. David Perdue (R) of Georgia, one of the president's closest allies in the Senate, told the Monitor last week.

That's not to say that Congress is acting like a monolith on this issue. The path to sanctions against Russia has been rockier in the House than in the Senate. But this week the House is expected to pass

separate from the news staff. Most editorials are coupled with an opposing view — a unique USA TODAY feature.

they'd give it a rest. But that's what the Democratic Party does in place of policy.

The Democrats' chorus of praise for special counsel Robert Mueller is at a fever pitch. Rep. Adam Schiff, the top Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, blessed Mueller with an unprecedentedly broad mandate, tweeting that it's "his duty" to investigate "anything that arises." Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said firing Mueller would be a "cataclysm."

Liberal whining about the Trump administration is expected, but the hypocrisy about the "independent" Russian probe is ridiculous. In just months, the person once blamed for Hillary Clinton's defeat, James Comey, has transformed into a

revised sanctions legislation against Russia, after breaking a logjam over a bill that sped through the Senate last month with a near unanimous vote of 98-2.

At the same time, congressional attention is turning to the president's former campaign manager and family members, including son-in-law and adviser Jared Kushner. Mr. Kushner appeared Monday at a closed hearing of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, which is investigating Russia's attempt to influence last year's election and any possible collusion between the Trump campaign and Russia over the election.

In a written statement released Monday morning, Kushner said: "I did not collude, nor know of anyone else in the campaign who colluded, with any foreign government." He characterized his contacts with Russia or Russian representatives as minimal and himself as a political novice, flooded by e-mails and other communications in a swiftly moving campaign and transition period.

Kushner described the infamous June 2016 meeting that included himself, Donald Trump Jr., then-campaign manager Paul Manafort, and a Russian lawyer, Natalia Veselnitskaya, as "a waste of our time" — so much so, he said, that he emailed an assistant to call his cell phone so he would have an excuse to leave.

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valiant public servant who spawned this important inquiry.

Peel back just a few layers on Mueller's probe and it's purely partisan. Only in Washington does this investigation pass as "independent."

Several members of Mueller's team show obvious bias. Jeannie Rhee donated to a Clinton Super PAC; she represented the Clinton Foundation in a 2015 racketeering case and Clinton herself in a lawsuit seeking access to her emails. Andrew Weissmann donated six times to Obama-affiliated groups. James Quarles gave to more than a dozen Democratic PACs since the 1980s.

Emails from a British publicist to Mr. Trump Jr. show the meeting was originally set up to offer damaging information on Hillary Clinton from Ms. Veselnitskaya, but Kushner's written account says he read only that part of an email chain from his brother-in-law that announced a time change for the meeting. "Documents confirm my memory that this was calendared as 'Meeting: Don Jr. | Jared Kushner.' No one else was mentioned."

Kushner, who expressed "gratitude" to be able to provide his version of events, will also appear in a private hearing before the House intelligence committee Tuesday.

Meanwhile, the Senate Judiciary Committee, under the chairmanship of Sen. Chuck Grassley (R) of Iowa, is also negotiating with Trump Jr. and Mr. Manafort to have them appear before the committee.

"It is striking that we've got bipartisan, sustained leadership on both the Intelligence Committee and the Judiciary Committee in continuing to pursue investigations," said Sen. Chris Coons (D) of Delaware, a member of the Judiciary Committee, in a brief interview last week. "It is not as divisive as may superficially seem to be the case."

'Unprecedentedly hostile' toward Russia

Paul Saunders, a former State Department official in the George W. Bush administration, describes

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Jared Kushner and Donald Trump Jr. have shown integrity and transparency. Both have voluntarily released more information to the public than was asked. Democrats, Hollywood liberals and leftist mainstream news media want to find collusion to validate their election bitterness. Meanwhile, President Trump and his administration are working to make America great again.

It's a shame Americans must turn on cable news to hear the same tired Russia story ad nauseam for hours, days and months on end. That's not news, that's a witch hunt.

Tomi Lahren is senior adviser for Great America Alliance.

US-Russia relations as the worst they've been since the early 1980s, when former President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev were in power amid mounting concern about a possible military confrontation in Europe.

The worry today is more over Russian cyberattacks and political interference than a hot war, he says, but in the '80s, the feeling was that relations could improve. Today, the expectation is they may well get worse.

"Attitudes toward Russia on Capitol Hill are unprecedentedly hostile," says Mr. Saunders, a Russia expert at the Center for the National Interest in Washington. He attributes this "primarily to anger over Russia's interference in the election."

The White House, which is trying to improve relations with Russia, objected to the Senate sanctions bill, saying it handcuffs the president's ability to conduct foreign policy — not an unusual complaint for a commander in chief. The bill got bogged down in the House over procedural and policy issues, with plenty of political accusations to go around.

But a revised version emerged over the weekend that was worked out with lawmakers from both parties and both chambers. The bill has been adjusted to meet some US business complaints and has added sanctions against North

Korea to a package that already included sanctions against Russia and Iran.

It would still, however, make it very difficult for the president to overturn sanctions without congressional approval. The new sanctions against Russia would punish it for its meddling in US elections, its military actions in eastern Ukraine and annexation of Crimea, and human rights abuses.

How the parties have switched stances

Notably, the politics over Russia has “totally flipped on its head” from the cold war days, says Jeffrey Mankoff, a Russia specialist at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Democrats have become more hawkish and vocal, demanding more congressional oversight of the Trump administration vis-à-vis

Russia from the Republican-controlled Congress. They point to a lack of independence from the White House on Russia that caused then-House intelligence chairman, Rep. Devin Nunes (R) of California, to hand his committee gavel over to Rep. Mike Conaway (R) of Texas, earlier this year.

“I mean, where are the heroic figures like we had in Watergate?” says Rep. Gery Connolly (D) of Virginia. (*Editor’s note: The congressman’s quote has been corrected from an earlier version.*)

Many Republicans attribute the drip, drip, drip of bad news on possible Russian collusion with the Trump campaign to media hype, Democratic histrionics, and neophytes in the White House with poor record-keeping and minimal understanding of government – political bumpkins, perhaps, but not criminals. Neither

do many of their voters think Russia should be a top concern.

“My state overwhelmingly supports Donald Trump,” said Rep. Mo Brooks (R) of Alabama, when asked by reporters whether the stories about Trump Jr.’s meeting were becoming a distraction. Russia is just one of “thousands upon thousands of issues” in his state, he said, and is viewed that way. Still, Congressman Brooks, a member of the hard-right House Freedom Caucus, supports sanctions against Russia.

In a brief interview with the Monitor, Senate intelligence chairman Richard Burr (R) of North Carolina said that the news churn and politicization of Russia were not affecting the bipartisan nature of his committee’s work – though he did admit that “the public nature of some of the statements makes it a little more difficult for us to get the

witnesses that we need and to do it in the privacy that we’d like.”

While the committee’s ranking member, Democrat Mark Warner (D) of Virginia, is a regular on the talk shows, Chairman Burr says he chose “a different route” when he started the investigation. He doesn’t do sit-down television interviews nor does he go over to the White House, because he wants to avoid any appearance of outside influence.

Indeed, on this day last week, when almost all of his GOP Senate colleagues were at the White House being pressed by the president to pass a health-care bill, Burr was ordering take-out from the Senate’s basement café.

“I have to stay as open as I possibly can,” he says about the investigation, holding onto his lunch. “We’re going to follow this through wherever the intelligence leads us.”



Trump Is Becoming Unhinged at the Twists and Turns of Kremlingate

Paul McLeary | 2 hours ago

9-11 minutes

If Kremlingate: The Scandal were *Kremlingate: The TV Series*, it would pack in so many improbable plot twists and surprise developments that any experienced showrunner would tell the writers to slow down because that’s not how real life works. In just the past week, we saw enough news to fill an entire season’s worth of episodes in a series that is equal parts *House of Cards*, *The Americans*, and *Arrested Development*. For those who find it hard to keep up, here’s a recap of last week’s action.

The week’s revelations began on Monday evening, July 17, when Ian Bremmer of the Eurasia Group disclosed to Bloomberg’s Charlie Rose that at the G-20 summit in Hamburg, Germany, Donald Trump had a second, undisclosed meeting with Vladimir Putin. Bremmer reported that the one-on-one conversation, with no other Americans present, lasted roughly an hour. The White House suggests it was much shorter — Trump says it “could be 15 minutes” — but it’s clear that the leaders weren’t just exchanging pleasantries.

Trump himself says, “We talked about adoption” — the same lame excuse that Donald Trump Jr. originally gave for his June 2016 meeting with Russian representatives eager to help the Trump campaign. “Adoption” is code for sanctions, because after Congress’s passage in 2012 of the

Magnitsky Act, imposing sanctions on major human rights violators in Russia, the Kremlin retaliated by banning adoptions of Russian children by Americans. Simply by saying the conversation was about “adoptions,” rather than about all of the Russian transgressions that have prompted sanctions, Trump was adopting Moscow’s narrative.

Further confirmation of how eager Trump is to help out how his friend Vlad comes in Syria. Trump and Putin negotiated a cease-fire in southwestern Syria that has now been denounced by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who worries that it will imperil his country’s security by entrenching Russia’s allies, the Iranians, next to the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights. As if this weren’t enough, on Wednesday, July 19, the *Washington Post* reported that Trump had decided to end the CIA program to train and arm moderate Syrian rebels fighting against Putin’s ally, Bashar al-Assad. A current U.S. government official told the *Post*: “This is a momentous decision.... Putin won in Syria.”

The final outcome of the Hamburg summit was Trump’s announcement that the United States and Russia would form an “impenetrable Cyber Security unit so that election hacking, [and] many other negative things, will be guarded ... and safe.” This proposal was so ridiculous — how could the United States partner with the main perpetrator of cyberattacks? — that Trump himself seemed to disown it, yet last week Putin’s top cybersecurity expert said, with no denial from the White House, that efforts to establish this

farfarcical task force were still “underway.”

So Trump did not lay down the law at Hamburg over Putin’s meddling in the U.S. election — but he did discuss cyber-cooperation with Russia. Little wonder that The Associated Press reported Thursday that National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster and other aides are expressing frustration about Trump’s friendliness with Putin.

Keeping up so far? Good. Because last week also brought fresh news that suggests the extent to which

Trump has surrounded himself with people who have their own Russian entanglements.

Trump has surrounded himself with people who have their own Russian entanglements.

In a prior episode — all of two weeks ago — we found out that Donald Trump Jr. jumped at the chance (“I love it,” he said) to meet with Russian representatives promising dirt on Hillary Clinton. Then we found out that Russian attorney Natalia Veselnitskaya, who flew all the way from Moscow to meet the Trump high command, had represented the FSB, the successor to the KGB. The other participants included a former Russian counterintelligence officer suspected of involvement in hacking and a Russian financier who specializes in setting up Delaware bank accounts through which his Russian clients can move hundreds of millions of dollars.

Last week, we also found out that Paul Manafort, Trump’s former campaign manager, was, according to the *New York Times*, “in debt to pro-Russia interests by as much as \$17 million” before joining the Trump campaign in March 2016, which would make him a major security risk. The *Wall Street Journal* is now reporting that Manafort is under investigation by special counsel Robert Mueller. Oh, and ExxonMobil was just fined \$2 million for violating sanctions on Russia while Secretary of State Rex Tillerson was its CEO.

But, wait, the best is yet to come. The writers of this series, as is their wont, saved their most startling revelations for the end of last week’s episodes.

It was not until Friday evening that we found out that Attorney General Jeff Sessions not only lied about meeting Russian representatives during the campaign but apparently lied about what they discussed. The *Washington Post* reported that electronic intercepts revealed that Sessions and Russian ambassador Sergey Kislyak had “substantive” discussions on matters including Trump’s positions on Russia-related issues and prospects for U.S.-Russia relations in a Trump administration.” (Sessions’s spokeswoman responded that he hadn’t discussed election “interference” but did not deny discussing the campaign per se.)

And how did this top-secret signals intelligence become public knowledge? The widespread suspicion is that it was leaked either by Trump himself or by someone

close to him in an attempt to force the attorney general from office so that Trump could appoint a replacement who would fire Mueller. Who but Frank Underwood of *House of Cards* could possibly pull off something so Machiavellian?

Yet this scenario is perfectly plausible because just two days before the Sessions leak, Trump had gone on the record with the *New York Times* to trash his own attorney general for daring to recuse himself from the Kremlingate probe. Maybe Trump was just blowing off steam — or maybe he is looking to replace Sessions with someone who wouldn't have to recuse himself and thus could terminate the Mueller investigation on his behalf.

In his *Times* interview, the president made clear that Mueller would be crossing a "red line" if he dared to probe his finances — something that Bloomberg reports Mueller is already doing. And for good reason: Given that Trump has a long history of financial links to Russia — his sons have boasted in the past of all the money they've gotten from wealthy Russians — it is imperative

to find out with whom he has done business. Remember what Deep Throat told Bob Woodward in the movie adaptation of *All the President's Men*: "Follow the money."

Yet, just as your drama critic predicted,

Trump is becoming unhinged at the prospect of Mueller uncovering his deep, dark financial secrets.

Trump is becoming unhinged at the prospect of Mueller uncovering his deep, dark financial secrets. The *Washington Post* reported on Friday that the president "was especially disturbed after learning Mueller would be able to access several years of his tax returns," which suggests that he is hiding something a lot more incriminating than a lower-than-claimed net worth. The *Post* also reported that Trump is trying to intimidate and smear the special counsel (more obstruction of justice?) while examining the prospect of pardoning his aides, family members — and possibly even himself.

Trump did nothing to dampen such speculation by defiantly proclaiming on Twitter, as part of his weekly Saturday morning meltdown, that the president has the "complete power to pardon." Actually, many legal scholars argue that a president can't pardon himself. Even if he does so, he will be admitting guilt and thus strengthening the case for his own impeachment.

What a crazy week. And now we are in for another — and another and another. Indeed, this week began with Jared Kushner trying to explain to congressional committees his meetings with Russian representatives last year and with his father-in-law berating his own "beleaguered" attorney general for not "looking into Crooked Hillarys crimes."

Get used to it. The Kremlingate show isn't going away as long as Trump remains in the White House. It's impossible to know how this story will end, but it's unlikely to have a happy outcome. More likely, we are going to see a presidency increasingly paralyzed by scandal and a president at war with the

whole world — except, of course, for his friend in the Kremlin, whom he treats the way a giddy schoolgirl would Zac Efron.

Trump has already signaled the next plot twist: He will somehow try to fire Mueller before the special counsel can uncover any more damaging information. We've seen this movie before. The "Saturday Night Massacre" did not work out well for Richard Nixon, but Trump is so oblivious to history, and so desperate to cover his tracks, that he may well stage a sequel. It will be up to Republicans, who control both houses of Congress, to decide if Trump will get away with such a shocking display of villainy. Sadly, given the failure of Republicans so far to do much to stand up to the miscreant in the Oval Office, this could well be one series where the bad guy gets away with his crimes. Stay tuned at the same Trump time, on the same Trump channel, for another depressing episode.

Photo credit: MIKHAIL KLIMENTIEV/AFP/Getty Images



With Probable White House Support, Congress Prepares to Vote on Russia Sanctions Bill

Paul McLeary | 2 hours ago

4-5 minutes

Congress on Tuesday is expected to begin considering a new bill that would level fresh sanctions against Russia, measures that now appear to have White House support.

House and Senate negotiators announced Saturday they'd reached a deal on the legislation, which would make it more difficult for Trump to lift sanctions leveled against Russia and could penalize firms, including those in Europe, that contribute to Russian energy development. Sanctions against Iran and North Korea are also included in the bill.

The next day, the newly minted White House communications director, Anthony Scaramucci, said U.S. President Donald Trump would make a decision soon as to whether he would support the new bill, contradicting press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders, who said the

White House was on board with the sanctions.

However, Scaramucci noted he was still new to the job and deferred to Sanders.

"The administration is supportive of being tough on Russia, particularly in putting these sanctions in place," Sanders said. She added that the White House felt the original legislation was poorly composed, but that it supported the current legislation.

"Frankly, not much in terms of what the administration can and cannot do changed in negotiations so her reasoning is not necessarily on solid ground," a Senate Democratic staffer said, in response to Sanders' comment. "But we're glad to see they're supporting the bill and hope the president signs it as soon as it reaches his desk."

Support from European allies is also critical to the new sanctions. They have criticized the legislation, both because it makes sanctions more difficult to lift even if circumstances changed, and also because of

potential "unintended consequences" on energy.

Companies working on the development of Nord Stream II, which runs from Russia to Germany, could well see the United States imposing punitive measures on those involved in the pipeline project. That would likely undermine the unified US-EU stance on Russia THAT the sanctions were meant to support.

"For US-Europe relations, Nord Stream has all the elements of being a really difficult problem to solve," Columbia University political science professor Timothy Frye told Foreign Policy.

Congress needs to craft legislation such that allies feel heard, but also to ensure the United States doesn't soften its posture toward Russia, according to Frye. "I think this is a very tricky problem in part because Europe is divided on Nord Stream II," he said, with Germans and Austrians supporting it and Poles, who do not want to increase

Europe's energy dependence on Russia, decidedly opposed.

Even if European allies are on board, it's unclear if the measures will actually serve to check Russian aggression in Ukraine, which is arguably their primary purpose. "My concern is whether the U.S. side will preserve the ability to credibly offer sanctions relief as leverage for Russian implementation of its Minsk commitments," Matthew Rojansky, of the Kennan Institute, told FP.

Trump would not have been the first president to oppose Congress using sanctions to shape the White House's foreign policy, but other administrations have not faced an investigation into foreign interference in U.S. elections.

But, then, with both parties overwhelmingly supporting the legislation, Trump "wants to get in front of the parade, I think," Frye said. "If this is going to happen anyway, there's no sense in trying to fight it."

Photo credit: Chris Kleponis-Pool/Getty Images



Editorial : Congress's drastic — but necessary — rebuke to Trump

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The Post's View
Opinion

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

Russian President Vladimir Putin. (Akos Stiller/Bloomberg)

By Editorial Board

11-14 minutes

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

July 24 at 7:15 PM

CONGRESS AT last looks ready to pass its first significant piece of legislation of the Trump administration — and it will be a major rebuke to the president. A sanctions bill covering Russia that the House is expected to take up Tuesday essentially would place President Trump's policy toward the regime of Vladimir Putin in receivership, preventing him from lifting sanctions without congressional agreement. It's a drastic but necessary response to the inexplicable affinity Mr. Trump has evinced toward the Kremlin, as well as to the continuing questions about Russia's support for his presidential campaign.

The need for congressional action was underlined again on Sunday, when Mr. Trump's new

communications chief, Anthony Scaramucci, quoted the president as saying about Russia's interference in the election, "Maybe they did it, maybe they didn't do it." For the U.S. intelligence community, there is no such doubt: Moscow did intervene with the intent to help Mr. Trump defeat Hillary Clinton, on the orders of Mr. Putin. Mr. Trump's refusal to accept those conclusions, and the possibility that he might reverse sanctions imposed on Russia for that interference and for its military invasion of Ukraine, has generated an extraordinary consensus in an otherwise polarized Congress.

The Senate voted 97 to 2 to expand and codify the sanctions and to give Congress the power to block their suspension by the White House. Following an agreement struck over the weekend, the House is expected to approve a slightly altered version of the measure by a similar veto-proof margin.

The Daily 202 newsletter

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

New sanctions against Iran's missile program and North Korean shipping are part of the bill, but the real impact will be on Russia policy. If Mr. Trump wishes to return two compounds confiscated from Russia by the Obama administration, which said they were used for spying, or to ease strictures on individuals and companies for their involvement in the Ukraine invasion, he will have to send Congress a report certifying that Russia has taken steps to stop its cyberaggression or that it has stopped trying to undermine Ukraine's sovereignty. Congress would then have the opportunity to pass a resolution blocking the action.

The measure is a blunt one and could have some unintended consequences. U.S. and European policy on Ukraine has been based on offering Russia an easing of sanctions if it complied with a 2015 peace plan. If Mr. Putin now concludes that he has no chance of reaping that reward, he could escalate the still-simmering conflict in Ukraine's eastern provinces.

European Union officials, for their part, are alarmed by provisions of the bill allowing for sanctions on companies that partner with Russia in building pipelines to export its gas and oil, and are threatening retaliation. One way or another, U.S.-European coordination on Russia may become more difficult.

Congress's action is nevertheless essential. It has become all too evident that Mr. Trump cannot be trusted to protect vital U.S. interests against persistent Russian aggression. He has shown no interest in stopping Russian cyberattacks, including further assaults on the U.S. electoral system. He appears ready to hand Mr. Putin major concessions for nothing, from the return of the compounds to withdrawal of U.S. support for rebel forces in Syria. Why Mr. Trump pursues these actions remains a mystery. But Congress is right to limit the damage.



Rampell : Jared Kushner 'forgets' to disclose his assets? Seize them.

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

5-7 minutes

You've heard of the so-called Pottery Barn rule: "You break it, you buy it"?

Maybe it's time for the banana republic rule: "You forget it, you forfeit it."

For the 39th time, top presidential adviser (and son-in-law) Jared Kushner has revised his financial disclosure forms. Kushner disclosed 77 additional assets, collectively worth millions of dollars. These items were "inadvertently omitted" from previous versions of his federal forms, according to a document the White House released Friday.

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Hey, I get it.

Financial assets — like meetings with Russian officials — can easily slip one's mind. Especially if one's mind is preoccupied with brokering peace in the Middle East, managing diplomatic relations with China, renegotiating the North American Free Trade Agreement and fixing the entire U.S. government.

And honestly, who among us has not forgotten a multimillion-dollar asset here or there?

Surely we've all reached into the couch cushions, searching for the TV remote, and pulled out a forgotten New Jersey liquor license worth between \$500,001 and \$1 million. Why, just the other day I was looking for a quarter for the office soda machine and instead stumbled upon a neglected personal art collection valued between \$5 million and \$25 million.

Maybe Kushner really *did* forget all those assets, including a stake in a start-up valued at \$5 million to \$25 million. Just as maybe he really *did* accidentally submit a security-clearance form that left off more than 100 contacts with foreign nationals.

One reason to give him the benefit of the doubt, at least on his financial forgetfulness: Kushner, like many of President Trump's senior officials, is really rich. And really rich people, almost by definition, have a lot of assets to keep track of.

They also tend to have far-flung holdings structured in complicated ways, with LLCs inside LLCs inside LLCs, matryoshka-doll-style. This is both to minimize tax burdens and maintain some level of privacy.

All of which is to say that maybe it's legitimately difficult for someone

such as Kushner to keep track of what he owns (and whom he owes).

It's true that willfully omitting an asset on one's federal financial disclosure form comes with the risk of criminal action. But how motivating can a threat of prison possibly be if Kushner knows he can just go back and add anything that the press happens to dig up?

That's exactly why we need the banana republic rule (named for the lawless state, not the store).

It might push Kushner — and other ultra-wealthy people serving the president — to be excruciatingly thorough on these forms. Here's how it would work.

Above a certain value — let's say \$1 million — any assets that are "forgotten" on federal disclosures can be seized by Uncle Sam. If they weren't memorable enough for these forms, then clearly you're rich enough that you don't really need them.

Treasury gets to take them, without compensating you.

"That's socialism!" you might protest. But really, it's not so different from another policy that the definitely-not-socialist Trump administration already backs enthusiastically: civil asset forfeiture.

This is when law enforcement seizes private property without proving the owner is guilty of a

crime, often without even *charging* the owner with a crime. Just last week, Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced he was restarting a federal forfeiture program the Obama administration had shut down.

"Civil asset forfeiture takes the material support of the criminals and instead makes it the material support of law enforcement," Sessions explained, even though the stuff being seized is not necessarily providing "material support" for any crime or any criminal.

With such tenuous logic, why shouldn't Sessions support appropriating possibly-innocent-but-still-kinda-suspicious financial disclosure omissions, too?

I'm not the first one to suggest a fix like this, by the way.

In the 1960s, famed University of Chicago economist Arnold Harberger proposed a self-assessed property tax system that worked much the same way. You'd register the value of your assets with the government — and you'd be required to sell your property at these self-declared valuations to any buyer.

For example, if you preposterously claimed your fancy golf club was worth no more than \$5 million, you could be forced to sell it at that price on the spot. Likewise, if you omitted

an asset entirely, that would be equivalent to saying the asset was valued at zero — and it could be taken from you without compensation. Lowballing or

outright omissions could be much more costly than simply paying a fairly assessed tax.

This so-called Harberger tax is intended to encourage greater

honesty, much needed in countries where institutional enforcement is weak.

Back in the '60s, Harberger was pitching this idea to Latin American

countries struggling with corruption and lawlessness. But all of a sudden it seems so relevant here in the United States.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

McGurn: Mueller Is Trumping Congress

William McGurn
6-7 minutes

documents. And John Koskinen, the awful replacement IRS commissioner who stonewalled and misled, remains in office.

The Lois Lerner fiasco offers a sobering lesson for a Congress whose various committees are holding hearings on Russia's intervention in last year's elections as Mr. Mueller investigates the same. While Mr. Mueller's office is a watered-down version of Ken Starr's or Lawrence Walsh's, it remains true that special prosecutors corrupt even if they don't corrupt as absolutely as independent counsels. The main headlines of the past week—Is Donald Trump attempting to undermine Mr. Mueller? Will Trump Fire Mueller?—all speak to the challenge a special prosecutor poses to the constitutional authority of the president.

Far less scrutiny has been devoted to the challenge Mr. Mueller poses to the authority of the legislative branch. In this case, ironically, the challenge stems less from the aggressiveness of the special prosecutor than from the meekness of Congress. In between their public tributes to Mr. Mueller's sterling character, too many in Congress seem to worry more about how they might be affecting his investigation than about what his investigation might be doing to theirs.

One small snapshot: Mr. Mueller, an unelected appointee, had the Trump memos written by former FBI Director James Comey even as the FBI was refusing to release them to

the elected representatives of the American people.

When Mr. Mueller was appointed back in May, Sen. Lindsey Graham rightly noted that though he respected the decision, the appointment will “really limit what Congress can do, and it's going to really limit what the public will know about this.” Alas, the South Carolina Republican went on to say that “we in Congress have to be very careful not to interfere in his lane.”

Certainly representatives and senators shouldn't set out to frustrate Mr. Mueller's investigation. But neither should they permit Mr. Mueller to frustrate theirs.

In this investigative capacity, Congress has many tools to enforce its demands for information. It can, for example, use inherent contempt to jail someone until he testifies or produces the requested information. True, inherent contempt hasn't been invoked since 1935, but given that the civil path to enforcing a contempt finding takes years and the criminal option (as Ms. Lerner showed) has effectively been overridden, Congress would do well to rely on its own powers and authority.

Here a May 2017 review from the Congressional Research Service is illuminating. Although witnesses before a congressional committee do have the right to invoke the Fifth Amendment, the House can get a court order directing the witness to testify so long as the threat of prosecution for that testimony is removed. Mr. Mueller might not like

this, but that shouldn't stop Congress from using a power designed to extract information rather than punish.

Even more intriguing, sensitive or privileged client information is not exempt from congressional subpoena. This might prove especially fascinating in the case of former Trump campaign manager Paul Manafort, who has had business dealings with a pro-Russia Ukrainian political party. Ditto for Glenn Simpson, whose Fusion GPS commissioned what became the Christopher Steele Russian dossier on behalf of political clients.

Not to mention the many other powers of Congress, including impeachment and the purse. The point is, Congress has many ways to get to the bottom of the Russia story and hold people accountable—if it so chooses.

In *Anderson v. Dunn* (1821), the Supreme Court correctly noted that without the power to imprison those found in contempt, Congress would be “exposed to every indignity and interruption, that rudeness, caprice or even conspiracy may mediate against it.” Two centuries later, the different examples of Ms. Lerner and Mr. Mueller both point to a brand new indignity—which Congress inflicts on itself when it is too timid to assert its own powers.

Write to mcgurn@wsj.com.

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July 24, 2017 7:07 p.m. ET

Did Congress learn anything from Lois Lerner? Judging from Capitol Hill's self-abasing deference to Special Prosecutor Robert Mueller, the answer is no.

You remember Ms. Lerner. She was the official at the center of an Internal Revenue Service effort that denied conservative political advocacy groups tax-exempt status, or at least held up approval long enough that these groups could not be a factor in the 2012 election.

Back when Republicans were holding hearings on the matter, time and again they were lectured not to do anything that might affect the FBI's investigation—which eventually ended with no charges against anyone. Though Ms. Lerner was found in contempt by the House for her refusal to testify, it proved all for show.

The tip-off came when then-Speaker John Boehner, rather than use Congress's inherent contempt power to jail Ms. Lerner until she talked, opted for classic swamp symbolism—by passing the buck to an Obama Justice Department everyone knew would never prosecute her.

The result? Ms. Lerner avoided having to answer any hard questions. The IRS merrily continued to lose or destroy crucial

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Scaramucci's White House Role Raises Questions for Planned Sale of His Investment Firm

Kate O'Keefe and Michael C. Bender

6-7 minutes

his hedge-fund investing firm, SkyBridge Capital, to Chinese giant HNA Group Co. in January in anticipation of joining the White House, he said. He didn't get a job there at the time.

Meanwhile, the SkyBridge/HNA deal proceeded and, like many foreign deals, is facing a review by the Committee on Foreign Investment in the U.S.

Mr. Scaramucci's appointment to a White House position last week gives the review new significance. The committee, which reviews deals for national security concerns, is made up of top officials in the

administration of President Donald Trump, and is led by the Treasury.

The panel, known as CFIUS, can approve a deal or recommend the president block it, meaning a transaction that Mr. Scaramucci stands to profit from could ultimately be in the hands of his boss, Mr. Trump.

The deal is worth \$250 million, according to a person familiar with the matter. Securities filings indicate that Mr. Scaramucci has a 25%-to-50% stake in the firm, which would mean that he could stand to earn between \$62.5 million and \$125 million from the deal.

White House officials didn't respond to requests for comment.

Mr. Scaramucci is far from the only official to face business issues as he joins the Trump administration.

Wilbur Ross Jr., the billionaire private-equity investor whom Mr. Trump tapped to serve as secretary of Commerce, agreed to sell 80 assets worth at least \$92 million. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin was required to sell by mid-May more than \$100 million of shares in CIT Group Inc., the financial firm he helped lead.

July 24, 2017 7:28 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON—Anthony Scaramucci's appointment as White House communications director presents a sensitive situation for the planned sale of his investment company to a Chinese conglomerate—a deal that is now under government review.

Mr. Scaramucci first announced plans to sell a controlling stake in

But ethics experts say the CFIUS involvement makes Mr. Scaramucci's case unique, given that the White House and other senior Trump appointees have a hand in the outcome. In addition to Treasury, CFIUS includes representatives of the Justice, Commerce, Defense and State departments, and others, and the president has the right to overrule committee decisions.

The review is also occurring at a time when the government has ramped up its scrutiny of Chinese deals. The backers of at least five Chinese deals—including another one involving HNA—have recently refiled or said they would refile applications to the committee after failing to get CFIUS approval, according to people familiar with the matter and public disclosures.

In his first news conference Friday, Mr. Scaramucci said he had worked with the Office of Government Ethics "to take care of" all conflicts of interest with his business. "My

start date is going to be in a couple of weeks, so that it's a—100% totally cleansed and clean," he said, later adding: "You want to go serve the country, and so the first thing you have to do is take on this mega opportunity cost by getting rid of all your assets, and so—but I'm willing to do that, because I love the country."

The ethics office declined to comment.

President George W. Bush's White House ethics lawyer, Richard Painter, said in an interview that he couldn't recall a similar situation arising in which a deal by an incoming White House staffer was undergoing a CFIUS review. He recommended that the White House stay out of the process entirely and respect whatever decision CFIUS makes, without the president exercising his right to overrule it.

"The worst case is this deal gets approved and it looks like favoritism," said Mr. Painter.

Under the terms of the deal, HNA, together with George Hornig-backed investment company RON Transatlantic, will take a stake of approximately 89% in SkyBridge, according to filings. HNA could end up with as much as 80% of SkyBridge, the filings indicate, while RON Transatlantic, which has been a minority shareholder for the past four years, could end up with between 9% and 38%, the filings show.

In recent weeks HNA has come under pressure from its own regulators back home as Beijing attempts to rein in some of its highest-profile private sector companies in what officials say is growing unease with their mounting debt and rising influence. Regulators last month ordered banks to scrutinize loans to HNA, one of China's most acquisitive companies, and others. On Monday the closely held company unveiled a new ownership structure to try to clarify who ultimately controls it.

An HNA spokesman said in a statement Sunday: "HNA Group is a financially strong company with a robust, diversified balance sheet that reflects our continued growth and engagement across the capital markets."

HNA has spent \$5.68 billion on investments abroad so far this year, following \$20 billion last year, according to Dealogic. The spree included the company's \$6 billion deal for U.S. electronics distributor Ingram Micro Inc., which cleared CFIUS last year.

—Lisa Beilfuss in New York, Rebecca Ballhaus in Washington and Anjani Trivedi and Julie Steinberg in Hong Kong contributed to this article.

Write to Michael C. Bender at Mike.Bender@wsj.com

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Gerson : Why Anthony Scaramucci won't make a dent in Trump's problems

By Michael

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Gerson

5-6 minutes

The best conversations on The Washington Post

Incoming White House communications director Anthony Scaramucci blows a kiss. (Pablo Martinez Monsivais/Associated Press)

Anthony Scaramucci's rollout as President Trump's new communications director received mainly good reviews. He is, as any White House job in the current administration requires, a skilled sycophant. His on-air abjection — including a televised apology for past disloyalty — smacks of self-criticism during China's Cultural Revolution. But comrade Scaramucci does have a knack for being aggressive without being angry. And he is good on TV, which means he'll play a starring roll in Trump's main obsession.

The president's intention in choosing Scaramucci was clear from the announcement. "We have accomplished so much," said Trump in his statement, "and we are being given credit for so little." Scaramucci's calling is to be a more effective harvester of credit.

This staff change is probably a good thing for the president. It also reveals a complete blindness about the true source of his administration's current struggles.

Who can look at the wreck of the White House — bitterly divided, dysfunctional and hemorrhaging leaks — and think a better communications approach is the answer? Who can look at the wreck of Trump's agenda — stymied in spite of Republican control of the House and Senate — and think the real problem is insufficient credit-taking on television? I could name half a dozen White House jobs that more urgently needed new blood — including the chief of staff — than communications director. Jobs in the press department are what the press and the president mainly see. But obvious problems are not always the most urgent.

To be fair, the idea that words are always the real problem is not unique to the Trump administration. I saw the same communications fallacy in my White House experience during George W. Bush's presidency. It is typical for politicians and party officials to believe that the fault lies not in themselves, but in their flacks. As head of presidential speechwriting, I heard more than my share of "if only." If only the administration would make such-and-such a point, the Katrina mess could be put behind us. If only the president said some magic words — suggested

language attached — the erosion in support for the Iraq War would be reversed. If only the president were to give 60 speeches in 60 days on Social Security reform, Americans would finally understand the problem and our plan would pass.

We actually tried that last one in 2005. The trip was carefully designed to pressure gettable Democratic senators. Bush was loose, informed and effective. And the plan never even got out of committee. We did not have a communications problem. We had a reality problem — as we did with Katrina and Iraq. In such cases, hiring a new head of speechwriting would probably not have helped.

The Trump administration's reality problem is a historically unpopular president, pushing historically unpopular legislation (at least on health care), in a historically divided party, to a historically polarized country. Hiring a new head of communications will not fundamentally alter this state of affairs.

Words generally cannot improve facts on the ground, but they do have the power to complicate them. Part of the reason Trump is, from his perspective, "given credit for so little" is that so little has been accomplished. But another part is the insanely high expectations that Trump's own words have created. "You're going to have such great

health care at a tiny fraction of the cost," he promised. "It's going to be so easy." Tax reform benefiting the middle class would come in the first 100 days. He would build an impenetrable physical wall across the continent and "the country of Mexico will be reimbursing the United States for the full cost of such a wall." There would be a package spurring a trillion dollars in infrastructure spending. Middle East peace is "frankly maybe not as difficult as people have thought over the years." And further: "I will give you everything" and achieve "every dream you ever dreamed for your country."

The president would probably not be politically comfortable fulfilling some of my dreams. But even more generally, this is what happens when a politician promises the world while knowing so little about how it actually works.

Trump's greatest need is not someone who will defend him on cable television. It is an administration capable of even the baby steps of governing — defining a positive, realistic agenda and selling it to Congress, starting with one's own party. Trump does not have a communications problem; he has a leadership problem.

Read more from Michael Gerson's archive, follow him on Twitter or subscribe to his updates on Facebook.

How Democrats Lost Voters to Trump—and Might Win Them Back

Gerald F. Seib
5-7 minutes

Updated July 24, 2017 11:05 a.m.
ET

This is a column about how Donald Trump won the White House.

Well, more precisely, it's a column about how Hillary Clinton lost the White House. That's particularly relevant right now because Democrats on Monday released a new road map showing how to recover from that 2016 loss.

Democratic leaders are calling their new agenda "A Better Deal," and it's heavy on populist economics: a higher minimum wage; more working-class access to government health programs; and expanded broadband for rural areas.

A deeper look back at the 2016 outcome suggests that approach is at least on the right track. The key for Democrats isn't simply to turn out more young, liberal voters, or to win over Republicans who don't like President Trump. Rather, Democrats need to win back working-class voters who defected to Mr. Trump. To do that, many in the party believe, Democrats will have to craft a more effective economic message as well as convince skeptical voters that the party isn't locked into an unpopular Washington status quo.

Third Way, a centrist Democratic

think tank, finds in a new report that about six million people who voted for Barack Obama in 2012 abandoned the Democrats to vote for Mr. Trump in 2016. That's twice as many as voters who went for Republican Mitt Romney in 2012 and then flipped to Mrs. Clinton four years later.

The voters who flipped from Mr. Obama to Mr. Trump are key. But why did they leave? Some answers are found in a Wall Street Journal/NBC News survey released earlier this month that looked at a broad cross-section of counties Mr. Trump carried last year.

There's no escaping that people in Trump country simply didn't like Mrs. Clinton. In some places, she was practically toxic. Across all Trump counties, just 27% hold a positive view of her. Among independent voters in those counties, only 16% view her positively.

But much of Trump country is so deep red that it is beyond Democrats' reach. It's more instructive to look instead at a subset of Trump counties: those that Mr. Obama carried in 2012 but went for Mr. Trump in 2016.

In these "flip counties" Mrs. Clinton also is personally unpopular; just 30% view her favorably, while 50% have an unfavorable view. Interestingly, though, Sen. Bernie Sanders, who challenged Mrs. Clinton from the left with an antiestablishment populist

message, is far more popular there. In the flip counties, 44% have a positive view of Mr. Sanders, while just 29% have a negative view.

In other words, in counties that moved from Democrats to Mr. Trump, feelings toward Mrs. Clinton are a net 20-percentage points negative, while they are a net 15-points positive for Mr. Sanders.

That suggests Mrs. Clinton, the ultimate representative of the party establishment, was a particularly ill-suited candidate for 2016. It further suggests that a populist economic message of the kind Mr. Sanders brought to the table has resonance in the areas that moved away from the Democrats.

That notion is supported by some more specific findings in the Journal/NBC survey. In the flip counties, more than half said they think the political and economic systems of the country are stacked against them. A whopping 71% said they aren't confident their children's generation will have a better life.

There is much about Mr. Trump's style that flip-county residents don't like, but they particularly like the suggestion that he is "shaking things up in Washington," and that he is twisting corporate arms to keep jobs in the U.S. That may be because they are feeling economic strain; 66% say someone in their household has lost a job in the last five years, and 75% say someone in the household has more than \$20,000 in student debt.

Yet there also are signs that many voters in this slice of Trump country have impulses that are more Democratic than Republican. Six in 10 say government should be doing more to solve problems, while just 37% say the government is doing too many things. They are slightly more inclined to want Democrats to control Congress than Republicans, and they have positive views overall of Mr. Obama. They don't like Republicans' health-care plans.

Mr. Trump won these places with his "America First" economic and cultural messages. But Mrs. Clinton just as surely lost them because she was seen as part of the political establishment in a year of surging antiestablishment sentiment, which Mr. Sanders tapped into quite effectively from within her own party.

These numbers suggest Democrats should be able to recapture this slice of the Trump coalition. They also suggest something else: Don't be surprised if Republicans try to hold on to those voters in next year's midterm elections by portraying Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi as a replica of Mrs. Clinton, an out-of-touch embodiment of a hated political establishment.

Write to Gerald F. Seib at jerry.seib@wsj.com

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Democrats Try to Find Economic Message After Railing Against Trump (UNE)

Matt Flegenheimer and Alexander Burns

9-11 minutes

Senator Chuck Schumer of New York, flanked by fellow Democrats, helped introduce the party's new economic message on Monday in Berryville, Va., saying: "Too many Americans don't know what we stand for. Not after today." Justin T. Gellerson for The New York Times

BERRYVILLE, Va. — For more than a year, Democrats have raged against now-President Trump, projecting their opposition as the party's central message. In so doing, they have maintained their minority status in Congress, sustained the most stunning loss in modern presidential history and left

voters with little sense of what they represent.

On Monday, Democratic leaders gathered 70 miles from Washington — in a town of some 4,000, in a district represented by a Republican, in a county carried easily by Mr. Trump — to try something else.

"Too many Americans don't know what we stand for," Senator Chuck Schumer of New York, the Democratic leader, told a sweat-soaked crowd of about 100 at a park here off Main Street. "Not after today."

Such is the battle cry of a party in the wilderness, straining to win support even while staring down a historically unpopular president consumed by Russia-specked scandal. Now Democrats are training their attention elsewhere,

unfurling a set of proposals aimed squarely at voters who see a gap between Mr. Trump's populist campaign message and the reality of his tenure.

Labeled collectively as "A Better Deal," the policies combine left-leaning doctrine old and new — a \$15-an-hour minimum wage, a crusade against monopolies, and efforts to lower prescription drug costs — elevating issues that Democrats expect to animate next year's midterm elections and supplying an answer to critics who accuse them of offering nothing but obstruction. Not coincidentally, Democrats latched onto two policies that Mr. Trump campaigned on but has done little to combat as president — the power of big-business monopolies and surging drug prices.

And so, one after another, the Democrats stepped into this small-town painting: the Senate firebrand from Massachusetts, two Brooklynites, the House leader from San Francisco, in her dark sunglasses, assembling in front of a swing set and a row of minivans and telling the people why they should listen this time.

"We're here today because the economy is broken," said Senator Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, the event's most celebrated draw, revving up as residents snapped to attention for cellphone photographs. "Americans know that this economy is rigged."

For all the fanfare on Monday, Democrats acknowledged that the message might serve more as a flexible skeleton for their 2018 campaigns than a precise ideological or political road map.

The "Better Deal" concept appeared designed to satisfy as many factions of the party as possible — populist liberals, suburban moderates, social justice activists — while attaching the Democratic Party in formal fashion to a few broad economic themes.

But the themes did aim at issues familiar to struggling Americans. Soaring drug prices are cutting into middle-class wallets, and the consolidation of industries, from airlines to cable companies to banks, are raising prices, reducing competition and holding down wages. The federal minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour has not been raised since 2009.

Laura Henderson protested in Berryville, Va., on Monday. Justin T. Gellerson for The New York Times

David Axelrod, the former chief strategist for President Barack Obama, said the messaging rollout appeared to be an acknowledgment that Democrats had failed to connect with voters' economic anxiety in the last election.

"The question is: Does it appear to people to be simply a poll-driven document offered by a bunch of Washington politicians, or is there a persistent, disciplined attempt to follow through on these issues?" said Mr. Axelrod, noting that Hillary Clinton's myriad economic policy prescriptions failed to overcome Mr. Trump's battering-ram nationalist message. "And do the candidates of the party, running throughout the country, embrace them?"

More optimistic Democrats said they hoped it would allow the party to sidle past some of the messy internal conflicts of the last eight months.

Mr. Trump's election touched off bitter arguments among Democrats over just how politically combative the party should be, and how much it should seek to compete with Mr. Trump's hard-edged version of economic populism.

Mr. Schumer suggested, in fact, that Mr. Trump's success had demonstrated the potency of this kind of economic strategy.

"President Trump campaigned on a populist platform, talking to working people. That's why he won," the senator said, adding that Mr. Trump's choice to often outsource policy making to hard-line conservatives had created a vacuum on economic issues. "We Democrats are going to fill that vacuum. Democrats will show the country we are the party on the side of working people."

The effort comes as the party confronts a mood of mounting urgency around its messaging, particularly on economic matters. For all of the Clinton campaign's white papers and round-table discussions last year — proposals, in many cases, that were equivalent to what Democrats embraced on Monday — the candidate's closing argument registered often as anti-Trump above all else.

The problem has persisted. Lacking a pointed national sales pitch in the first half of this year, Democratic candidates were shut out in a series of special congressional elections in conservative-leaning districts — in Georgia, Montana, South Carolina and Kansas — with each defeat fueling new recriminations and deepening existing disagreements about the party's future.

Several Democrats were heartened that Monday's display seemed at

least to reflect a consensus that the party needed to be more attentive to voters' close-to-home concerns, without lurching too precipitously toward the left or the center.

The event was ostensibly hosted by Senator Mark Warner of Virginia, a centrist, business-friendly Democrat who reached the governor's mansion in 2002 in part by finding unlikely success with the kinds of rural voters who have since gravitated toward Mr. Trump.

Senator Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts spoke on Monday. Justin T. Gellerson for The New York Times

"In that way, it's an important step," said former Gov. Jack Markell of Delaware, a moderate Democrat and former chairman of the National Governors Association. "I think this really appeals to everybody, from Mark Warner to Elizabeth Warren."

As with most any political messaging rollout, there were halting moments: ham-fisted baseball banter, time-filling riffs about the weather and — to the delight of Republicans in Washington — a slogan that echoed both a tagline from Speaker Paul D. Ryan's "A Better Way" agenda and the Papa John's pizza creed, "Better Ingredients, Better Pizza."

On Monday, a small group of protesters, who refused to say if they belonged to an organization, held aloft pizza boxes with the face of Representative Nancy Pelosi of California, the minority leader. "Still Pelosi," the boxes read.

Yet if Ms. Pelosi and Mr. Schumer were plainly a long way from her home cities on Monday, Democrats were careful to line up other party

ambassadors with more down-home appeal.

Representative Cheri Bustos of Illinois, whose district is largely rural, cheered an attendee for wearing a hat for a seed company. "That's, like, my kind of peeps," she said.

Others leaned into their urban ZIP codes.

"I'm from a small town up north," said Representative Hakeem Jeffries of New York. "Brooklyn."

And Mr. Schumer became perhaps the first elected official in Virginia political history to begin an attempt at anecdotal folksiness with, "Last month, I went to a Yankees game." He spoke of encountering two Trump voters there who worried about the president's approach so far.

Such pangs rang familiar to some attendees on Monday.

Maria Esparolini, 61, said she had supported Mr. Trump last year after twice voting for Mr. Obama. While she believes Mr. Trump has successfully frightened some of America's enemies abroad into submission, she appeared unsettled by his tenure.

"Please don't ask me that," Ms. Esparolini said with a laugh, when asked to appraise the Trump presidency.

She added, "I'm personally tired of all the twitters and the twotters."

Kate Petranek, 72, overheard.

"I think," she said, "you speak for all Americans."

**The
New York
Times**

Editorial : The Democrats' Agenda, and the Art of the Possible

The Editorial Board

4-6 minutes

Laurie Rollitt

Remember that little booklet Paul Ryan used to wave around with the Republicans' insipidly branded economic agenda, "A Better Way"? Now Democrats have an agenda called "A Better Deal."

This semantic similarity neatly encapsulates how scarce better ways and better deals have been in this gridlocked Congress. The agenda Democrats began rolling out on Monday actually shares some ideas — job training, lowering drug prices, help for working families — with the Republicans'

stated but so far unrealized priorities.

But the minority Democrats won't accomplish much, if anything, on this list without Republican assistance. Democratic leaders say they've asked their Republican counterparts and President Trump for help, but that nobody on that side of the fence seems much interested in anything besides squandering the calendar (and their credibility) on a mindless effort to repeal Obamacare. Meanwhile, Mr. Trump's campaign promise for a \$1 trillion infrastructure overhaul, a job-creation effort Democrats are eager to talk about, goes nowhere.

Democrats need to keep trying, no matter how Sisyphean the effort, if only to show that at least one party has more interest in getting

something done for struggling Americans than in positioning itself for the 2018 election. And why isn't Mr. Trump, who is counting bills to rename post offices as legislative achievements, turning to Democrats for help on initiatives they and he support?

Some items are less open to compromise than others. Democrats want a \$15 federal minimum wage — a worthy goal that is a nonstarter in this Congress. Democrats are going further than their two past presidents in promising to crack down on monopolies and mega-mergers that deprive consumers of choice and workers of bargaining power. But their pledge to create a "trust buster" to "stop abusive corporate conduct and the exploitation of market power" seems more populist

talking point than legislative possibility — and the Federal Trade Commission and the Justice Department's antitrust division already have those powers.

Family leave is another Democratic priority, favored in sketchy form by Ivanka Trump. The Democrats' plan, championed by Senator Kirsten Gillibrand of New York, is a comprehensive one that covers people caring for aging parents as well as new mothers and fathers. It's not clear that Ms. Trump has any real plan for pushing family leave, but if the goal is to accomplish this, rather than campaign on the issue, Democrats should test her resolve.

Democrats want to help 10 million Americans find work by expanding paid apprenticeship and work-based

job-training programs. They share this goal with President Trump, who in a June executive order directed the secretary of labor to find and promote apprenticeship opportunities. The government has dozens of such programs, and both parties could work to re-energize the best without any more spending. Democrats want to give Medicare Part D the power to negotiate lower prescription drug prices for its 41

million enrollees; our deal maker in chief once thought that was a good idea, so he might want to pick up the phone.

The Democratic agenda's political purpose is clear enough. Party leaders realize, as Senator Chuck Schumer, the minority leader, wrote on Monday, that they've lost the last two elections in part because they "failed to articulate a strong, bold economic program for the middle

class and those working hard to get there."

But articulating a program is one thing; persuading the party in power to work with them is quite another.

It cannot be stated often enough that Republicans have spent over eight years doing little more than obstructing Democratic initiatives. That tactic seemed to work for them politically. But elected

representatives are ultimately judged on what they deliver. If Democrats believe their ideas will provide middle-class people with better jobs, wages and futures, they should do everything possible to move them through Congress, and worry later about who gets credit.



Editorial : The Democrats' Plan for Workers Falls Short

by The Editors
More stories by

The Editors

4-5 minutes

Agenda setters.

Photographer: Tom Williams/CQ-Roll Call

Democrats unveiled what they are calling "A Better Deal" for American workers on Monday, but it might more accurately be called "A Modest Deal." Which is to say, it features some sensible ideas that don't go nearly far enough.

The proposal calls for a doubling of federal funding for apprenticeship programs, a new tax credit for businesses that invest in worker training, and closer partnerships between community colleges and employers to ensure that more

students leave school with marketable skills.

All these ideas have merits and limitations. The Democrats' plan for apprenticeships matches the worthy yet vague one that the White House has already proposed. Tax credits give companies an incentive to develop the skills of their employees, rather than replace them, but there's no guarantee they'll choose that option.

The U.S. should place greater emphasis on career-based learning, but an even bigger challenge is to get community college students to stay in school long enough to earn a credential. The former leader of the party -- who just happened to be president as well -- had some appealing ideas on how to help students with jobs or families stay on track.

What's missing from this deal is a vision for how to help workers withstand the upheavals caused by trade, technology and automation. Skills that are in demand today will be obsolete a decade from now. The focus should be on giving workers opportunities to pursue training and education throughout their careers, not just when they start.

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A more ambitious agenda might include an innovative proposal to offer "wage insurance" to formerly unemployed workers who take a job that pays them less than what they were previously paid -- which would encourage more workers to consider working in new industries at lower salaries. Another

interesting idea would provide federal retraining loans to all American adults, which workers could use to cover education costs for the duration of their working lives.

The Democratic skills-promotion proposals do have the virtue of being attractive to some Republicans. But they're not ambitious enough to make a meaningful difference. American workers don't just need a better deal; they need a bolder one.

--Editors: Romesh Ratnesar, Michael Newman

To contact the senior editor responsible for Bloomberg View's editorials: David Shipley at davidshipley@bloomberg.net .

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Pelosi : Americans deserve better than the GOP agenda, so we're offering a better deal

By Nancy Pelosi

5-6 minutes

Pelosi says health-care reform "took 100 years to pass" and questions GOP effort to repeal the Affordable Care Act. Pelosi says health-care reform "took 100 years to pass" and questions GOP effort to repeal the Affordable Care Act. (Reuters)

(Reuters)

By Nancy Pelosi July 23 at 7:30 PM

Nancy Pelosi, from California, is House Democratic leader.

Last week, our nation marked six months since President Trump's inauguration.

For the first time in a decade, the GOP had the White House, Congress and complete control of the legislative process to advance its agenda. But instead of creating good-paying jobs, or rebuilding America's crumbling infrastructure, or advancing tax reform, Republicans have spent six months

trying to raise Americans' health costs to fund tax breaks for billionaires.

Democrats have a better approach — in fact, a better deal. On Monday, House and Senate Democrats are traveling to the town of Berryville, Va., to announce a fresh vision for "A Better Deal: Better Jobs, Better Wages, Better Future."

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What motivates us is that the costs of living keep rising, but families feel their incomes and wages aren't keeping up. Special interests are given special treatment, while hard-working Americans are ignored. Working people from the heartland to the cities are struggling in a rigged economy and a system stacked against them.

Our agenda is focused on efforts to create jobs and raise incomes for American workers, to lower the cost of living for American families, and to build an economy that gives

every American the tools to succeed in the 21st century.

It is an ambitious economic agenda that represents a renewed Democratic commitment to the hard-working men and women across the United States who have been left out and left behind for too long. As part of that commitment, Democrats are announcing three new proposals rooted in a bold approach to the challenges facing the United States.

First, Democrats are pledging ourselves to the goal of creating good-paying, full-time jobs for 10 million more Americans in the next five years.

It is time to ignite a new era of investment in America's workers, empowering all Americans with the skills they need to compete in the modern economy. We are calling for a new tax credit for employers to train and hire workers at a good wage, and a massive new national commitment to expanding apprenticeships and paid on-the-job

training that advances their skills and careers.

While we grow jobs, wages and the economy, Democrats know that a better deal for the American people demands strong action to tackle rising costs that are eating up families' budgets.

Prescription drug prices are jacked up, and Americans have fewer options at increased costs. Large communications companies merge, and families see fewer options and higher bills. Agriculture giants consolidate, while farmers struggle and prices in Americans' shopping carts rise. The price of gas goes down, but plane tickets become more expensive and airlines keep adding fees.

With this agenda, Democrats pledge ourselves to breaking the grip of the special interests and confronting the rising everyday costs that families have endured for too long.

That is the impetus behind our second proposal, to put economic power back into the hands of the

American people, cracking down on the monopolies and big corporate mergers that harm consumers, workers and competition. We will demand that proposed mergers meet tough new standards to protect competition before approval, and will institute post-merger reviews to ensure that consolidated

companies keep their promises to American consumers.

Third, Democrats will take unprecedented aggressive action to lower the cost of prescription drugs — the single largest factor driving increasing health costs in the United States today. We will leverage the

power of Medicare to negotiate lower drug prices, force drug manufacturers to open their books and justify cost increases, and create a strong, independent enforcement agency empowered to end outrageous and unjustified prescription drug price-gouging.

The past six months have exposed the toxic special-interest priorities at the core of the Republican agenda. The American people deserve better. With a Democratic Congress, a better deal is exactly what Democrats will give them.

**The
Washington
Post**

Editorial : Are Democrats offering 'A Better Deal'? Not so fast.

Opinion A column or article in the Opinions

section (in print, this is known as the Editorial Pages).

July 24 at 7:13 PM

PRESIDENT TRUMP has so far failed to supply a credible remedy to the economic ills that prompted so many of his followers to cast a ballot for him in 2016. Of course, many of Mr. Trump's voters were expressing not only support for him but disenchantment with the Democratic alternative. Democrats have responded to this devastating defeat mostly by preaching "resistance" to Mr. Trump and the Republican majority on Capitol Hill. However, if they are to recover politically and — more important for the nation's overall political health — turn our political tribal warfare into something more like a battle of ideas, the Democrats must declare what they are for.

In that sense, we give them credit for Monday's rollout of a new message aimed at the struggling middle class; they have decided to start trying to articulate a new vision. The question is whether their "A Better Deal" offers an alternative to Trumpism that is both clear and well-calculated to cure what really ails the American economy.

We don't envy the Democrats' task: In many ways the U.S. economy is performing well, operating at nearly full employment and growing at a steady if modest pace. Its problems are not spectacular but structural: lagging productivity growth, subpar labor force participation, slow wage growth, income inequality. Over the horizon, even more potentially job-killing automation looms. No one has foolproof answers for these complex challenges, which affect not only the United States but also developed economies around the world.

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Even allowing for the degree of difficulty, however, the Democratic response, as sketched so far, is less than compelling: Its declared premise, that the economy is "rigged" against middle-class people, has a basis in the reality of Washington special-interest politics but seems better calculated to placate the party's ascendant left wing than to start a serious policy conversation. American capitalism needs reform, not delegitimization. The Democrats offer one interesting idea in this respect — beefed up antitrust efforts to help bring down prices of airline tickets and the like. Otherwise, they rehash ideas that Mr. Trump himself has embraced at least rhetorically (massive new infrastructure spending; tougher negotiations between Medicare and the pharmaceutical companies) or

play small ball (a tax credit for business to do job training).

The Democratic message includes nothing, yet, on trade, a major omission, given Mr. Trump's effective exploitation of the issue. Yet perhaps it was better to remain silent than to admit the contradiction between House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi's (Calif.) promise that Democrats would confront "rising everyday costs" and the higher consumer prices that would result from the protectionism favored by both Mr. Trump and the Democratic left. Democrats also had nothing to say about tax reform, possibly because the clearest need is for a more internationally competitive (i.e., lower) corporate rate, which is what President Barack Obama correctly concluded, but populists abhor. Democrats are right that the United States hungers for a more equitable and effective alternative to GOP economics; obviously, though, they're still working on it.

**The
Washington
Post**

Robinson : Forget 'A Better Deal.' Here's what would actually work for Democrats.

<https://www.facebook.com/eugenerobinson.columnist>

5-7 minutes

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) speaks as Democrats roll out their economic agenda. (Astrid Riecken/For The Washington Post)

"A Better Deal" is not the worst slogan I've ever heard, but it's far from the best. The Democratic Party has overwhelming support from the "creatives" on Madison Avenue and the marketing geniuses in Hollywood. Why are Republicans so much better at coming up with pithy phrases that pack a punch?

It was not always thus. John F. Kennedy's "New Frontier" and Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society" were aspirational in a reach-for-the-stars kind of way; Barack Obama's "Yes We Can" invited Americans to feel good about themselves and their collective potential. "A Better Deal" leans in the right direction, but betterness is relative. Why cede

rhetorical absolutism — "Make America Great Again" — to Donald Trump, on his way toward being remembered as the least great president in our history?

Of course, the slogan is less important than the policies behind it. Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.) acknowledged Sunday that the party failed last year to get a clear message across. "When you lose an election with someone who has, say, 40 percent popularity, you look in the mirror and say, 'What did we do wrong?' And the No. 1 thing that we did wrong is we didn't have — we didn't tell people what we stood for," Schumer said on ABC's "This Week."

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At a kickoff event Monday in Berryville, Va., Democratic Party leaders announced three initial policy priorities: creating 10 million jobs over five years, with new apprenticeship programs and a tax

credit for employers who provide on-the-job training; "cracking down on the monopolies and big corporate mergers that harm consumers, workers and competition," as House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) writes in a Post op-ed; and concrete action to lower the price of prescription drugs, a big factor in rising health-care costs.

All of which is fine. But somehow I don't see Republican spinmeisters quaking in their Ferragamo loafers.

"A Better Deal" plays off the title of President Trump's first and best-known book, "The Art of the Deal." It is true that Trump has so far shown himself to be one of the worst dealmakers ever to reside in the White House, unable even to get his own party to agree on something it has been promising for seven years, the repeal and replacement of the Affordable Care Act. It is also true that Trump has reneged on all of his populist promises, instead following the standard GOP game plan of tax cuts for the rich and entitlement cuts for everyone else.

But if there is one lesson Democrats should have learned from 2016, it is that opposition to Trump is not by itself enough to win elections. I predict this will still be the case when the 2018 midterms roll around.

Yes, the Republican Party looks to be in trouble. Trump is sowing intraparty rancor and division, not unity. The base has remained loyal thus far, but independents and crossover Democrats have been given no reason to stick with the GOP.

It is possible that the stars might align next year to produce conditions for a pro-Democratic, anti-Republican "wave" election. But that has not happened yet. In the Senate, the Democratic caucus has 25 seats up for grabs next year, while Republicans have only eight seats at risk. And in the House, the GOP holds a 46-seat majority that will be difficult to reverse because of gerrymandering.

At the launch event Monday, Schumer promised "a strong, bold economic agenda." He pledged that

"Democrats will show the country we are the party on the side of working people."

Schumer told a story of having recently gone to a Yankees game and sitting next to two Teamsters, both wearing "Proud to be Deplorable" T-shirts. He said the two men had especially liked Trump's pledge

to spend \$1 trillion improving the nation's infrastructure, including the potholed roads over which the Teamsters have to drive. But the men now worry, Schumer said, that Trump will be unable to deliver on his promise.

Such infrastructure spending has long been a Democratic Party priority. However, Trump managed

to communicate it in a way that Hillary Clinton did not.

I'm still waiting to hear the "bold solutions" that Democrats promise. I can think of one possibility: Why not propose some version of truly universal single-payer health care?

Yes, that would be risky. But it might generate real excitement

among the Democratic base — and also grab the attention of some of the GOP's working-class supporters. Incrementalism is not the answer. Democrats need to go big or go home.

The
Washington
Post

In Congress, new fears and new protections in wake of baseball team shooting

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Ed-OKeeffe/147995121918931>

12-15 minutes

Even before the shooting at a baseball field in Northern Virginia last month, Congress was rattled by the increasingly hostile political environment that has produced combative town hall meetings and violent encounters among political activists. This year, the rate of threats against members of Congress has surpassed last year's, and a growing number of rank-and-file lawmakers are traveling the halls of the Capitol — and the streets of their home towns — with security details.

That unease was amplified significantly by the shooting that grievously wounded House Majority Whip Steve Scalise (R-La.). Scalise called in to the weekly Republican whip team meeting Monday evening and, according to several attendees, shared encouraging news: He has started the physical recovery process and could be transferred soon from MedStar Washington Hospital Center, where he has been hospitalized since the June 14 shooting, to a specialized rehabilitation facility. The wounds are healing for the other people shot by James T. Hodgkinson — who was killed in the attack — but the possibility of another attack worries many on Capitol Hill.

"If you shoot a police officer, you're going to make the 5, 6 and 10 o'clock news. But if you shoot a congressperson you're going to make the world news," said Rep. Cedric L. Richmond (D-La.), a longtime friend of Scalise's. "We're in a very vulnerable state because tensions are high in this country."

All of it brings unsettling implications for democracy and discourse, and has prompted a debate about how much security is necessary — and affordable. Some lawmakers are carrying firearms or installing security systems at their homes and offices. Some have decided not to hold town hall meetings at all —

restricting voters from meeting their elected leaders. Some are demanding that the government pay for a security detail for every member of Congress — a prospect that has enormous budgetary implications and that also might create even more chaos on already overcrowded Capitol Hill.

"Could you imagine 435 black SUVs with security details trying to pull up for votes?" asked Rep. Kevin Yoder (R-Kan.), who leads the House Appropriations subcommittee that sets budgets for congressional offices. He guessed the cost for Congress-wide protection would reach into the billions. "I just think the practicalities of it don't really work."

Yet Yoder acknowledged that rising threats and political acrimony have left lawmakers and their families on edge and wanting to do more to protect themselves.

In a sign of that reality, Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) was spotted last week and again on Monday walking around the Capitol with three U.S. Capitol Police officers wearing suits and ties. Aides confirmed that the senator's security detail began last week but declined to say why. Capitol Police also declined to comment.

"There are a number of members who've had very specific threats that scare them or their spouses or their staffers," said Yoder, who is a member of the GOP baseball team but wasn't at practice on June 14, the day of the shooting. "I've heard of members with staff who are too scared to come to work. So, this is for the safety of the members, and their families and constituents that come to events."

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) has been spotted with at least two Capitol Police officers recently. (Joe Raedle/Getty Images)

A growing number of threats

The attack on GOP lawmakers practicing for the annual Congressional Baseball Game last month had a unique Capitol Hill

flavor: It directly affected the men and women who set national policy on guns, mental health and federal funding for police agencies.

Scalise and his teammates are still working through their physical and mental recovery; he is battling an infection after gunfire tore through his hip, shattered bone and damaged organs. There was no word on when Scalise might return to work. Chris Bond, a spokesman, said Scalise told the whips that "he is looking forward to working through the rehab process and returning to the Capitol once he is ready."

Hodgkinson had a history of sharing hostile rhetoric on social media against President Trump. His rampage could have been much worse if Scalise hadn't been there with his Capitol Police security detail.

Since the shooting, security officials have responded to a handful of specific threats against lawmakers.

Police responded this month to an incident at the Las Vegas office of Sen. Dean Heller (R-Nev.) that reportedly included a note left on the door threatening the senator's life if he voted for the Republican health-care plan. That incident followed an arrest over the July Fourth recess of a protester outside the Tucson office of Sen. Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.). The protester told a Flake staff member, "You know how liberals are going to solve the Republican problem? They are going to get better aim," according to local reports.

This month, an Omaha man was arrested after walking into an Iowa motorcycle shop and saying that he "could kill" Sen. Joni Ernst (R-Iowa), who was scheduled to visit the shop the next day.

After the baseball shooting, Rep. Adam Kinzinger (R-Ill.) told Fox News Channel that somebody contacted him saying, "I wish you were on second base" — the location where Scalise was shot. And the day of the shooting, an Ohio man called the office of Rep. Steve Stivers (R-Ohio) and

threatened the congressman, his wife and daughter. The man was arrested for making at least five threatening phone calls to Stivers, according to a federal court filing.

The Secret Service and the Capitol Police declined to release the number of threat cases they have investigated or generally talk about whether they are increasing or decreasing.

And the FBI said in a statement that it "has not seen a sustained trend in criminal threats to Members of Congress," despite the recent shooting. It opens investigations only "when the threats are regarded as credible and meeting a certain threshold."

Still, this year, more than 1,650 threats have been made against lawmakers, or the U.S. Capitol or Congress, said senior congressional aides familiar with the figures who were not authorized to share them publicly. That figure for about the first half of the year is just short of the number of threats in all of 2016, the aides said.

As of late June, House members had received about 950 "threatening communication messages," easily surpassing the roughly 902 messages received in all of 2016, said House Sergeant at Arms Paul D. Irving. The number of specific threats against senators was unavailable.

"This is an urgent matter," Irving said last month as he shared the statistics with the Federal Election Commission, telling regulators that every House member needs "a residential security system due to the threat environment."

A team of Capitol Police patrols the halls outside the office of Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) in the Russell Senate Office Building, ready to react to groups protesting against the Republican health-care legislation. (Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images)

Irving's warning prompted the FEC to rule this month that all lawmakers can now use money raised from

campaign donors to pay for security cameras, door locks, motion sensors and other security upgrades at their homes.

The blanket authority is warranted, FEC commissioners said, because they now consider security costs the kind of "ordinary and necessary expenses" that lawmakers incur as part of the job.

Rep. Gregg Harper (R-Miss.), who chairs the House Administration Committee, which doles out office space and deals with other congressional housekeeping concerns, said he knows of several colleagues with plans to take advantage of the FEC decision.

"When you've had threats to your home, involving your spouse, or your children have been mentioned, those things are really having the biggest impact on members," he said.

More taxpayer money also will be spent on congressional security. Already, at least \$5 million is earmarked for Irving's team to pay for security upgrades at House district offices that face threats or are considered vulnerable. The Capitol Police budget will grow by \$7.5 million to hire 39 more officers and personnel and buy equipment. And all 435 House members are receiving \$25,000 in emergency funding to be used for the remainder of the year for any security purpose — to add bulletproof windows at district offices or hire private security guards for public events back home. The Senate, which has fewer district offices to protect, has not yet

allotted such money.

Richmond, who chairs the Congressional Black Caucus, became so concerned about threats against colleagues earlier this year that he arranged to meet with House Speaker Paul D. Ryan (R-Wis.) a week before Scalise was shot. Richmond told Ryan that he wants even more taxpayer funding to protect lawmakers.

"If you look at our leadership, from even the Senate or the House, they have full-time protection detail. Everybody else is just really left out there on their own," he said. "For the House sergeant at arms to absorb the costs of putting a camera system or alarm system on 435 houses — the 435 people who vote for this country to go to war, the 435 people that make tough decisions about anything from health care to entitlements to how we treat our veterans to all of those things — I think it's not unreasonable."

Yoder said that next year, "if there was another incident or people continue to feel at a heightened sense of being threatened, we would look at additional measures."

A still-bitter discourse

On Capitol Hill in recent weeks, one of the few visible reminders of the shooting was the boot on Rep. Roger Williams (R-Tex.), who was injured as he dove away from the gunfire. Also injured were Williams's aide Zach Barth, lobbyist Matt Mika, and U.S. Capitol Police officers Crystal Griner and David Bailey, who returned fire. All are poised to recover fully — but other, less visible signs of the shooting remain.

Rep. Joe Barton (R-Tex.) will never forget the look on his 11-year-old son Jack's face as he ran for cover that morning. "It was fear, surprise, wonderment," Barton recalled.

As Barton and others affected by the shooting move on, they have been struck that the tone of discourse hasn't much changed since. It's the dual burden of facing a shooting in politics: trying to carry on at a personal level — and trying to make a difference in the public domain. It's another reason to continue protecting themselves, several said.

"I definitely know where my firearm is at all times," Richmond said.

Harper said that he or a traveling aide always carries a weapon when they make stops in his district. Barton, who doesn't own a gun, said he's considering getting the training to do so.

Just hours after the shooting, Rep. Charles J. "Chuck" Fleischmann (R-Tenn.), a member of the baseball team, walked onto the House floor still dressed in his dusty uniform, looking stunned. He's coping well, he said more recently, but "some members have told me that they're having some problems and that they're not going to be able to play baseball again next year."

"You just feel thankful that the carnage was not as great as it could have been," he said. Congressman Charles J. "Chuck" Fleischmann (R-Tenn.) speaks to reporters on Capitol Hill after the shooting at the congressional baseball practice in Alexandria, Va. (Melina Mara/The Washington Post)

Fleischmann and Yoder credited Rep. Tim Murphy (R) for providing support. An eight-term lawmaker from southwestern Pennsylvania, he's a Navy psychologist who works at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Md., with wounded service members who have trauma issues. On the day of the shooting, Murphy stood up at a security briefing for all lawmakers to offer advice on how to deal with shock.

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Fleischmann recalled Murphy telling him later, "Go watch a fireworks exhibit online, just so that when you go out there that — not that you would have problems — but just so you don't." Fleischmann was grateful for the advice. "I went to see many fireworks displays, didn't have any issues, but I thought it was very kind of him."

Murphy said that the tone still gets hot in committee rooms, where "people continue to say things that try and provoke each other."

Said Yoder: "The uncivil tone in this town has gotten worse — it was already bad, it's gotten worse. We all have an obligation, from the president, to us, to our constituents — we all have a role in that. I can't stop my constituents from not being civil, what I can do is make sure I'm leading by example."

Matt Zaptosky and Mike DeBonis contributed to this report.

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The New York Times Editorial : A Terrorism Trial in the Federal Courts

The Editorial Board

4-5 minutes

Republicans raged over what they called the White House's weak and dangerous decision last week to prosecute in federal court a man suspected of belonging to Al Qaeda, rather than shipping him off to the military prison at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba.

Sorry, wrong year. That happened back in 2009, when President Barack Obama and his attorney general, Eric Holder Jr., tried to put Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, the 9/11 mastermind, on trial in New York City.

Ali Charaf Damache in 2010. He appeared before a federal judge in Philadelphia on Friday on terrorism-

related charges. Peter Morrison/Associated Press

Senior Republicans claimed to be aghast. John Boehner, then the House minority leader, said Mr. Obama was "treating terrorism as a law enforcement issue and hoping for the best." Jeff Sessions, then a senator from Alabama, said the attempt to move Mr. Mohammed to federal court showed "fighting global terrorism is not the priority it once was."

Republicans complained about more than Mr. Mohammed, whose civil trial was called off in early 2010; throughout Mr. Obama's presidency, they fumed often at the prospect that terrorism suspects would enjoy the constitutional protections of civilian trials.

Yet there was no similar outcry last week at the news that Mr. Sessions, now the attorney general, has

agreed to try Ali Charaf Damache in a federal court in Philadelphia. Mr. Damache is believed to be a recruiter for Al Qaeda and is charged with providing material support to the organization. He was extradited from Spain, where he was arrested in 2015, and made his initial appearance before a federal judge on Friday.

The extradition effort began under Mr. Obama and continued under President Trump, who promised during the campaign to keep Guantánamo open and to send more "bad dudes" there. But before anyone starts thinking that Mr. Trump and his allies have come to see the value of federal trials for terrorism suspects, there is a simpler explanation: The administration most likely had no choice. Spain, like many other countries, sees Guantánamo as the moral catastrophe and legal black

hole that it is, and would have refused to hand Mr. Damache over without a guarantee that he would not be sent there to face a military commission.

Whatever factors combined to bring Mr. Damache to the federal court system, it was the right move. Forget the overheated rhetoric and look at the record: Federal prosecutors have won about 200 "jihadist related" terrorism and national security cases since Sept. 11, as a federal judge noted in 2015. Meanwhile, not a single Sept. 11 defendant has been convicted under the Guantánamo military commissions. That system, plagued from the start with delays and legal challenges, has led to just eight convictions over all, three of which have been overturned — a record the commissions' former chief prosecutor called a "litany of failure."

Little of this has sunk in with Mr. Trump. Perhaps Mr. Damache's trial will show him that the federal court system is far better equipped to handle such prosecutions than military commissions at Guantánamo Bay will ever be.